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Panel on Education

Meeting on 13 July 2018

**Background brief on the situation of contract teachers
in primary and secondary schools**

Purpose

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on the situation of contract teachers in primary and secondary schools.

Background

2. Under the existing policy and practices, public sector schools are provided with teaching staff resources through the following three major means:
 - (a) regular teacher establishment computed according to the number of classes approved and the corresponding teacher-to-class ("T/C") ratio;
 - (b) additional regular teaching posts provided under various initiatives; and
 - (c) cash grants featured by their deployment flexibility for meeting specific policy objectives.

3. Regular teachers employed within the approved establishment are subject to the terms and conditions as set out in the relevant Codes of Aid applicable to secondary schools, primary schools and special schools or the Civil Service Regulations for government schools. Teachers employed under various cash grants are required to contribute to the mandatory provident fund schemes similar to the majority of the workforce. Meanwhile, schools are advised to follow the same salary scales applicable to regular teachers and provide similar leave entitlement to teachers appointed on contract terms.

4. In July 2017, the Administration announced an increase in the T/C ratio¹ by 0.1 for all public sector schools starting from the 2017-2018 school year. The Administration envisaged that the increase would bring about the creation of around 2 350 teaching posts and create better opportunities for serving contract teachers to be employed as regular teachers. The number of regular teachers and contract teachers in public sector primary and secondary schools for the school years from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018 are in **Appendix I**.

Major views and concerns

5. During the Fifth Legislative Council, issues related to contract teachers in public sector schools had been discussed at various Panel meetings. The major issues of concern raised by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Employment of contract teachers

6. Some members expressed concern that there was a growing practice of teachers (young teachers in particular) being employed on contracts instead of on the regular teacher establishment, and some teachers who had been employed on successive contracts might work in a different school or teach a different subject for each contract. In their views, this was not conducive to sustaining teachers' morale and the accumulation of expertise, and would eventually result in a succession gap in the teaching profession. Members called on the Administration to review and expand the regular teacher establishment to absorb the existing teaching staff employed on contract terms. However, there was another view that schools had employed teachers on contracts because they would wish to ascertain the suitability of the teachers before deciding whether to appoint them on regular establishment.

7. The Education Bureau ("EDB") clarified that some of the teachers employed under defined contract period ("DCP") were actually regular teachers. The DCP arrangements would enable schools to prepare for their future development and to cater for a flexible subject mix under the New Senior Secondary curriculum. EDB had kept the teacher employment situation under review and often reminds schools that employment of regular teachers on DCP terms should be truly justified and that schools should not take such mode of employment as a staff management tool. For persistent cases where the schools had employed a high percentage of regular teachers on DCP terms for a prolonged period without valid reason, EDB would intervene. As regards career

¹ Prior to 2017-2018 school year, the T/C ratio in public sector primary schools was 1.4 and 1.5 teachers per bi-sessional class and whole-day class respectively. As for public sector secondary schools, the T/C ratio was 1.7 teachers per junior secondary class (S1 to S3) and 2 teachers per senior secondary class (S4 to S6).

prospect of contract teachers, EDB advised that the wide range of professional development programmes for teachers were generally open to all teachers, irrespective of their terms of employment. The teaching experience accumulated by a contract teacher would be duly recognized when the teacher later took up a regular post.

8. Concern was also raised over the remuneration of contract teachers. Some members enquired about the difference, if any, in salary between contract teachers and regular teachers performing similar duties. According to EDB, the salary and contract period of contract teachers employed by schools using cash grants were determined in accordance with the school-based needs. EDB had not asked schools to set a specific pay scale for these teachers, nor were they required to provide information on the salary, contract period and terms of employment, etc., of these teachers. Therefore, EDB was unable to provide statistics on the salary difference between contract teachers and regular teachers and the details of contract renewal of the former. There was also no information on whether contract teachers had served in different schools under different contract terms. Some members considered it essential for EDB to collect information on the employment terms and duration of service of contract teachers.

Increase in teacher-to-class ratio

9. Some members considered the increase in T/C ratio by 0.1 starting from the 2017-2018 school year insufficient to help convert all serving contract teachers into regular appointments and called for further enhancement. EDB advised that the increase of 0.1 teacher per class would provide around 2 350 permanent teaching posts. Instead of freezing these posts to obtain a cash grant, schools were required to fill the newly created teaching posts by surplus teachers and serving contract teachers. EDB would continue to consult the education sector on the T/C ratio but currently had no fixed timetable for further enhancement.

Relevant Council questions

10. Members expressed concerns about the manpower planning for teachers, as well as employment and retention of contract teachers in their questions raised at the Council meetings of 26 March 2014, 27 April and 6 July 2016.

Latest position

11. The Administration will update members on the situation of contract teachers in primary and secondary schools at the Panel meeting on 13 July 2018.

Relevant papers

12. A list of relevant papers on the website of the Legislative Council is in **Appendix II**.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
3 July 2018

Appendix I

The number of regular teachers and contract teachers in public sector primary and secondary schools for the school years from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018

Primary Schools (Government and Aided)

| School Year | Regular Teachers | | Contract Teachers | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Number of Graduate Teachers* | Number of Non-graduate Teachers* | Number of Graduate Teachers* | Number of Non-graduate Teachers* |
| 2013/14 | 7 330 | 9 580 | 0 | 1 170 |
| 2014/15 | 7 550 | 9 780 | 0 | 1 360 |
| 2015/16 | 7 950 | 9 540 | 0 | 1 600 |
| 2016/17 | 8 520 | 9 240 | 10 | 1 800 |
| 2017/18 (Estimate) | 9 230 | 9 880 | 10 | 1 730 |

Secondary Schools (Government, Aided and Caput)

| School Year | Regular Teachers | | Contract Teachers | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Number of Graduate Teachers* | Number of Non-graduate Teachers* | Number of Graduate Teachers* | Number of Non-graduate Teachers* |
| 2013/14 | 17 350 | 3 510 | 820 | 1 270 |
| 2014/15 | 17 200 | 3 380 | 820 | 1 380 |
| 2015/16 | 16 840 | 3 200 | 840 | 1 540 |
| 2016/17 | 16 680 | 3 060 | 760 | 1 580 |
| 2017/18 (Estimate) | 16 900 | 3 170 | 580 | 1 330 |

* Numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

Source: Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2018-2019(Reply Serial No.: EDB 460)

List of relevant papers

| Committee | Date of meeting | Paper |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Panel on Education | 10.6.2013 (Item VII) | Agenda Minutes |
| Panel on Education | 22.6.2013 (Item I) | Agenda Minutes |
| Legislative Council | 26.3.2014 | Official Record of Proceedings Pages 30-42 (Question 3) |
| Panel on Education | 12.1.2015 (Item VI) | Agenda Minutes CB(4)515/14-15(01) |
| Panel on Education | 11.4.2016 (Item III) | Agenda Minutes |
| Legislative Council | 27.4.2016 | Official Record of Proceedings Pages 54-60 (Question 13) |
| Legislative Council | 6.7.2016 | Official Record of Proceedings Pages 126-130 (Question 14) |
| Panel on Education | 10.7.2017 (Item II) | Agenda Minutes |