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**Evaluation of the Enhanced Native-
speaking English Teacher Scheme
in Hong Kong Secondary Schools
2009**

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Executive Summary

The study of the Enhanced Native-speaking English Teacher (ENET) Scheme was conducted in three parts. The first was a series of focus groups; the second was a series of school visits and the third consisted of a number of questionnaires administered to school leaders, native English speaking teachers (NETS), English Panel Chairs and members of the English Panels in schools. The latter were the local English teachers.

A separate report on focus groups has been provided. The current report encapsulates the information gained from focus groups and adds to it the report on school visits and the analysis of the data from the surveys. A total of five focus groups were conducted and nine schools were visited.

Thirty four Principals or Assistant Principals of the 104 schools approached, 74 English Panel Chairs, 79 local English teachers and 64 NETS completed the relevant survey instruments. While this is less than what could be called a full sample, the data have provided sufficient information to support the intense discussions and conclusions derived from the focus groups and school visits.

The conclusions drawn from this study provide the basis for a series of recommendations that will enable the program to be revitalized after its period of 10 years of operation.

English Panel meetings

It was found that local English teachers would like English Panel meetings to:

- permit more time for teachers to discuss and share successful teaching strategies and resources;
- help teachers to collaborate on setting up teaching programs and sequences;
- support teachers' efforts to devise teaching programs that were clearly linked to better outcomes for students;
- help teachers to plan strategies to support students of different ability levels;
- allow teachers to discuss their students' class performance, areas of weakness and areas of improvement;
- be reduced in duration and tightly controlled by an agenda so that the meetings are better focused and more productive; and
- include time to check that decisions taken in earlier meetings have been put into practice and to discuss outcomes of those decisions.

Similarly, the NETs would like English Panel meetings to:

- place emphasis on setting clear objectives for the English program;
- allow all teachers opportunities to add items to the agenda and to contribute to discussions;
- reduce emphasis upon administrative tasks and formal meeting procedures;
- include regular reports from teachers on successful strategies and programs;
- help to identify professional development needs and incorporate professional development opportunities for teachers;
- be of shorter duration and conducted on a regular (perhaps monthly) basis to allow short term teaching and learning goals to be set, strategies to be trialed and outcomes to be reviewed;

- focus on one or two major discussion points at each meeting, and permit more debate and sharing of ideas and resources; and
- include strategies for dealing with problems, reporting back on outcomes and making sure that initiatives are adopted.

The broad conclusions were as follows:

1. Schools are generally satisfied with the role and function of the NETs in schools. In general the NETs are providing a stimulus to the oral language context in school. This is complementary to an apparent general text based approach to teaching English among local teachers.
2. NETs have both a curriculum and marketing role within schools in Hong Kong. Their presence in the school is valued by parents as an indication of the serious nature of the English language curriculum in the school system. As such there is some tendency to exploit the presence of a NET in the school to attract students. This is important in a period when the demographic structure of the population is altering and the school-aged cohort is reducing in size.
3. NETs have generally adopted an educational role more consistent with the anticipated changes to be introduced with the new curriculum. Schools therefore are anticipating changes in teaching, curriculum and assessment with the introduction of the new curriculum, but NETs are anticipating less change in their role.
4. Students are appreciative of the presence of NETs in schools. The opportunity to practise their English and to become accustomed to people from other cultures is valued.
5. The organization of English departments in the secondary schools is thorough, focused on the improvement of examination performances and on the deployment of resources which include staff.
6. The role of the NET within the English Panel in the secondary schools varies according to the Panel Chair's perception and local expectation of the NET. This perception varies from a role that is manifested in oral language practices with students, support and professional development for staff, development of materials and strategies for the classroom, administrative support for the Panel Chair and leadership in English language curriculum – to a NET occupying the role of just an additional English teacher in the school. Both extremes and the roles in between are appreciated in the schools by the Principal, the local teachers and students and parents.
7. Departmental meetings, or Panel meetings as they are described, appear to focus more on administrative matters than on pedagogical or curriculum reform. When attention is focused on improvement of learning, the Panel meeting focuses on test scores and examination results. The purpose of these conversations is generally to improve grades, test scores and both internal and external examination results. The pedagogical and leadership roles of the NET in this milieu are diminished. In some cases, the NET lends support to students and staff in the students' oral language development and practice examinations but this was often regarded as irrelevant to the improvement of test scores. The role of the NET had become a valuable complement to the main business of the English Department, but it was not seen as central to the improvement of examination performance.

8. The introduction of the new curriculum and the changing examination format and focus, accompanied by the projected new form of reporting, will place additional pressures on the Panel Chair, Principal and the local teachers. The perception of the local teachers or members of the Panel could be described as treating the role of the NET as largely irrelevant to the curriculum while it was dominated by the competitive and norm referenced examination system. The peripheral curriculum was the main area of influence for the NET.
9. Substantial changes are envisaged once the new curriculum is introduced. The shift to a standards referenced framework, criterion referenced interpretation of assessment and reporting in terms of proficiency levels has the potential to radically shift the emphasis in the curriculum from the way it is currently taught in schools. A great deal of thought needs to be given to the implications of the changes that are necessary for the successful implementation of the new curriculum, and related assessment and reporting procedures. The main platform will have changed in the school's role for the Panel Chair and the local English Panel members. This may require a substantial change in the way in which Panels operate and the NET may have a critical role in assisting this change to occur.
10. During visits to classrooms, although minimal in number, no targeted or differentiated instruction was observed. Every lesson observed involved whole class instruction, including small-group work but where all members of each small group focused on the same task. Targeted instruction aimed at improving student proficiency appeared to be antithetical to the teaching approach in the Hong Kong English classroom. In a proficiency oriented curriculum, using standards referenced frameworks, criterion referenced interpretation of assessment, and proficiency reporting, this approach to teaching may have to be adjusted. The role of the NET in this process would be of considerable importance, providing that the NET has the necessary set of assessment, interpretation and curriculum skills.

The following steps are recommended for the Panel Chairs and the NET:

- a. Panels need to shift their emphasis from administrative to curriculum and pedagogical foci.
- b. The English Department needs to be reorganized so that teams of teachers act as collaborative specialists in the implementation of the new English curriculum. This is an extension of the teaching model that currently exists in some schools under the rubric of the NET's duties. Local teachers need to de-privatize the classroom and begin to work in collaborative teams of teachers.
- c. The organization of the Panel meeting needs to be altered:
 - i. At a minimum English Panel meetings in schools where a NET is deployed should be conducted in English. There should be no exceptions to this. The practice of excluding and disenfranchising the NET has to be stopped if the NET is to take more than a token role on the Panel.
 - ii. While administration is important, and should occupy some of the agenda time, the focus of the Panel meeting will have to address more

- of the pedagogical issues in school especially with the introduction of the new curriculum.
- iii. The perceived dominance of the role of the Panel Chair needs to alter to allow more open discussion and sharing of ideas, resources and recommendations.
 - iv. While it may be culturally difficult, teachers need to develop the confidence to question and challenge the effect of teaching strategies on student performance. For this to occur, considerable professional development is needed to provide teachers with confidence, pedagogical competence and the appropriate discourse to enable these discussions to take place. True collaboration cannot be achieved unless there is the opportunity for the participants to express and discuss dissent and options.
 - v. Accountability within the English Panels appears to be focused only on examination scores. Accountability needs to include responsibilities for implementing pedagogical practices and improving English language proficiency of the students. In a collaborative environment, peer accountability is of great importance. Opportunities for Panel members and the NET to discuss and challenge each others' ideas is essential. This is a mandatory professional development process. The challenge, however, must be based on the evidence of student learning outcomes. This evidence-based approach forms part of the framework on which the new curriculum is founded.
 - vi. Panel members, all subgroups of Panel members depending upon the size of the Panel, need to establish a collaborative system that enables joint ownership and responsibility for student learning outcomes.
 - vii. Record-keeping in Panel meetings is at present focused on timetables, workloads, resource allocation and requisitions and the organization and administration of events, classes and school level expectations. These records are important, and are supplemented by examination scores, test results and times and dates of assessment strategies. They need to be further supplemented, with the help of the NET, to include matters of individual student proficiency progress and development within the standards referenced framework.
 - viii. Teachers designated by the Panel to be responsible for the learning progress of specific students need to make and keep records of decisions, proposed strategies, resources recommended and used and timeframes for reassessment of the student. Student work samples need to be tabled and discussed as part of the decision-making process for targeted intervention.
 - ix. The role of the Panel Chair is a firm administrative or organizational role. This should, of course, continue. However, the role of the Panel Chair needs to be enlarged to include more input from the NET on pedagogical and resource matters and on advice for the local Panel members regarding intervention, monitoring and recording progress of individual pupils. Local Panel members should also adopt a culture of challenge so that the NET is accountable for recommendations.

- x. While it may be culturally difficult, NETs and local teachers must be privileged with the right and opportunity to seek help and accept a situation where they do not know how to teach or to improve the students' English. Unless this happens, overall improvement in teaching within a proficiency based curriculum will not occur.
- xi. Panel Chairs and to some extent the NETs must ensure that every Panel member is participating in the discussion and learning from and with each other.

The members of the Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT) will have an important role to play in altering the culture and process of the Panel meetings. Their role needs to be expanded to become more in line with role of the Advisory Teachers in the Primary NET Scheme. However, the role of the RNCT should be broader than just development and provision of teaching materials.

There are cultural changes needed in the operation of the Panel meetings. With the implementation of the new curriculum, there is a need for professional development of both the NETs and the local Panel members which focuses more on a developmental rather than a deficit model of pedagogy.

1. Introduction and Overview

1.1 *The Setting of the Study*

The prosperity of Hong Kong and its position as a global and regional force are conceptually linked by the Hong Kong community to the English proficiency of its people. This attitude to English is endemic, not only in Hong Kong but throughout the region (Jeon & Lee, 2006; Jeong, 2004; Lai, 1999; Law, 2004; Xiaoqiong, 2005). Although Cantonese is recognized as the mother tongue of Hong Kong people, English is prized for the access it provides to employment opportunities, higher education, business negotiation, foreign diplomacy, travel and study (APEC, 2009). Further, since the late 1970s, the need to arrest declining standards of English, or to address perceptions that English standards were declining, has been the source of considerable debate and anxiety in the Hong Kong media and community. For example, a review of archives of a prominent English-language newspaper in Hong Kong revealed English language standards and English language education to be widely and hotly debated topics of concern (refer to Media Archives, South China Morning Post, 2008).

Hong Kong's history can be related to the place that proficiency in English occupies in terms of access to hierarchies of economic and social influence. English was the language of government, administration, trade and law in Hong Kong from the time of its occupation by the British in 1841. In the 1970s, the colonial government began a program of investment in the development of English which was carried on by the post-1997 Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. The impetus of the late 1990s was further accentuated by global and regional developments in the years that followed. This included growth in the prosperity of Mainland China with associated developments in Shanghai and in other South China SARs which are now in direct competition with Hong Kong for lucrative tourism, financial and commercial markets.

The place of English language studies in the Hong Kong education system, and by extension the role and contribution of a scheme such as the deployment of NETs in schools, should ideally be examined in relationship to educational reforms within the broad social context. The systemic re-evaluation which began with the *Holistic review of the Hong Kong school curriculum* (Curriculum Development Council, 1999) affirmed the importance of English within the context of a comprehensively restructured curriculum. Further, since the late 1990s the Hong Kong education system has been going through a progressive cycle of revision and renewal, with ramifications for all aspects of the system from kindergarten to tertiary education. In relation to secondary schools, from 2009 onward the system will include senior secondary education in the compulsory provision for the first time and a new curriculum has been developed to coincide with this important initiative. The major system-level events currently influencing secondary education in Hong Kong are thus the introduction of the 3+3+4 structure of secondary and tertiary education and the implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum.

In practical terms, these reforms are expected to mitigate pressures on Hong Kong schools to concentrate much of the English language teaching allocation on preparing students for examinations. By eliminating one of the exit examinations, it is expected that time will become available for more student-centred and task-based styles of learning and teaching. In addition, the new curriculum is designed to place emphasis upon teaching English through language arts and fostering the use and enjoyment of English, and to shift emphasis away from grammar drills, rote-learning and a narrow conceptualization of English merely as a subject to be studied for examinations. This is a major shift. In its current manifestation, the English examination acts as a gatekeeper to further education and future prosperity for many

Hong Kong students and understandably dominates thinking and planning about English language studies for educators, students and parents.

In addition to the pervasive influence of the examination system, several policy decisions and initiatives have set the scene for the deployment of native-speaking teachers of English in secondary schools. Since 1997, the language policy of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has fostered both English and Putonghua through a commitment to tri-lingualism and bi-literacy in the learning goals of the curriculum. Concurrently, the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications instituted new standards for language teachers which helped address the problem of proportions of local English teachers who were under-qualified to teach the language. Similarly, the establishment of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) enabled constructive review of other system-level issues including the medium of instruction policy in secondary schools, the appropriate qualifications of language teachers and, in its Review of Language Education (SCOLAR, 2003), the appropriate achievement standards for school students.

At the time of writing this report, the issue of medium of instruction was a hotly debated topic of concern in the Hong Kong press and education community. The division of schools into three levels dependent on the academic achievement levels (Bands) aligned mostly with the medium of instruction produces a system that could be argued to discriminate on the basis of the language of instruction. There are those that teach predominantly in English (referred to in this report as English Medium of Instruction (EMI) schools. These enrol students of high academic standard and are predominantly Band 1 schools. There are others that primarily use mother tongue or Chinese Medium of Instruction (CMI). They enrol students of middle (Band 2) or lower (Band 3) academic standards. This process effectively creates at least two, and possibly three, distinctive educational contexts in which native-speaking teachers of English are deployed. Thus, examination of the role, responsibilities, contributions and experiences of native-speaking English teachers in secondary schools must acknowledge not only broader social and systemic influences on English language education in Hong Kong, but also take into account the diverse requirements of different types of schools participating in the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme.

1.2 The Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme

The NET Scheme was introduced in 1997 to Hong Kong secondary schools, coinciding with a return to mother tongue as the principal language of instruction in many schools. Expectations of the Scheme at its inception were that it would improve the professionalism of English language teachers, leading to advances in the quality of English teaching through a system where NETs produced teaching resources, served as models of good practice and effected gains in student language proficiency. At this time, it was hoped that NETs could adopt a leadership role in schools and act as agents of change. After the first few years of implementation, researchers from the Hong Kong Institute of Education evaluated the Scheme and concluded that it had enjoyed some initial success, despite difficulty in identifying clear-cut language gains for students resulting conclusively from interaction with a NET (Storey, Luk, Gray, Wang & Lin, 2000).

The current evaluation marks the ten year anniversary of the deployment of native-speaking teachers of English in Hong Kong secondary schools through the NET Scheme. Given that the Scheme is now a decade old, it has had sufficient time to be inculcated into the secondary education system and for evidence of change in language teaching, language attainment and resource use to be apparent. The evaluation is also timely, as it coincides with the introduction of the 3+3+4 structure of secondary and tertiary education and implementation of the new curriculum for senior secondary education. These innovations present opportunities for the

NET Scheme, with its emphasis on innovative learning and teaching strategies, to align with and make a significant contribution to the learning targets and objectives of the new curriculum. Certainly, this is the light in which the Scheme is currently being repositioned as the Enhanced NET (ENET) Scheme in secondary schools. Similarly, as the Scheme has matured it has shifted conceptualization of the optimal role of NETs from external agents of teaching reform to integrated school-based contributors to broader education initiatives. These reforms draw upon systemic and school-level forces to graduate students with the English literacy and linguistic skills to participate in and contribute to the development of Hong Kong.

Building upon this perception of the ENET Scheme, the evaluation described in this report took an approach designed to examine the Scheme from multiple perspectives. A primary aim of the evaluation was to provide a foundation for the invigoration of the ENET Scheme, with particular attention paid to the role of the NET in secondary schools and the development of a model of optimal NET deployment. The evaluation scrutinized the contribution of the ENET Scheme to English language education and its proposed relationship to the new curriculum, and sought future trends and directions for the Scheme.

At the outset of the evaluation, the acknowledged objectives of the ENET Scheme were to:

- enrich the English language learning environment in schools;
- enhance the teaching and learning of English with linguistically and culturally authentic materials and resources; and
- build up teaching expertise through school-based professional development and collaboration between NETs and other English Panel Members (EPMs).

1.3 Methodological Approach

The study drew upon an integrated series of focus groups, school visits and surveys to review the ENET Scheme. Each of these research methodologies incorporated the voices and viewpoints of people who were expected to occupy different roles in, and have different relationships to, the Scheme. Participants in the various research activities included Principals, NETs (experienced and recently deployed), English Panel Chairs (EPCs), local English teachers, graduate students who had been taught by NETs, students who were currently being taught by NETs, parents of students who had been taught by NETs, representatives of the management team of the NET Section, EDB, and members of the NET Section's Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT). The RNCT comprised experienced NETs employed by the NET Section to support the work of NETs and, through the NETs, to make positive contributions to the English Panels in secondary schools.

1.3.1 Focus Groups

The first of the evaluation activities was a sequence of eight focus groups held at the headquarters of the NET Section, Hong Kong Education Bureau, in Tsuen Wan during December 2008 and January 2009. The purpose of the focus groups was to examine how effectively the system and individual schools had addressed and achieved the objectives that had been established for the ENET Scheme.

Three of the focus groups were heterogeneous in composition, and included a Principal, NET, parent, graduate student, local English teachers and Panel Chairs. A fourth group brought together NETs from different types of schools and with a wide range of experience in the Scheme. The fifth group was intended to include only English Panel Chairs but was also attended by one NET who accompanied her Panel Chair. The sixth of the discussion groups allowed Principals from schools of different Band levels to present their views about the

ENET Scheme and their experiences of NET deployment. The background and experience of participants in these six discussion groups are described in Appendix A.

An evidence-based approach was followed in this phase of the evaluation, so that views expressed by different groups consisting of school-based stakeholders in the Scheme were complemented by perceptions of success and attainment suggested by members of two other discussion groups drawn from NET Section management and members of the Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT).

The questions posed to participants of the focus groups were:

Goals

- What are the main goals of the ENET Scheme as seen from the perspective of the focus group participants?

Drivers

- What are the main drivers towards attaining these goals?
- What are the main blockers to the attainment of these goals?
- How can the drivers be facilitated?
- How can the effects of the blockers be reduced?

Strengths and Weaknesses

- In its current configuration, what are the main strengths of the ENET Scheme?
- In its current configuration, what are the main weaknesses of the ENET Scheme?
- How can the strengths be maximized?
- How can the weaknesses be eliminated or reduced?

Return on Investment

- What has Hong Kong derived from the ENET Scheme that it would not otherwise have obtained?

The perceptions and insights offered during these focus groups were summarized in an earlier report (Griffin & Woods, 2009), with particular attention paid to participants' ideas about the goals of the ENET Scheme, forces that drove or blocked attainment of the Scheme's goals, and the strengths and weaknesses of the Scheme in its current configuration. The main areas of interest covered in the focus groups are reprised in Chapter Two of the current report. Participants' views of the returns that Hong Kong has derived from the ENET Scheme are summarized in Chapter Four.

1.3.2 School Visits

Nine school visits were conducted as part of the evaluation. Schools were invited to volunteer interest in being visited by the researchers, and were chosen to represent the different types of school in which NETs were deployed and different styles and durations of NET deployment.

These visits provided narratives of the ways in which the ENET Scheme operated across different school environments. Their purpose was to provide an overview of the activities typically performed by NETs and the interactions between NETs and other teachers in classrooms, and included lesson observations, interviews with NETs, Principals, English Panel Chairs, local English teachers and students. A summary of the schools and NET deployment strategies adopted in schools is set out in Chapter Three of this report. Expanded

descriptions of schools, and discussion of the various ways that they deployed their NETs, are included as Appendix B.

1.3.3 Surveys

As an adjunct to the focus groups and school visits, online surveys were distributed to representatives of 104 Hong Kong secondary schools. In each school, Principals, English Panel Chairs, NETs and local English teachers were invited to respond to surveys, the purpose of which was to ascertain attitudes to the ENET Scheme and NET deployment across diverse school contexts and from multiple perspectives.

Thirty four Principals or Assistant Principals, 74 English Panel Chairs, 79 local English teachers and 64 NETS completed the surveys. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents are included in Appendix C.

Schools were sampled to represent the different types of school context for NET deployment. It did not provide data on the ENET Scheme that could be generalized to all secondary schools in Hong Kong. Information in this report should not be interpreted in that light. Rather, the surveys gathered opinions from different stakeholders in the ENET Scheme to expand upon topics of interest raised in the focus groups. In particular, surveys were designed to investigate and elaborate on the expectations that different school-based contributors to the Scheme held about their own role and the roles of others in the English program, impact of the new Senior Secondary curriculum on English teaching, and optimal deployment conditions for NETs.

1.4 Summary

At the outset of this evaluation, the NET Section management team espoused a view of the ENET Scheme as an initiative embedded in the wider context of systemic reforms in learning and teaching practices and in curriculum. Building on an earlier evaluation of the NET Scheme in Hong Kong primary schools (Griffin, Woods, Storey, Wong & Fung, 2006), collaboration between NETs and other English teachers was suggested as a particularly important indicator of successful implementation for the Scheme, as was the NETs' ability to create an authentic and positive environment for English language use in schools. Of interest, therefore, were the school-level and systemic conditions that promoted, or formed barriers to, collaboration between teachers or that supported or blocked the NETs' capacity to engage the school community in English language activities.

A point raised for consideration at the commencement of the evaluation, and repeated during the focus groups, was that NETs were deployed in quite diverse school environments and that this held implications for their optimal deployment. It was argued that NET deployment in schools using English as the primary medium of instruction required different skills and experience of a successful NET than deployment in schools that used mother tongue as the medium of instruction. These differences were further exacerbated if the school enrolled mainly students at the lowest Band level of ability. The impact of different school contexts on optimal NET deployment was explored during the school visits and taken into consideration during analysis of the survey responses.

It was also expected that potential for realizing the goals of the ENET Scheme would be influenced by the teaching experience of the NET, and in particular the length of time a NET had been deployed in Hong Kong. It was argued that NETs need time in schools to gain the

confidence of their English Panel, and are unlikely to be able to affect the English program at their schools until well into their first, or even second, contract.¹ Accordingly, length of NET deployment was taken as a point of comparison for analysis of the survey data to monitor its impact on school-based attitudes to the ENET Scheme. Further, it was acknowledged that the success of the ENET Scheme depends on the contributions and collaboration of many people. NETs cannot meet the goals set for their deployment without the support and leadership of their Principals and English Panel Chairs, guidance of the NET Section and professional cooperation of local English teachers. The operation of the English Panel was expected to be particularly important for successful NET deployment as this was the conduit through which new ideas and teaching strategies could most effectively be shared in schools.

This evaluation report is organized into five chapters. This chapter acknowledges the educational and social context of the ENET Scheme and the Scheme's changing role within broader educational reforms in Hong Kong, and introduces the scope and range of the current evaluation of the Scheme. The next chapter reprises areas of interest, raised during focus groups, which were presented in detail in the interim report of the current evaluation (refer to Griffin & Woods, 2009 for a full discussion). That chapter draws upon responses to surveys by different school-based participants in the Scheme to elaborate upon topics such as the expected role and contributions of NETs and English Panel Chairs, deployment strategies for NETs, conduct and perception of English Panel meetings, and relationships between NET deployment and system-level programs and innovations. The third chapter draws upon visits to schools and key informant interviews to describe the deployment strategies adopted in different types of school contexts and the different attitudes to the ENET Scheme and English language education evidenced in those contexts. The fourth chapter summarizes the ideas of NET Section management, Principals, English Panel Chairs, local teachers of English, NETs, parents and students about the contribution and return on investment to Hong Kong of the ENET Scheme, and the final chapter sets out recommendations for the future success of the ENET Scheme.

¹ NETs in the ENET Scheme are employed on two year contracts.

2. Implementation of the ENET Scheme

2.1 Overview

Indicators of success for the ENET Scheme that were raised for discussion in focus groups and elaborated upon in the interim report for this evaluation (Griffin & Woods, 2009) included:

- Attitudes and practices of English Panel Chairs and Principals with regard to NET deployment and duties, and the impact of the Scheme in schools.
- Patterns of NET role, deployment, responsibilities and contribution.
- The evolving role of NETs as collaborative resource persons within schools, in contrast to the earlier change agent model.
- The professional relationship between NETs and other English teachers.
- NETs' contributions to the learning environment within secondary schools.
- The perceived links between having a NET in the school and students' learning outcomes.
- The impact of NETs on student motivation to acquire English language proficiency.
- Language opportunities arising out of NET-conducted extra-curricular activities.
- The contribution of the Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT).
- Recruitment and retention of NETs, including job description, roles, responsibilities and attitudes.
- Contributions the ENET Scheme was expected to make to the Learning Targets of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum.
- Influence of the examination system on English teaching and the ENET Scheme

These topics were summarized into the following broad areas of interest:

- The role of NETs and impact on student attitudes, learning outcomes and learning experiences.
- Reciprocal professional relationships between NETs and local teachers.
- Impact of school context and school leadership on NET deployment, including the role of the English Panel Chair and the conduct of Panel meetings.
- Relationships between system-level innovations and programs and NET deployment.

The insights offered by focus group participants were combined and contrasted with data gathered from survey respondents, and the outcomes of these analyses are discussed in the following sections.

2.2 Role and Contributions of NETs

Most of the Principals who took part in the focus groups believed that it was important to allow schools freedom to deploy NETs in ways that suited the specific needs of the individual schools, and which also capitalized on the skills and experience of individual NETs. Most Principals placed responsibility for the implementation of the ENET Scheme at their school in the hands of their English Panel Chairs. However, several Panel Chairs expressed uncertainty over the optimal way to deploy NETs and reported that, without a method to link deployment strategies for NETs to better language outcomes for students, they felt hampered in their ability to make wise choices for the English programs at their schools.

The surveys explored the ways that NETs were currently being deployed in schools by asking school leaders (Principals and Panel Chairs), NETs and local English teachers to indicate the types of activities they expected the NET at their school to perform. Their responses are summarized in Table 2.1. These have been ordered from those almost all respondents agreed were responsibilities taken up by NETs to those that were less widely regarded as part of the NET role.

Table 2.1. *Perceptions of Roles and Responsibilities of NETs*

The NET is someone who . . .	School Leaders (% agree)	NETs (% agree)	Local Teachers (% agree)
Encourages students' interest in English	95.6	100	89.9
Helps students improve English proficiency	95.6	100	93.7
Helps student improve confidence to use English	95.6	100	93.7
Organizes extracurricular activities related to English	94.7	98.4	97.5
Encourages students' cultural awareness	94.7	98.4	91.1
Develops an authentic English language environment	94.7	93.4	93.7
Supports the teaching of other English Panel members	93.9	88.5	92.4
Suggests new ideas / strategies to English Panel members	93.0	90.2	87.3
Recommends new teaching materials/resources	91.2	93.4	92.4
Co-plans English classes with other Panel members	86.8	52.5	67.1
Acts as co-teacher with other Panel members	86.0	50.8	69.6
Discusses curriculum content with the English Panel	85.1	88.5	69.9
Works with the Panel to tailor lessons for more able students	83.3	54.1	63.3
Designs units of work for the English department	74.6	68.9	57.0
Provides professional development for other English teachers	72.8	47.5	57.0
Works with the Panel to tailor lessons for less able students	71.9	45.9	46.8
Discusses educational objectives with the English Panel	71.1	72.1	65.8
Explains use of assessment data to promote student learning	49.1	36.1	45.9
Demonstrates use of assessment data to improve teaching	46.4	27.9	38.0

Almost all survey respondents placed emphasis upon the contributions that NETs made to students' English language proficiency, interest, confidence and cultural awareness, and their role in organization of extracurricular activities, supporting the teaching of local English teachers and recommending new ideas, strategies, materials and resources to the English Panel.

Across diverse school contexts and from the perceptions of different stakeholders, NETs were valued for their capacity to break down barriers of fear, embarrassment, indifference or resistance that prevented some students from developing positive attitudes to English and willingness to engage with English studies. This was described by several focus group participants as a "vital and unique" role of NETs that could not be filled by local teachers. It was suggested that students could not speak in English to each other, or to local teachers, without discomfort, but that it was acceptable and natural to speak in English with the NET. This was viewed as part of the NETs' responsibility to develop an authentic English language environment, a contribution that was highly valued by the focus group participants and by the school leaders, NETs and local teachers who responded to surveys.

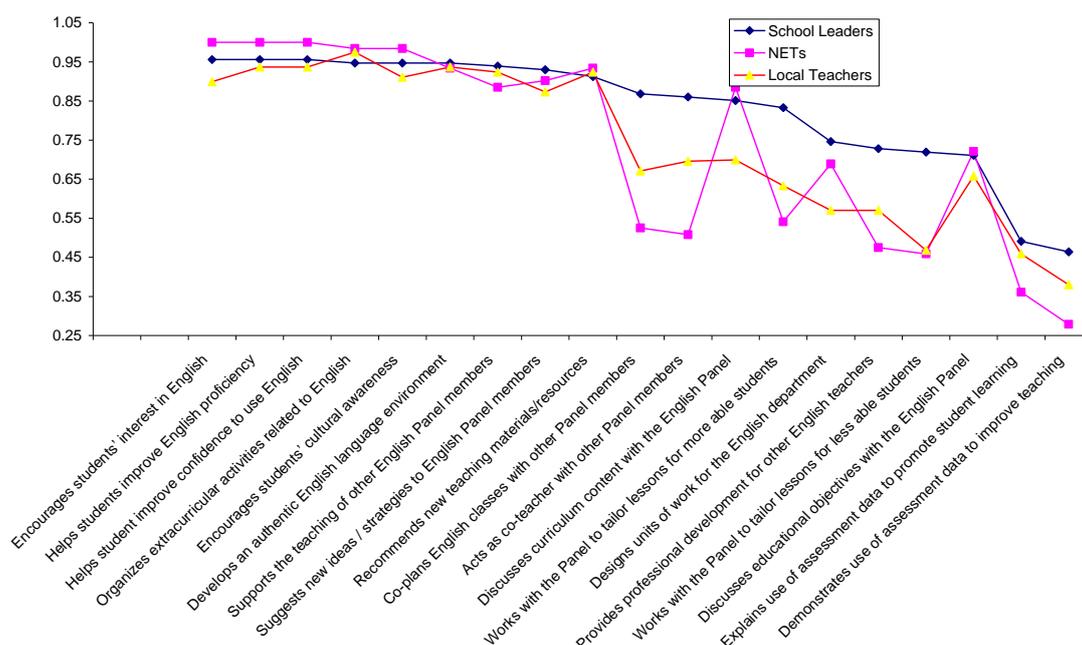


Figure 2.1. Comparison of NETs' and others' perceptions of the NET role

In addition, the contribution that NETs could make to shifting the focus of English education to the students' use and enjoyment of English in daily life, rather than English as a subject to be studied at school and passed in examinations, was discussed with enthusiasm by many of the focus group participants. Thus, the impact of the ENET Scheme on student learning outcomes was viewed through the frame of improvements in student attitudes and interest, and activities based upon enrichment and authenticity of the English program.

Table 2.2 sets out responses by school leaders, NETs and local English teachers to questions about specific deployment strategies for NETs.

Table 2.2. *Deployment Strategies for NETs*

Deployment Strategy	School Leaders (% agree)	NETs (% agree)	Local Teachers (% agree)
The NET contributes to regular classroom teaching	91.8	96.7	93.3
The NET takes regular junior form classes	62.7	73.3	69.3
The NET takes regular senior form classes	48.2	61.0	56.0
The NET negotiates deployment with the school	60.0	45.9	65.8
The NET is deployed across every level of the school	46.4	46.7	61.3
The NET takes a mix of classes and oral language classes	66.4	65.0	57.3
The NET takes only oral classes	18.2	18.3	32.0
The NET contributes to curriculum planning and PD	74.5	59.0	58.7
The NET helps teachers identify student learning needs	53.6	42.6	45.3

In summary, a deployment strategy in which NETs contributed only to oral classes was less prevalent in surveyed schools than strategies in which NETs took regular English classes. These data were re-examined, to check whether school context (Band level or medium of instruction) or the duration of NET deployment was related to strategies for NET deployment. In the main, there were no statistically significant relationships between these variables, although rather more of the NETs on their first contract than NETs on subsequent contracts

reported that they took only oral classes and were not engaged in regular classroom teaching of English. This supported observations made by focus group participants that schools did not routinely deploy new NETs for regular classroom teaching until they had assessed the skills and experience of the NET and the NET had gained the confidence of the English Panel Chair.

NETs were surveyed about what changes, if any, they would like to make to the way they were deployed at their current school. Only nineteen of the 56 NETs that responded to the question indicated that they were very satisfied with their current deployment. Among the approximately two thirds of the respondent NETs and who suggested changes, several expressed frustration with the structure and format of meetings at their school, their inability to find time to work in collaboration with local teachers, and perceived lack of interest from school leaders in the ideas and experience they could contribute to the English Panel. Several others commented that their skills and experience as English teachers were being under-utilized or that they were asked to teach students across too many year levels.

2.2.1 Collaboration between NETs and Local English Teachers

In general, the school leaders who responded to the surveys portrayed the NETs' contributions in a very positive light. Most responded that the NET took a role in co-planning and co-teaching with other English teachers and routinely discussed curriculum content with the English Panel. However, only half of the NETs and approximately 70% of the local teachers reported that co-teaching and co-planning were in regular practice at their school. Collaboration between teachers had been identified as a strong influence on student language outcomes in an earlier evaluation of the NET Scheme in Hong Kong primary schools (Griffin et al., 2006). Unlike that study, the current evaluation did not track student progress in English proficiency over time and so could not conclusions about relationships between teacher collaboration and student outcomes. Rather, survey respondents were asked about their perceptions and experiences of co-teaching, co-planning and collaboration between NETs and local teachers. Their responses are depicted in Figures 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4, and summarized as follows:

- In more than half of the schools, NETs and local teachers did not co-teach or, if they did, co-teaching took the form of the NET conducting the class while the local teacher assisted or worked on other classroom duties.
- In at least half of the schools, NETs and local teachers had relatively few opportunities to meet for the purpose of co-planning and collaboration.
- Meetings between NETs and local teachers were described as structured and targeted to establishment of learning objectives and teaching responsibilities in less than half of the schools.

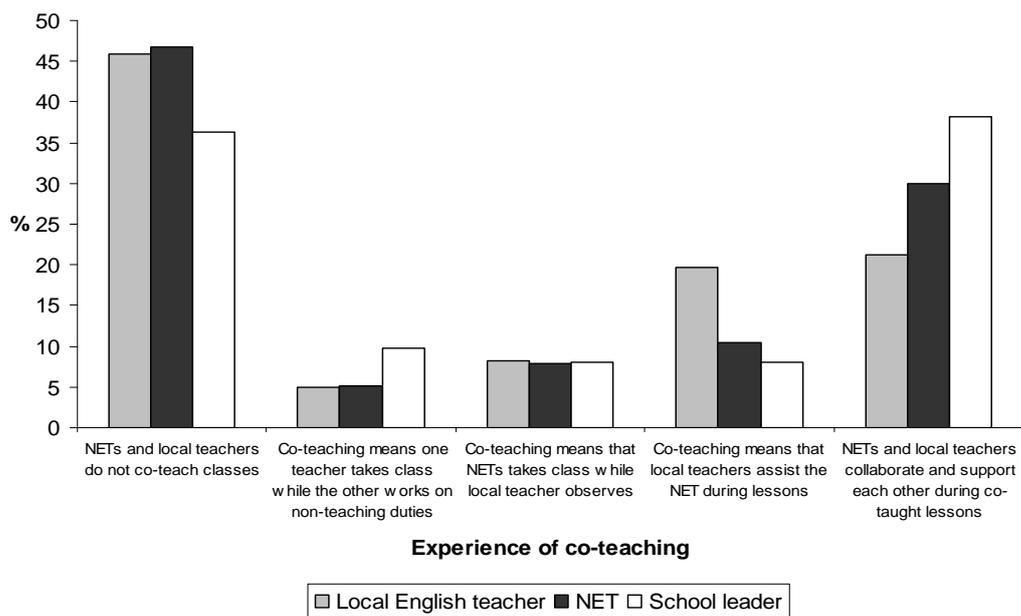


Figure 2.2. Perceptions of co-teaching between NETs and local English teachers.

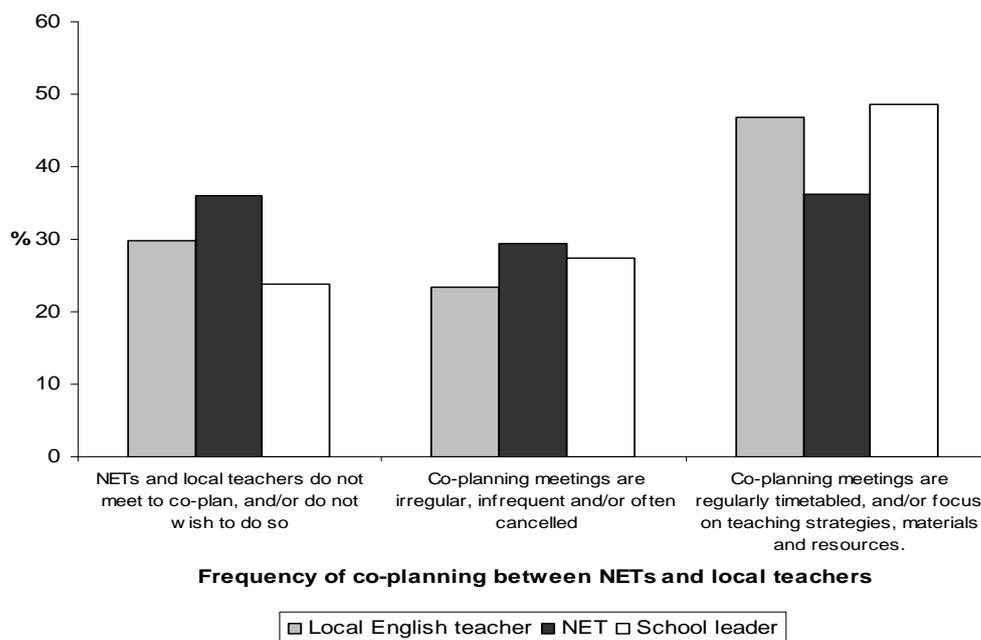


Figure 2.3. Perceptions of frequency of co-planning between NETs and local English teachers.

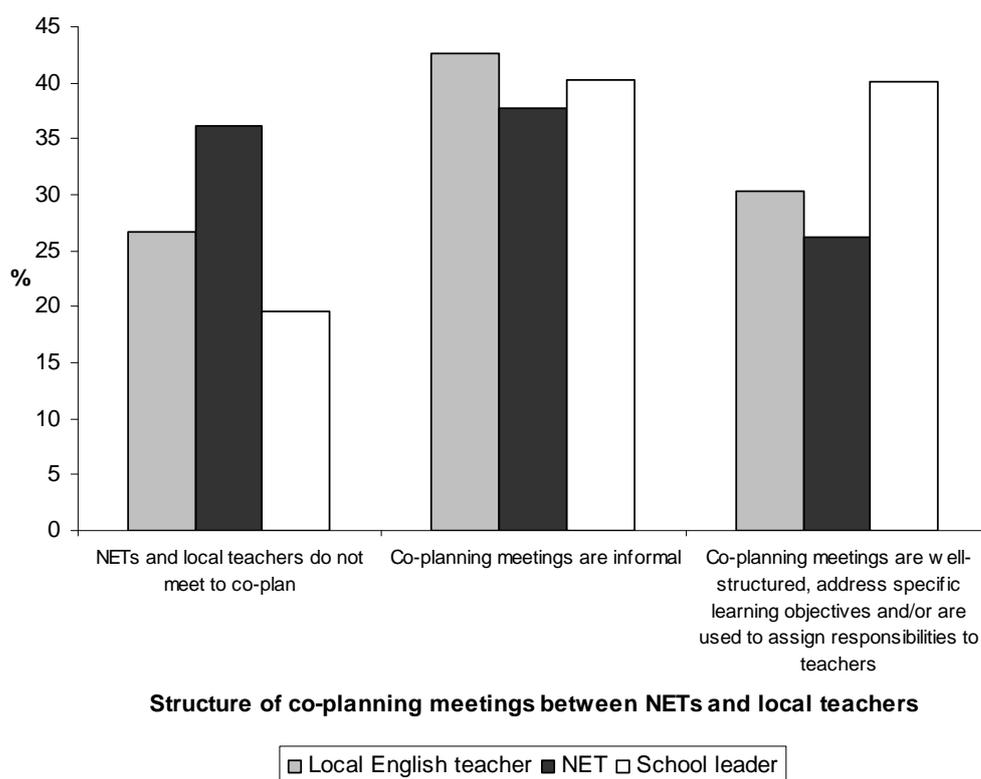


Figure 2.4. Perceptions of structure of co-planning meetings between NETs and local English teachers.

Comparison of patterns of response to these questions in schools of different Band level, medium of instruction or duration of NET deployment suggested that:

- Co-teaching between NETs and local English teachers was less prevalent in Band 1 EMI schools.
- There were no interpretable relationships between length of NET deployment and perceptions of co-teaching for either NETs or local teachers.
- Frequency/structure of co-planning meetings was not related to type of school context or length of time the NET had been deployed at the school.

Many NETs and local teachers reported that they sought informal opportunities to discuss student performance, lesson planning and the curriculum. Local teachers and NETs were quite similar in their assessment of the usefulness of their formal and informal meetings. Less than 20% of the local English teachers reported that they had not spent time discussing the English program with their NET or had found such discussions ineffective in terms of improving English teaching at the school. However, more NETs (26%) than local teachers (14%) indicated that they would welcome additional opportunities to meet and talk about matters related to English teaching at their schools.

2.2.2 NETs' Contributions to Oral Language Development

NETs were praised by many of the focus group participants for their capacity to bring a set of teaching skills to the school that differed from and complemented those of the local teachers. NETs were regarded as potential sources of information about teaching English through literature and drama, and were valued for their contributions to the oral language skills of

both students and teachers. Many (86%) of the local English teachers who responded to the surveys noted that they asked the NET for advice on English language use at least once or twice per school term, and 81% had asked the NET for advice on culture related to English. This was accorded high value by many of the local English teachers, 39% of whom described it as extremely useful to them while a further 13% described it as indispensable.

In response to survey questions probing the role of NETs as models of English language use, more than half of the school leaders (64%) and local teachers (56%) indicated that the NET at their school fulfilled this function by proofing school documents. Drafting and preparing school documents or hosting visitors were less frequently cited as examples of the NETs' contributions to language development. Less than 40% of local teachers responded that these activities were regularly undertaken by NETs at their school. The NETs reported that they also modeled the use of English by speaking at school assemblies and meetings, engaging teachers and students in conversation as often as possible, answering questions about pronunciation and grammar, organizing school involvement in drama and debating competitions and contributing to the design and production of bi-lingual materials.

2.2.3 Knowledge Transfer and Duration of NET Deployment

Several of the English Panel Chairs who attended the focus groups argued that potential for realizing the goals of the ENET Scheme was influenced by the experience of the NET and the length of time a NET had been deployed in Hong Kong. It was widely agreed that new NETs required at least six months to settle into the culture of a school and to gain the confidence of the English Panel. Accordingly, expectations about the role and contributions of NETs were re-examined, via analysis of the survey responses, to determine whether duration of NET deployment at a school was related to ideas about NET roles and contributions to knowledge transfer. The main points taken from these analyses are summarized below:

- NETs deployed at their school for two or more years were more likely than less experienced NETs to respond that they supported the teaching of other members of the English Panel, and suggested new ideas and strategies to other English teachers.
- Panel Chairs working with NETs who had been deployed for two or more years were more likely to report that their NET recommended teaching materials and resources to other teachers at the school.
- More local English teachers working with NETs who were relatively new to the school (i.e., first contract) reported that the NET discussed curriculum content and educational objectives with other Panel members. It is possible that NETs on their first contract were more likely than experienced NETs to seek the opinions and advice of other English teachers at their school.

While the NETs' contributions to knowledge transfer was described as an area of strength for the ENET Scheme, it was conceded by many of the focus group participants that the NET is often one teacher in a school that could have upwards of 80 staff and over 1000 students. It was generally agreed by the focus groups that the NET and the English Panel should ideally co-construct the English program, and that successful deployment of NETs must recognize the reciprocal professional relationships between NETs and local teachers.

2.2.4 Use of Resources and Strategies

NETs and local English teachers were surveyed about the strategies and resources they routinely used when teaching English, and asked to select the five activities that they

incorporated into their teaching practice most frequently. Their responses are shown in Table 2.3, ordered in terms of selection by the NETs. When required to select only resources and strategies that they used with high frequency, both NETs and local teachers displayed a strong tendency to favour those over which they, as individual teachers, exercised most control. Collaborative planning, co-teaching and advice, and materials or support from the English Panel figured very low on these lists. Many of the NETs and local teachers made frequent use of self-produced teaching materials, textbooks and worksheets. More NETs than local teachers used language arts materials (such as poems, plays and stories), internet resources and activities related to their specialized role in the oral English program. More local teachers than NETs used drills and practice sessions. It can also be seen that local teachers use more text based materials coupled with drill and practice and the NETs use more oral and participatory approaches. This may well be a defining difference between the two groups of teachers.

Table 2.3. *Teaching Strategies and Resources: NETs and Local English Teachers*

Teaching Resource/Strategy Frequently Used	NETs (% selected)	Local Teachers (% selected)
English materials self-produced	82.0	70.1
Spoken English activities (talks, plays, debates, presentations)	47.5	24.7
Textbooks	45.9	67.5
Language arts materials (stories, poems, plays,)	41.0	15.6
Worksheets	34.4	49.4
Opportunities for students to practice conversational English	34.4	14.3
Internet resources (e.g., YouTube)	27.9	13.0
Practice examination tasks	23.0	31.2
Media materials (newspapers, radio, television)	21.3	39.0
Multimedia materials (e.g., powerpoint presentations)	19.7	29.9
Homework	16.4	24.7
Ongoing assessment of students' production of English	13.1	10.4
Curriculum guides	13.1	3.9
Process writing (e.g., drafting, editing, polishing)	11.5	14.3
Co-teaching with other English teachers	9.8	..
Simulation of examinations	9.8	5.2
Phonics packages	6.6	3.9
Grouping based on learners' abilities	6.6	13.0
Co-planning with other English teachers	4.9	..
Teaching strategies learned from RNCT-conducted training	4.9	3.9
Drills and practice sessions	3.3	35.1
Teaching materials recommended by NET Section	3.3	..
Advice or support from English Panel members	3.3	..
Interactive multimedia materials in English	3.3	2.6
Portfolio assessment and feedback	3.3	1.3
Multimedia Learning Centre	1.6	6.5
Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with local teachers	1.6	..
Strategies learned from English Panel meetings	0.0	3.9
Language lab and equipment for recording student proficiency	0.0	0.0
Teaching materials recommended by the NET	..	5.2
Co-teaching with the NET	..	3.9
Co-planning with the NET	..	2.6
Advice or support from the NET	..	1.3
Ideas and methods from lessons co-taught with NET	..	0.0

Note: An entry of double dots (..) denotes that the question was not asked of either NETs or local teachers.

2.3 Role of the English Panel and the Panel Chair

2.3.1 Panel Chairs

School leaders (Principals and Panel Chairs) who responded to the surveys were asked to describe the role of the Panel Chair at their school, and all responded that this role included administrative tasks concerning the English program, monitoring the work of English teachers and supporting the deployment of the NET at the school. More than 90% of the leaders reported that the Panel Chair was also expected to ensure that all teachers followed curriculum guidelines, and to review evidence of teaching and learning success, set goals and objectives, monitor student progress and attitudes, organize extracurricular activities and programs and professional development designed to improve school conditions for English language studies, discuss the effectiveness of resources and strategies with Panel members, and ensure that all teachers knew how to use student assessment data to inform their teaching. In most survey schools, Panel Chairs took responsibility for the organization of time for NETs and local teachers to co-plan and for ensuring that the NET was integrated into the school community and the English program. Approximately two thirds of the school leaders responded that the Panel Chair encouraged members of the English Panel to challenge current methods for teaching English, and just over half indicated that the Panel Chair liaised with the RNCT or NET Section to support professional development of their English teaching staff. This was a strong endorsement of the role of the Panel Chair. Regardless of how thoroughly or how well these responsibilities were carried out by individuals, there was little doubt that most of the surveyed schools placed accountability for the success of their English program and NET deployment in the hands of their English Panel Chair.

Similarly, according to many of the focus group participants, the success of the ENET Scheme in schools is contingent upon the support provided to the NETs by their school leaders. It was pointed out that few NETs take leadership roles in their schools' English program and they cannot influence English teaching and learning practices without the overt support and guidance of their Panel Chair. One conclusion that could be drawn is that the ENET Scheme would benefit from provision of additional resources and professional development targeted to building the leadership capacity of the Panel Chairs.

The NET cluster meetings were praised by many focus group participants as a support structure and avenue for NETs to discuss problems and share examples of expectations and successes. However, it was suggested that there should be a similar set of network meetings for English Panel Chairs so that they too could learn from each other, and perhaps another set of meetings that combined Panel Chairs and NETs. This would acknowledge the leadership role taken by English Panel Chairs in schools, and provide structured opportunities for NETs and Panel Chairs to explore opportunities to improve the implementation of the ENET Scheme. Some of the focus group participants argued that the ENET Scheme was blocked by focusing too narrowly on NETs, rather than on the entire English program and the context in which NETs work. They suggested that NETs and Panel Chairs would benefit from opportunities to learn from each other and seek solutions to shared challenges.

2.3.2 Induction and Inclusion of NETs

In most schools, induction of a new NET and inclusion of the NET in the school community was regarded as the responsibility of the English Panel Chair. The importance of settling a new NET into the school as quickly and well as possible was discussed by several focus group participants, as new or inexperienced NETs were unlikely to be given opportunities to contribute to the English program until they had proven their worth.

NETs and local English teachers were surveyed about the procedures for induction of NETs at their schools. Their responses are illustrated below, and summarized as follows:

- In some schools, local teachers believed that the school had provided an induction program for the NET when this may not have been the case.
- Even when an induction program had been organized, local teachers often believed the NET had been given information about expectations of discipline and the roles of different staff members when the NET reported that this was not the case.
- In schools where local English teachers were prepared for the induction of a new NET, most of the local teachers reported that they had been given information about expectations of roles and responsibilities, collaboration and support strategies, but many of the NETs did not perceive that local teachers had access to this information.

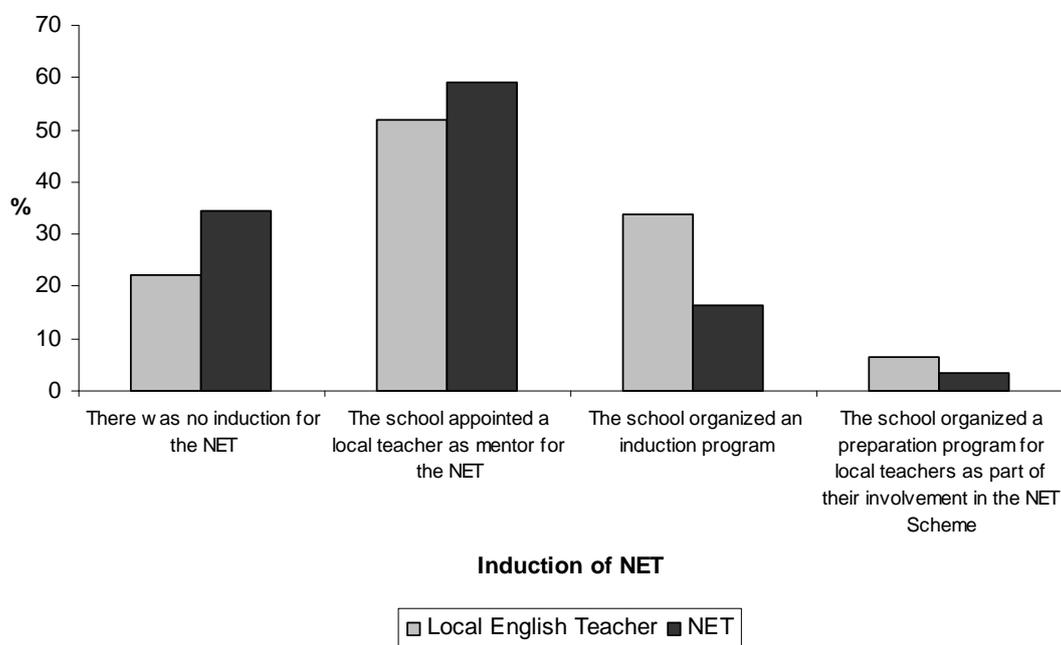


Figure 2.5. School-based activities to induct a NET.

Table 2.4. Scope of Induction Program for NETs

Topics included in the induction program for NETs	NETs (% agreed)	Local Teachers (% agreed)
School culture	63.3	87.3
Timetabling	70.3	70.4
School resources	63.3	80.3
Discipline in the school	43.3	69.0
Expectations of the NET	46.7	71.8
Expectations of the local English teachers	20.0	50.7
Expectations of the English Panel Chair	23.3	60.6

Table 2.5. *Scope of Information Program for Local Teachers*

Topics included in information programs for local teachers as part of the NET's induction	NETs (% agreed)	Local Teachers (% agreed)
NET's home country	15.8	29.7
Expectations of the NET	21.1	70.3
Expectations of local English teachers	21.1	62.5
Collaboration issues	31.6	79.7
Support strategies	42.1	75.0
NET's background and expertise	42.1	53.1

NETs and local teachers were also asked about the inclusion of the NET in the school community. Most were very positive about the efforts made by schools to help the NET to feel welcome. Indeed, more than 90% of NETs and local teachers reported that the NET was routinely placed in the staff room close to other members of the English Panel. More than half of the NETs and local teachers indicated that, at their school, NETs were encouraged to participate in and contribute to school events and, in some cases, to take part in all social events. It was unusual for local teachers or NETs to report that NETs were excluded from relevant school events. Indeed, this response was returned by the NET and local teacher at only one school. In both cases – the NET induction to the school and the local teachers' introduction to the NET – the local teachers have a far more positive impression of what was done than were the NETs. The ad hoc arrangement of the induction could well be standardized so that both parties have an equal expectation of what could be and was done to induct the NET and familiarize the local teachers to the role that the NET might be expected to play.

2.3.3 *English Panel Meetings*

All NETs and local English teachers reported that they regularly attended meetings of the English Panel at their schools. These meetings were held at least once per term in almost 70% of the schools, although Panel meetings were reported as more frequent in the EMI schools than CMI schools.

In most of the EMI and CMI schools, Panel meetings were conducted entirely in English. Approximately 20% of the NETs and local teachers reported that the meetings at their schools were conducted partly in Cantonese. Two of the local teachers and NETs reported that English was not used during meetings of the English Panel at their schools.

NETs and local English teachers were asked about the items that were regularly placed on the agenda for English Panel meetings, and their answers are summarized in Table 2.6. There were no systematic differences in response patterns on the basis of medium of instruction or Band level of schools.

Table 2.6. *Agenda Items for English Panel Meetings*

Which of the following agenda items are regularly included for English Panel meetings?	NETs (% agree)	Local Teachers (% agree)
Review of student assessment data	73.8	81.5
Review of evidence of teaching and learning success	64.6	75.3
Setting goals and objectives for student learning	64.6	67.9
Plans for sharing resources and teaching strategies	53.8	77.8
Review of professional development requirements and opportunities	41.5	45.7
There is no fixed agenda	15.4	9.9

Most survey respondents reported that Panel meetings provided opportunities to discuss student outcomes and to set goals for student learning. More local teachers than NETs regarded the meetings as an avenue for sharing resources and teaching strategies, and less than half of the NETs and local teachers regarded Panel meetings as a time in which professional development could be discussed and planned. The perceptions of the local teachers and the NETs are more aligned in this aspect than in previous data analyses above.

In general, local English teachers were more positive than NETs about the impact of the Panel meetings on English teaching at the school. This is illustrated in Figure 2.6.

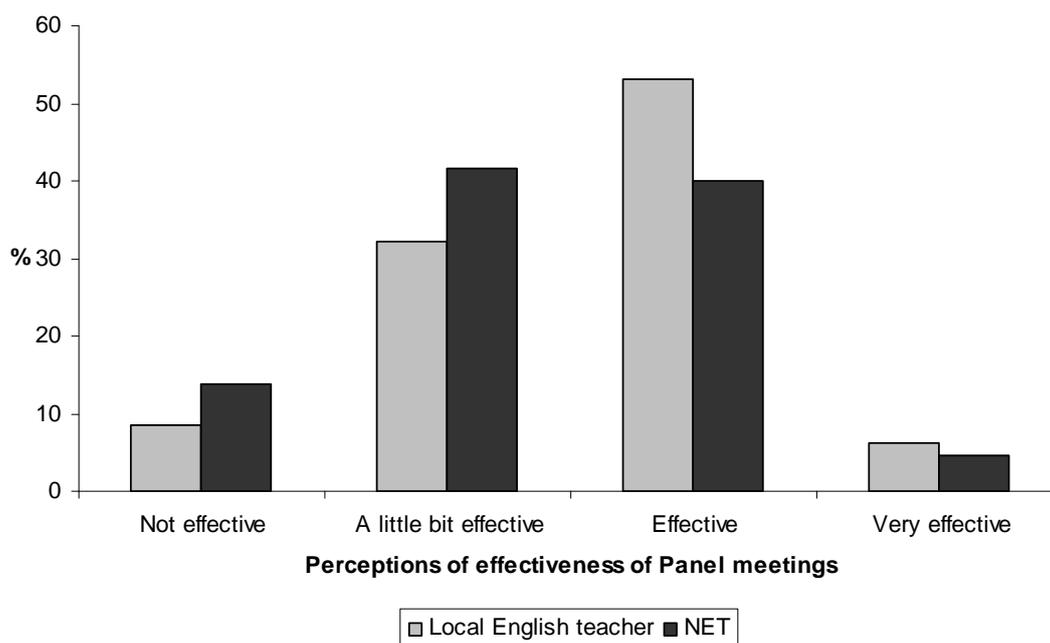


Figure 2.6. Perceived effectiveness of English Panel meetings in terms of improving English teaching at the school.

Most of the NETs and local English teachers received feedback and advice on their teaching from their English Panel Chair at least once per year, and many described this as quite helpful for their teaching practice. However, as shown in Figure 2.7, more local teachers than NETs responded in positive terms about the effectiveness of their Panel Chairs' input and advice.

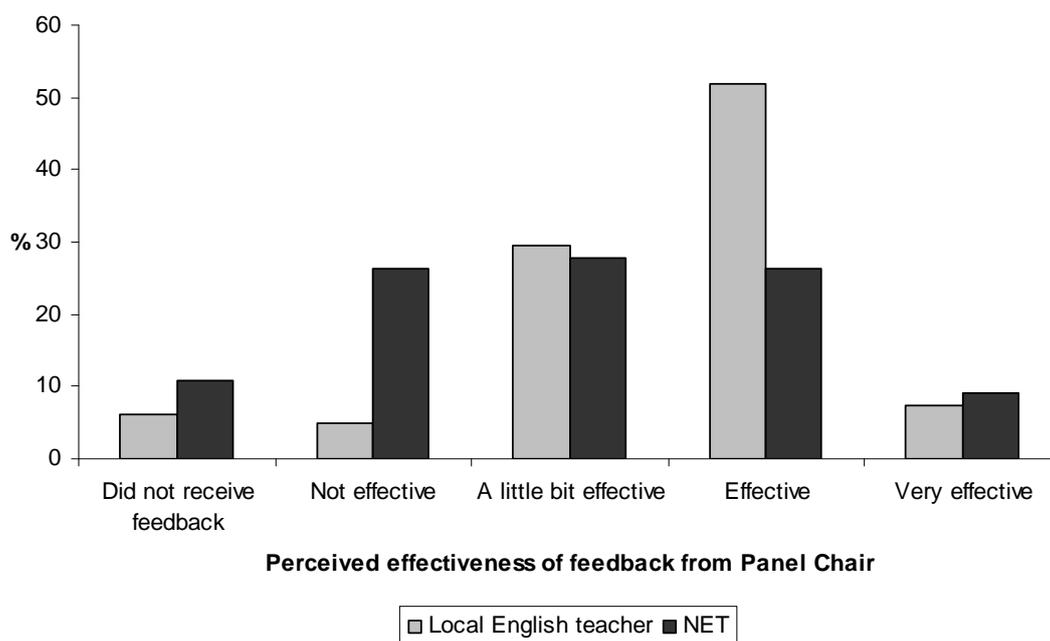


Figure 2.7. Perceived effectiveness of advice from English Panel Chair in terms of improving English teaching at the school.

Some of the NETs and most local English teachers received feedback from other teachers on the English Panel about their teaching practice and, as shown in Figure 2.8, local teachers in particular regarded such feedback as useful to them.

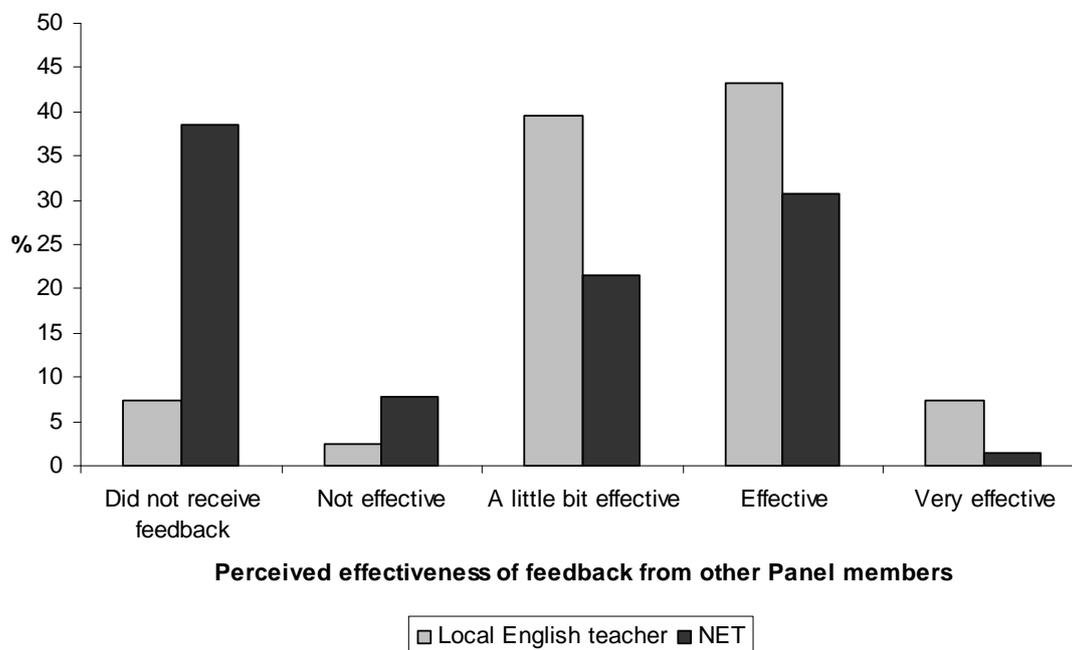


Figure 2.8. Perceived effectiveness of advice from other English Panel members in terms of improving English teaching at the school.

Local teachers and NETs were asked whether they would like to make changes to their English Panel and, if so, what form those changes would take. The implications of their comments are discussed in more detail in the Chapter 5. In brief, local English teachers responded that they would like English Panel meetings to focus on:

- discussion of successful teaching strategies and resources;
- collaboration between teachers;
- linking teaching strategies to student outcomes;
- differentiation of strategies to suit student ability level; and
- review of strategies and outcomes.

Similarly, the NETs responded that they would like English Panel meetings to emphasize:

- clear objectives for the English program;
- shared decision-making by all teachers;
- discussion of successful strategies and programs;
- professional development needs and opportunities for teachers; and
- strategies for dealing with problems, reporting back on outcomes and making sure that initiatives are adopted.

Both groups are concerned about pedagogy and the possibility of matching teaching to the learning needs of students. Where this is difficult, the Panel meetings are expected to identify professional development needs. The differences where they existed showed that local teachers are more concerned with student achievement results and the NETs focused on structure and process. Several of the NETs suggested that smaller group meetings of teachers who were working with students of similar year levels were of more practical assistance than formal meetings of the full English Panel. Some NETs reported that Panel meetings at their schools were very well organized and structured, while others were rather critical of the meetings at their schools.

NETs were asked about their perceptions of their own contributions to the English Panel. More than half replied that they provided advice and ideas to their English Panel Chair and to other Panel members at least once per month, and most believed that this was quite effective in terms of improving English teaching at the school.

Local English teachers were asked about the contributions that the NET at their school made to English Panel meetings. Almost all teachers made very positive comments, praising the NETs' capacity to bring new and interesting ideas to the Panel. A few of the teachers noted that the NET was sometimes rather critical of colleagues, and a few others responded that the NET at their schools did not make a contribution to the Panel. In brief, many of the local teachers responded that the NETs:

- offer objective opinions and provide useful and innovative solutions to problems;
- prepare teaching materials that are creative and interesting for students;
- share their expertise and offer many new ideas;
- recommend useful programs and strategies;
- suggest ways to improve the syllabus and assess student progress;
- report on their own activities in terms of enriching the language environment and improving student skills;
- take minutes of the meetings;
- act as 'walking dictionaries'; and
- share their experience of teaching in their home countries.

2.4 Systemic Innovations and Programs

2.4.1 Expectations of Impact of New Senior Secondary Curriculum

In focus group discussions, members of the NET Section management team suggested that implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum would inevitably shape the direction taken by the ENET Scheme. It was noted that the NSS Curriculum requires teachers to have competence in teaching English through media, language arts, themes, sports and social issues. The NETs' skills and training in these aspects of English teaching were expected to be a resource upon which schools could draw during the transition to the new curriculum. Some school leaders who took part in focus groups were concerned that NETs might not understand how to transfer their knowledge and understanding in these areas to the local teachers, and suggested that NETs would benefit from professional development to support them in this role.

School leaders, NETs and local teachers were surveyed about their understanding of the likely impact of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum. Their responses are shown in Table 2.7.

Table 2.7. *Expectations of the Impact of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum*

Expectations of impact of NSS curriculum	School Leaders (% agree)	NETs (% agree)	Local Teachers (% agree)
The NET will be used as an expert in terms of the emphasis of the NSS Curriculum	22.7	22.7	40.0
The NET will be a source of expertise in criterion referenced assessment	30.0	35.0	37.8
The NET will help with the language arts emphasis of the NSS Curriculum	74.5	82.0	74.7
The NSS curriculum will affect teaching because of the shift to criterion referencing	70.9	41.0	48.0
The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education will still dominate teaching after the NSS Curriculum is implemented	98.2	81.7	86.7
The NSS Curriculum will not affect the way that senior forms are taught	22.7	28.3	20.0
The NSS Curriculum will demand more time and resources	95.5	65.0	96.0
Tailored teaching will become an important aspect of the NSS Curriculum	95.5	78.3	97.3
The NSS Curriculum will make me change my teaching approach	85.3	43.1	88.0

- Most survey respondents expected that the new curriculum would hold implications for the way that senior forms were taught, but most also believed that this would not lessen the impact of the examinations on English language teaching.
- While most school leaders, NETs and local teachers expected that the NET would be able to assist with the language arts components of the new curriculum, less than half of the respondents expected that NET would be expected to take leadership roles as schools adjusted to the new curriculum.
- Most local teachers and school leaders recognized that the new curriculum would require a change in their approach to teaching English, but less than half of the NETs expected this to be the case for them. Many of the NETs routinely incorporated language arts activities and resources into their current teaching programs.

School leaders and local teachers had higher expectations of the NET with respect to the impact of the NSS curriculum on teaching practices. NETs did not generally regard this as affecting their teaching where as the local teachers did. There was agreement that the effect on a school curriculum and assessment practices however would be slight. If the effect on curriculum and assessment was to be slight, it is unlikely that teaching would be affected in the longer term.

2.4.2 *Impact of Examinations*

The NET Section management team expected the ENET Scheme to be influenced by decisions taken by the Hong Kong Examinations Authority. Examinations will take place at the end of the sixth year of secondary school in the new 3, 3, 4 system. The present S5 and S7 examinations will be replaced by a single examination at S6 that places emphasis upon English proficiency.

However, a shift in the emphasis of the examinations was not expected to alter the pressures placed on schools by concern about exam performance. Many of the focus group participants argued that NETs must make positive contributions to students' examination outcomes if they are to be highly valued by schools, parents and students.

Several focus group participants argued that it was unlikely that the shift in emphasis of the examinations towards criterion referenced assessment would be understood by many schools or the wider Hong Kong community, at least in the shorter term. However, it was acknowledged that the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) in S3 was likely to help with the transition because it incorporated school-based assessment and was reported using a standards referenced framework. This impact of the standards referenced framework however was not discernable at this stage.

However, the Principals' focus groups expressed optimism that, as the levels of language proficiency monitored by the examinations become familiar to both local teachers and NETs, ways of teaching language to move students from one level to another in a standards referenced framework would become better understood and student outcomes would improve. Support for schools and teachers, as they come to terms with these transitions in thinking about teaching and learning English, would be a timely contribution from the ENET Scheme.

Most focus group participants mentioned the examination system as a strong influence on the ENET Scheme. It was noted that students and teachers recognize exams as a way of making explicit the knowledge privileged as most important in the curriculum. At present, the examination is interpreted by many teachers as dictating that structures of grammar and drilled and rote-learned language are the most important parts of the English curriculum in Hong Kong. This is consistent with the emphasis of the local teachers on drill and practice using text based materials compared to the participative approach and oral interactions used by the NETs.

2.4.3 *NET Section Guidelines*

Several of the focus group participants suggested that the goals of the ENET Scheme should be more clearly articulated by the NET Section so that they are well understood by all stakeholders. It was argued that deployment guidelines linked to those goals should be established and disseminated. The focus group discussions pointed to a situation in which many school-based stakeholders in the ENET Scheme expressed uncertainty about the

optimal role of a NET and expectations of schools in which NETs were deployed. To check these impressions, school leaders, NETs and local teachers were surveyed about their understanding of the guidelines for NET deployment. While almost all of the NETs reported that they were aware of the deployment guidelines, 11% of school leaders and almost 70% of local teachers responded that they were unsure about this information. It might be argued that local teachers do not need to understand the guidelines for NET deployment in order to work effectively with the NET at their school. However, it was a matter of concern that some of the English Panel Chairs and Principals admitted to being unaware of the guidelines laid down for NET deployment.

2.4.4 Training Programs and the Regional NET Coordinating Team

The NETs who participated in the focus groups welcomed the guidance of the NET Section and the Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT). Many spoke of their support for an expansion of the activities of the team. In particular, it was noted that the NET Section's Advisory Teachers play a respected and valued role in the NET Scheme in primary schools, and their contributions to that Scheme could be used as a basis upon which the RNCT could build.

NETs and local English teachers were surveyed about their experience of training programs, professional development and workshops, including those provided by the RNCT and by external service providers. They were asked about their attendance at such courses, and their perception of the effectiveness of the courses in terms of improving their English teaching. Their responses to questions about the RNCT-provided workshops and courses are shown in Figures 2.9 to 2.11.

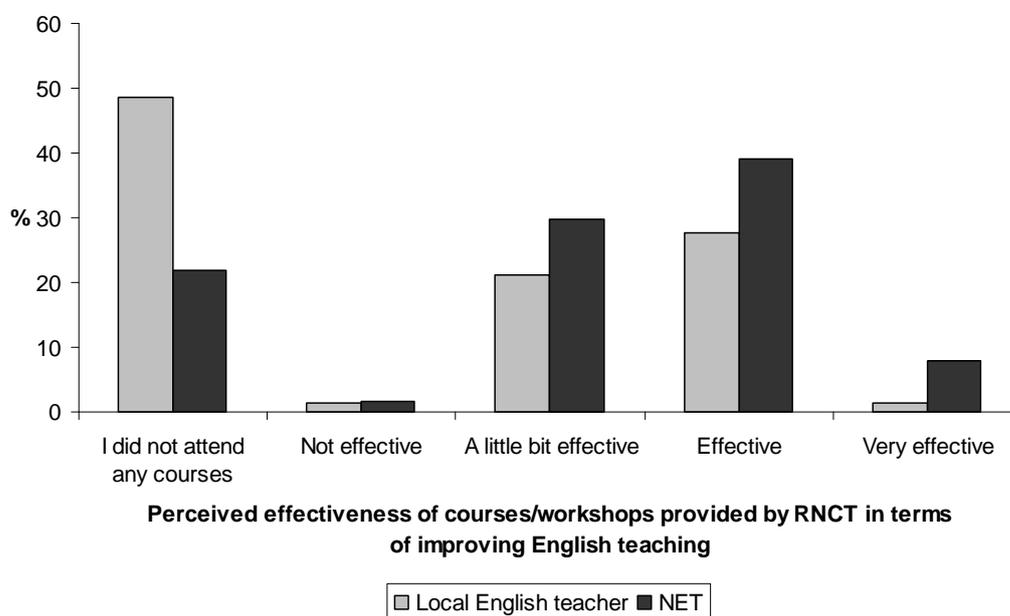


Figure 2.9. Perceived effectiveness of professional development courses/workshops provided by the RNCT.

Figure 2.9 illustrates an encouraging outcome for the RNCT. It was an indication that, in general, the teachers who had been able to attend professional development courses or workshops considered them to be useful and to have practical application to English teaching at their school. To expand upon these ideas, NETs and local teachers were asked whether they

had been able to use or share ideas and information gathered from these courses with other English teachers at their schools. Their responses are illustrated in Figures 2.9 and 2.10.

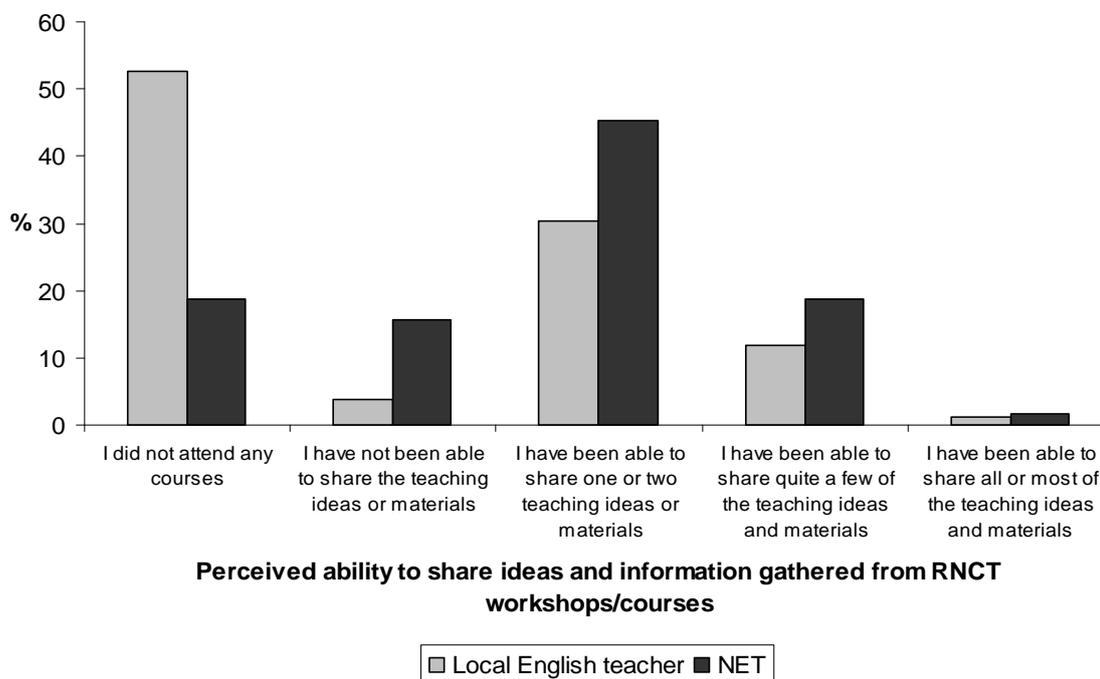


Figure 2.10. Perceived ability to share ideas and information from professional development courses/workshops provided by the RNCT.

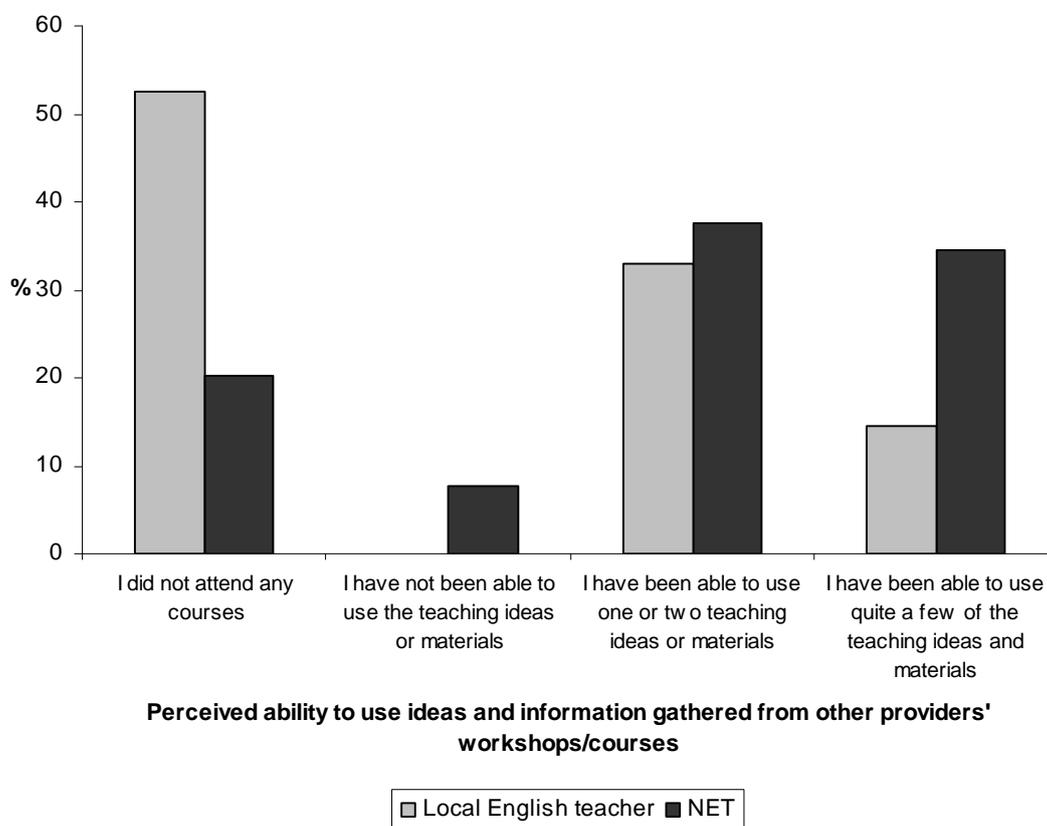


Figure 2.11. Perceived ability to use ideas and information from professional development courses/workshops provided by the RNCT.

The patterns of teacher response illustrated in Figures 2.9 to 2.11 suggest that:

- Teachers who were able to attend professional development courses or workshops run by the RNCT considered them to be useful and pertinent for their practice as English teachers.
- However, many teachers indicated that they had limited opportunities to share the information gained from courses with other teachers at their schools. If professional development courses and workshops are to be a successful channel for the dissemination of new ideas and resources, schools should be encouraged to provide teachers with opportunities to share and discuss ideas. This could be included as part of the agenda for meetings of the English Panel.

NETs and local English teachers were asked to nominate the most effective strategy for teaching English that they learned from RNCT-provided courses or workshops, and the evidence they used to support their judgment of the strategy's effectiveness. In most cases, the evidence cited by local English teachers related to student interest and enjoyment, although some teachers referred to their use of formative assessment strategies and to positive impact on student test results and to opportunities to share ideas with other teachers.

The strategies nominated as most effective by local English teachers included use of:

- activity-based materials;
- portfolios;
- games and activities;
- role play activities;
- songs;
- debating and public speaking;
- task-based learning;
- mind maps and brainstorming;
- multimedia;
- cooperative learning;
- action plans for improvement of students' reading strategies;
- techniques for recognizing different types of text and their structure;
- authentic teaching materials;
- techniques for teaching phonics in an enjoyable way;
- teaching methods designed to cater for students with special needs;
- rubrics for oral assessment; and
- criterion-referenced assessment.

Strategies nominated as most effective by the NETs included use of:

- motivational games, activities and internet materials;
- interesting ways to introduce poems, songs and drama activities;
- ideas to motivate passive students in the context of large classrooms;
- tailoring materials for reading and writing to suit student needs;
- functional grammar;
- process writing;
- integration of phonics into all areas of English teaching; and
- ideas specifically related to teaching English as a second or foreign language.

A small number of NETs reported that they could not attend meetings, workshops or courses that were held during class time because it would mean that their students missed lessons. Some were concerned that the strategies presented in the workshops were too challenging for their students and expressed interest in teaching strategies tailored to the needs of students who were struggling to learn English. Others commented that they valued the materials distributed during the workshops, and several reported that they found it useful to learn more about the NSS Curriculum. Quite a few of the NETs reported that the strategies and information presented in the RNCT workshops were familiar to them, but that they appreciated access to new and interesting materials to support these teaching strategies.

The NETs wrote about the usefulness of the strategies in terms of improvements in student attitude, participation and interest in classroom and extracurricular English activities. They welcomed opportunities to work with other NETs and to share information and ideas, several were pleased with the responses of colleagues on the English Panel when they took the strategies back to their schools, and others wrote about their observations of improved student performance in reading and writing activities. A very common observation by the NETs was that the strategies were practical, well-designed and easily transferred to their classroom practice.

Responses to questions about courses related to English teaching that were run by service providers other than the RNCT are shown in Figures 2.12 to 2.14.

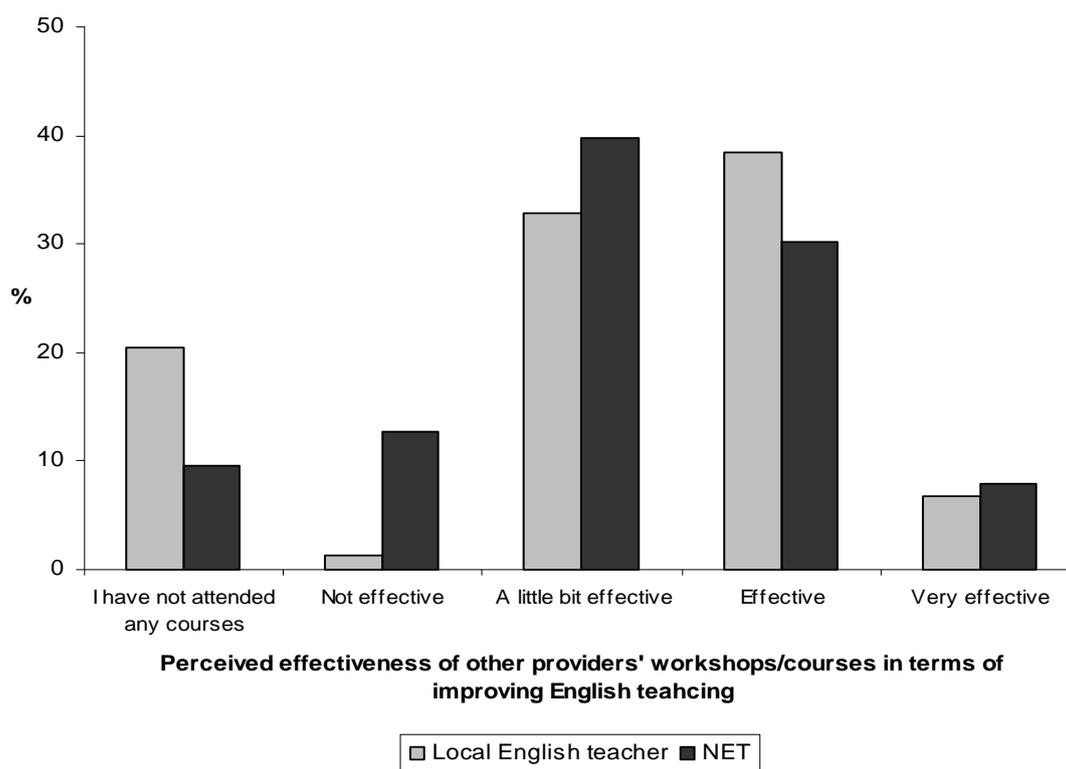


Figure 2.12. Perceived effectiveness of other providers' professional development courses/workshops.

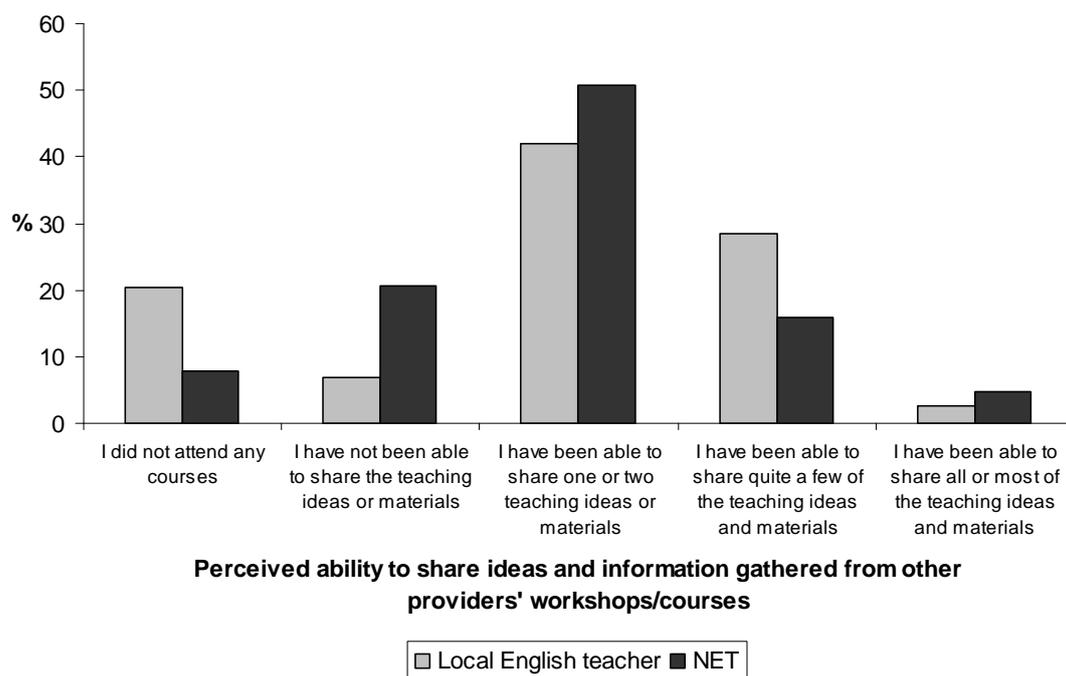


Figure 2.13. Perceived ability to share ideas and information from other providers' professional development courses/workshops.

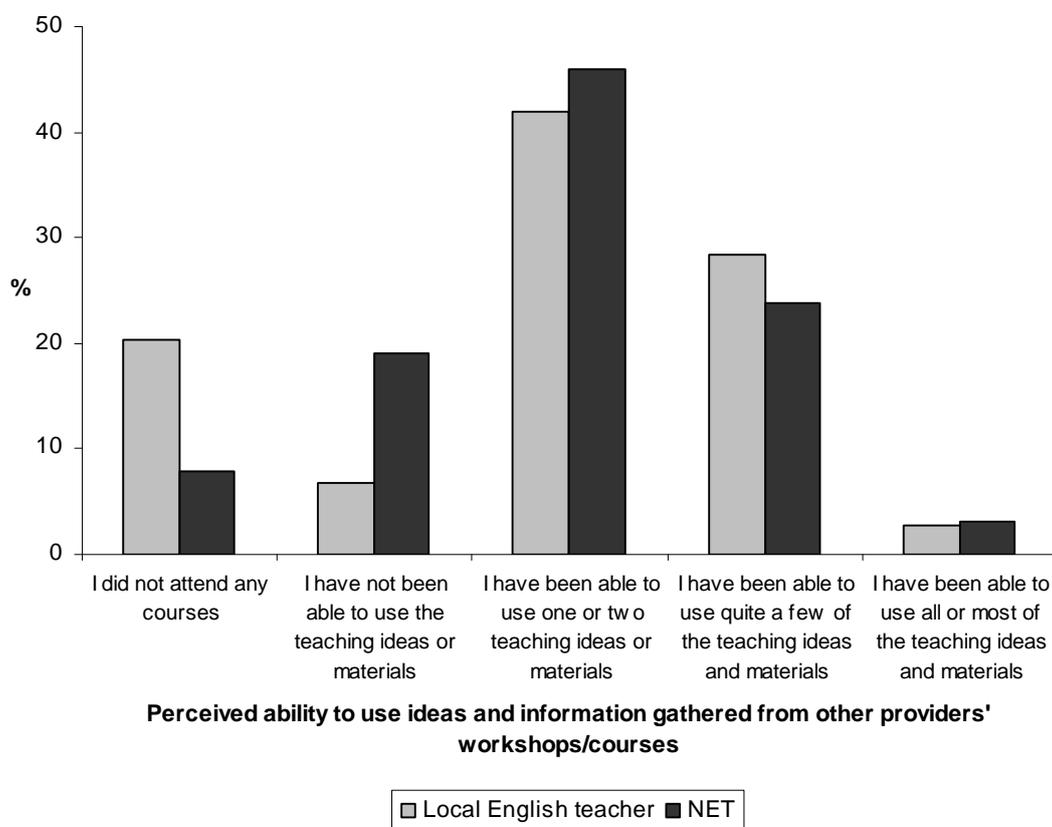


Figure 2.14. Perceived ability to use ideas and information from other providers' professional development courses/workshops.

Patterns of teacher response illustrated in Figures 2.12 to 2.14 suggest that:

- Approximately 20% of the NETs responded that they had not been able to use any of the teaching ideas or strategies from these courses/workshops and more than 10% of the NETs perceived these courses and workshops as ineffective in terms of improving English teaching at their school. These negative reports were more prevalent for the courses provided by other service providers than for RNCT-led courses.
- In similar fashion to the RNCT-led courses and workshops, the teachers reported that they had limited opportunities to share information and materials gathered from courses with their colleagues.

Local teachers and NETs were asked about the most effective strategies for teaching English learned from the courses led by providers other than the RNCT, and the evidence upon which they based their judgment of effectiveness. Evidence cited by the local teachers included improvements in students' willingness and ability to participate in classroom activities, access to new materials and enhancement of their confidence as English teachers. A diverse range of strategies gained from these workshops were nominated as effective by local English teachers, including use of:

- classroom management to permit group and pair work
- tailoring teaching to student ability
- strategies to improve student participation
- methods for teaching phonetics
- development of a learning progression framework
- methods for the development of higher order thinking skills
- methods to cater for learner diversity
- adaptation of teaching materials from authentic resources (e.g., films, television)
- drama and story writing activities
- methods to enhance interaction between teachers and students
- peer collaboration
- information about the NSS Curriculum, and in particular information about teaching language arts content
- use of drama in teaching
- task-based learning
- mind maps and brainstorming
- multimedia to teach English

Strategies nominated as most effective by the NETs included use of:

- ideas for working within an examination-driven education system
- methods for evaluation of school-based assessment tasks, including portfolio assessment
- methods to ensure that teaching materials are targeted to the needs of second language learners at different levels of proficiency
- creative use of games, poetry, songs, story telling, debating and drama
- methods for motivating passive students in large classes
- methods for teaching genre writing
- computers and online resources in the classroom
- classroom management to promote small group work
- ways to establish an active English Corner
- ideas for extracurricular and enrichment activities

Some of the NETs reported that the courses and workshops did not provide information appropriate for students of lower ability levels, while others perceived them as avenues for propagation of expectations about student assessment. Several of the NETs wrote that they valued the courses and workshops primarily for the opportunities they provided to form professional bonds with the local English teachers at their schools or for the materials and resources that were distributed. Some commented that their role in the school did not include classroom teaching, and so the courses were of little practical use to them.

Many of the NETs reported that they evaluated these strategies in terms of their practical application in the classroom and impact on student interest and participation. Several others cited evidence of their students' successful participation in competitions, student production of films, screenplays and other creative activities, and improvements in students' oral language proficiency.

2.5 Attitudes of School Leaders, NETs and Local English Teachers

School leaders, NETs and local English teachers were surveyed about their attitudes and beliefs about English teaching at their schools and in Hong Kong, and their overall perceptions of the contribution of the NET to English teaching and, where appropriate, attitudes to working with a NET. Their responses were clustered² to reveal common patterns and groupings, and are reported below.

2.5.1 Beliefs about English Teaching

The school leaders, NETs and local teachers were unanimous in their assertion of the value and importance of English proficiency for all Hong Kong students. All of the local teachers expressed a strong commitment to their role in the English program and their interest in developing their skills and knowledge as English teachers. A very high proportion of school leaders and local teachers also believed that every teacher in the school should attempt to help students with their English, although not all believed that English proficiency should be required of all teachers. More than 90% of NETs indicated that they believed all students could learn English and almost as many concurred that it was important for all students to improve their English.

Almost all of the NETs expressed their interest in learning new strategies and ideas to improve their English teaching, and their commitment to improving English teaching at their school. Many also indicated their willingness to try out teaching ideas suggested to them by the local English teachers at their school, and recorded their readiness to help other teachers practise their English. However, only half of the NETs reported that they regularly made time to co-plan with the other members of the English Panel although 90% responded that they would like to work in collaboration with other English teachers at their school.

2.5.2 Perceptions of the NET: School Leaders and Local Teachers

School leaders could be divided into two groups in terms of their ideas about NET deployment. Across both groups, school leaders expected the NET and local teachers at their school to work in close collaboration. One large group, comprising almost 70% of the school leaders, expressed very high expectations of their NETs. More Principals than Panel Chairs belonged to this very positive group. These school leaders reported that the NET made a

² Survey responses were analysed using Ward's method for hierarchical agglomerative cluster analysis.

valuable contribution to English teaching at their school and to the English Panel, and expressed their belief that the local English teachers were learning a good deal about English teaching through their involvement with the ENET Scheme.

A second, smaller group of school leaders expected the NET to follow English Panel guidelines and to work productively with other English teachers, but did not look to the NET for specialized knowledge about teaching English. These attitudes were not related to school context, such as medium of instruction or Band level of students, or to the qualifications or experience of the NET.

Almost all of the local teachers responded that they had a positive professional relationship with the NET at their school and complied with their English Panel's requirements in terms of working with the NET. Similarly, almost all responded that local teachers should help the NETs to learn about teaching English to Hong Kong students. Very few local teachers indicated that they believed it was a waste of resources to deploy a NET at their school or that they did not wish to work with a NET and could not find time to do so.

In general, the local teachers could be divided into two groups in terms of their attitudes to the NET. The largest of these groups, comprising more than two thirds of the local teachers, expressed very positive perceptions of the NET at their school and responded that the NET made a valuable contribution to their own teaching and to the English Panel. Many members of this group responded that they believed every school should have a NET to improve English proficiency in Hong Kong. Many reported that they were learning a great deal about English teaching through their school's involvement with the ENET Scheme.

The second and smaller group of local teachers reported that, although they enjoyed working with a NET, they preferred to work with other local English teachers and, in the main, did not expect the NET to contribute to their own classroom practice or understanding of English teaching. For these teachers, the NET was not regarded as a source of expertise or information about English teaching, but rather as a colleague on the English Panel.

There were no relationships between teacher attitude to working with a NET and the duration of NET deployment, experience or qualifications of the NET or the school context in terms of medium of instruction or student Band level. However, local teachers who were themselves more highly qualified (i.e., who were qualified at Bachelor's degree level or higher) were more likely than other teachers to express very positive attitudes towards working with the NET at their school.

3. Deployment Strategies in Different School Contexts

School Principals volunteered interest in their school being visited as part of the evaluation of the ENET Scheme, and nine schools were chosen to represent different contexts for deployment of NETs. Thus, schools were chosen to represent school diversity in medium of instruction (English or mother tongue) and academic Band levels of students. Schools were also drawn from different geographic regions of Hong Kong, and chosen to include schools with different durations of deployment for the current NET. Detailed descriptions of each of the schools, and the deployment strategies for their NETs, are included as Appendix B.

The visits provided descriptions of the ways in which the ENET Scheme operated in different types of schools. Their purpose was to provide an overview of the activities typically performed by NETs and the interactions between NETs and other teachers in the English program. With the support of the Principal in each school, the visits included interviews with NETs, Principals, English Panel Chairs, local English teachers and students and, in some cases, observation of lessons taught by NETs or co-taught by NETs and local English teachers.

The main purpose of the visits was to examine the use of, and contributions to, resources made by the NETs in different school contexts, and to address the following questions:

- How does the NET interact with and influence the staff and students in the school and affect the human resources of the English Panel?
- How are materials and facilities at the school focused on the improvement of English language, and what is the NET's impact on this?
- How is the language program in the school influenced by the NET?

During the focus groups, medium of instruction and ability Band level of students had been identified as important influences on the optimal deployment of NETs. The visits to schools confirmed this, at least to some extent. NETs working in EMI schools with mainly Band 1 students acted as teachers of English within a team of colleagues with similar skills and experience. The roles of NETs in CMI schools were more varied, and tended to be contingent on the skills and experience of the NET. It could be argued that NETs in CMI schools with mainly Band 3 students might be best deployed as specialist teachers. In this context, a NET may benefit from a background, training or experience in teaching English as a Foreign or Second language and possibly some remedial teaching. A NET in a CMI school with mainly Band 2 students fits somewhere between these two extremes, and may be deployed in quite different ways to suit both the NET's own skills and experiences and the needs of the school community.

3.1 *Human Resources*

Schools had devised quite different patterns of deployment for their NETs and, in many cases, these were justified by school leaders on the grounds that they suited the particular strengths and interests of the NET, rather than being explicitly tied to the needs of the students. In all schools, NETs were described as a scarce resource and the loss of a NET was seen as a negative event for the school. Locating a suitable NET, settling a new NET into the school, retaining the services of the NET, and managing the relationships between NETs and local teachers were described by Principals and Panel Chairs as demanding tasks. Having a NET at the school was seen as an imperative for all schools, predominantly because of the impact on parent confidence in the English program. Several Principals were concerned that, without a NET on staff, they would not be able to maintain enrolment numbers. So, ensuring that the NET was satisfied with the deployment strategy was seen as an important component of

retaining the services of the NET. From a human resources standpoint, it was also recognized that individual NETs brought their own particular skills, training and interests to the school and school leaders took time to understand what these were and to capitalize on them. In general, NETs were deployed in one of the following ways:

- As an ordinary member of the English Panel, taking the same role as a local English teacher including number of classes taught, administrative and marking duties, responsibility for examination-level classes, and contribution to the English program. This deployment pattern was sometimes observed in EMI and CMI schools where the NET had been working for several years and had won the confidence of the Principal and Panel Chair. NETs were unlikely to be given responsibility for preparing students for examinations unless they had achieved a level of esteem within the English Panel, and this took time and consistent, diligent demonstration of their capacity as teachers by the NETs. This deployment strategy was also observed in schools where the Principal was concerned to protect perceptions of parity between local teachers and the NET. It was a strategy suited to NETs working in EMI schools, where the other English teachers were likely to be quite similar to the NET in skills and experience.
- In a mixed role, where the NET taught some (often Junior Form) classes and took responsibility for oral classes across several levels. In some schools, the NET was assigned to classes with the more able students because these students were expected to be able to gain most advantage from working with a NET. In other schools, this strategy was adopted because of concerns that NETs could not cope with discipline problems in more challenging classes.
- Across all year levels to teach oral language classes only. This strategy had been tried and rejected in several schools, because it meant that the NET did not have an opportunity to get to know any of the students. It was seen as a threat to the job satisfaction of the NET, which might in turn lead to the loss of the NET. However, it was a pattern chosen by other schools to provide as many students as possible with opportunities to work with the NET. These were schools where it was seen as important to differentiate clearly between the sort of contribution expected by a NET and the role and responsibilities assigned to the local teachers. In these schools, the NET was treated as a resource additional to the local teachers, to be deployed for enrichment and extracurricular programs.

3.1.1 Impact on Teachers

Many of the local English teachers welcomed opportunities to learn new ideas from NETs, but expressed regret that it was often difficult to find time to do this. Co-teaching or peer observation were methods used in some schools to allow local teachers to learn from NETs and NETs to learn from local teachers. However, as one teacher pointed out, co-teaching often took the form of the NET leading the class and the local teacher helping to maintain discipline. It was an opportunity to observe the NET but not really to co-teach or to work together to plan a lesson and understand why the lesson should be organized in that manner.

Only one of the visited schools articulated a plan designed to allow NETs and local teachers to collaborate. In this school, the Principal asserted that the NET needed to be treated as a specialist teacher, in addition to the Panel's allocation of English teachers, and funding was available for this to be realized. This deployment strategy enabled the notion of partnership teaching to be used extensively throughout the school. The NET worked with a local teacher for two months at a time. After a two-month period of partnership teaching, the NET moved to work with another teacher.

Most schools placed emphasis upon informal, rather than structured or timetabled, opportunities for NETs to interact with local teachers. NETs were often provided with space close to the Panel Chair or other members of the English Panel in staff rooms and, in the main, they were warmly welcomed into the life of the school. Some of the NETs related narratives of less positive experiences in previous schools, and spoke about experiences of alienation and loneliness in those schools. Some of the Principals and Panel Chairs talked about their concern to make sure that the NET was not isolated within the school community. Most valued the contribution of the NET, and were anxious not only to ensure that the NET was happy at the school but also to create harmonious and supportive relationships between the NET and other teachers at the school.

It was unusual for a NET to be given a leadership role in the school, or to be expected to take responsibility for the professional development of other teachers. These were the roles of the English Panel Chair. Several schools expressed concern about giving leadership roles to the NETs as they were seen as temporary visitors to the schools, who might leave at any time. Even when a NET had been deployed for an extended period of time at one school, his opportunities to provide other teachers with new ideas and strategies came under the control and direction of the English Panel Chair. In many schools, collaboration with the local teachers was facilitated by the expertise and confidence of the Panel Chair. If the Panel Chair had good coordination skills and was able to assist the NET, collaboration between NETs and local teachers was generally more successful.

In some schools, teachers had started planning for the implementation of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum and saw the NET as a potential source of information about how to teach the language arts component of the curriculum. Many, however, were cautious about incorporating new ideas into their teaching practice due to uncertainty over the impact on students' examination results. The importance of the examinations for students, teachers and schools, and their impact on opportunities for NETs to bring new ideas to the English Panel at schools, was a constantly repeated message. In most schools, a conservative approach was favoured and any new idea or teaching practice would be rejected if it took class time away from preparation for the examinations.

3.1.2 Impact on Students

In many schools, it was expected that the NET take up a role as a resource person who created an "English-rich environment" for students. An often repeated comment was that students found it much easier and more natural to switch to English with a NET than with another Chinese person. In the view of many local teachers, this was the major contribution of NETs, and something that could not be provided in any other way. Many of the students also made this point. They said that, without the NET, they would not use English outside the specific context of an English lesson and that, even in that context, they would most likely use more Cantonese than English if the teacher spoke Cantonese.

Although students expressed their enjoyment of classes held by the NET and were enthusiastic about chances to learn more about English language and culture from the NET, they maintained that local teachers were more useful for exam preparation. NETs taught English in ways that students interpreted as fun and interesting, but which were not always recognized for their educational value. In general, if an activity could not be directly linked to better examination results it was likely to be dismissed. Thus, as noted by teachers in one school, if the NET did not conform to the expected teaching schedule his students were disadvantaged in the assessments and this caused complaints from parents about unfairness. Parents also complained that NETs did not provide sufficient feedback to the students and did not mark every mistake on their written work in the same way as the local teachers. Several

students said that the NETs were not as helpful as the local teachers when they needed support in exam preparation, as they could not go into the depth of explanation (in Cantonese) required for students to fully understand difficult concepts.

Several NETs commented on the negative impact of large class sizes on a teacher's (NET or local) opportunities to meet the individual needs of students. In particular, some of the NETs felt that their opportunities to effect positive change could be greatly improved by smaller class sizes and more split class teaching, so that teaching could be tailored to the needs of students and more feedback could be provided.

3.2 *Materials and Facilities*

The schools were very well equipped for English language teaching. It was standard for schools to have excellent computer facilities, a language laboratory and a multimedia room, although it seemed that these were not in constant or even regular use in many schools. Similarly, several schools had libraries containing a wide selection of books, movies and other resources in English although the use of these materials was often focused on exam and school-based assessment (SBA) preparation.

Many local teachers expressed interest in the sorts of materials that NETs used in teaching, and hoped to be able to incorporate some of these in their own teaching practice. NETs were generally described as very creative. As one local teacher in an EMI school said, the NETs' approach to teaching was innovative and unfamiliar to local teachers, and they had helped her to modify teaching materials in attempts to make English classes more interesting for the students.

Although all schools provided teachers and students with access to a wide range of teaching resources, relatively few had organized times to allow teachers to discuss and review resources outside the formal structure of an English Panel meeting. However, in one of the schools the teachers could draw on textbooks, resource books, online resources stored on the school server, and there was a strong culture of sharing resources and ideas with each other. In their efforts to gain the interest of the students, they had recently shifted to using resources that were described as more "authentic", including newspapers, videos, TV programs, magazines, food menus and maps. The Panel had a regularly time-tabled co-planning meeting every cycle that allowed teachers to discuss and exchange materials.

Several of the experienced NETs, and especially those who had previously worked in the Primary NET Scheme, expressed their interest in support from the NET Section that was modeled on the Primary Literacy Program – Reading (PLP-R) and provision of high quality teaching resources. NETs were often deployed primarily to support oral language activities in the secondary schools, although several expressed interest in contributing to the reading and writing proficiency of students. One NET commented that he would particularly like the NET Section to work on a reading program for the secondary schools. He felt that the *NET working* books were very helpful for sharing good resources on drama and poetry and hoped that they would be carried into every elective.

3.3 *Impact on English Program*

Leadership of the English Program at all of the schools was the responsibility of the English Panel Chair. The NET's role in that program and opportunities to effect improvements or add value to the program were mediated and moderated by the Panel Chair. Several schools had

found ways to provide NETs with avenues to make contributions, but this depended upon the duration of the NET's deployment, as it took time for schools to develop an understanding of the sorts of contributions the NET could make and to have confidence in the NET.

In some cases, the terms and conditions of the NET's deployment acted against the NET taking a more active role in the English program. For example, two of the EMI schools ran bridging programs over summer to meet the needs of students who arrived at the school from CMI primary schools. This was a very important foundational learning activity at each school. In one of these schools the NET, who was a resident of Hong Kong and had been deployed at the school for many years, took a leading role in the organization of this bridging program. In the second school, the NETs had not contributed to the language bridging program because they usually took holidays in summer. Instead, the school brought in external service providers and assigned one of the local English teachers to take charge of the program.

NETs were responsible for the creation of an "authentic" environment for English in the schools. In many schools, this was interpreted as making a contribution to oral language practice for both teachers and students. Many schools had deployed the NET to maximize this contribution. For example, in one school the NET had traditionally been assigned responsibility as a leader in the choral language and drama competitions, English clubs, festivals and general English extracurricular activities. These were regarded as enrichments to the English Program, and contributions that NETs were very well-suited to make. However, in several schools the Principal and Panel Chair argued that NETs should not be overloaded with too many responsibilities for extracurricular activities. The division was between schools that felt NETs should best be treated as an additional resource person, and not deployed for a large teaching load, so that they had free time to devote to many extracurricular activities, and those schools where the NET was deployed mainly for classroom teaching. In all cases, this decision was taken by the school leaders but sometimes in negotiation with the NET and sometimes as a result of the perceived needs of the school community. Where NETs were assigned a heavy teaching load, this diminished their time to make other contributions to the English program.

3.4 Summary

In most of the schools, NETs were valued as specialist teachers who could bring new resources and ideas to the school community and share these with other teachers. Some schools had organized formal and structured opportunities to support their NET and teachers in this endeavour, and others used informal methods to bring the NET and local teachers into regular contact. NETs were not regarded as "agents of change" in schools, nor were they routinely given leadership positions in the English program.

Students were enthusiastic about the creative and interesting teaching style used by many NETs, but also acknowledged the value of the contributions local teachers made to their examination readiness. More experienced NETs also spoke about the particular skills required to prepare students to meet the challenges of the examinations and some had made efforts to understand and acquire these skills. School leaders reported that parents were eager for their children to be taught by a NET, but also concerned that the NET would not provide sufficient feedback to students and thus hamper their efforts to do well on the examinations.

4. Return on Investment for the ENET Scheme – The NET Return

The focus groups conducted as part of this evaluation included consideration of the overall return to Hong Kong for its investment in the ENET Scheme. In some of the groups, participants were asked to consider changes the ENET Scheme had brought to language education in Hong Kong that might not have occurred without the Scheme. In this section, the viewpoints of the NET Section management and members of the Regional NET Coordinating Team are presented first, followed by summaries of the suggestions made by the Principals, Panel Chairs and NETs when talking in groups of their peers, and then those put forward by participants in the three heterogeneous groups.

4.1 *NET Section Management and Regional NET Coordinating Team*

Several members of the NET Section management team argued that it was difficult to take a qualitative perspective on the impact and return on investment for the ENET Scheme in the schools. From their viewpoint, any assessment of return on investment would necessarily be subjective. However, they drew attention to positive outcomes as a result of the Scheme which included the number of products, materials and packages that had been developed and the large numbers of people attending professional development programs. As noted in the second chapter of this report, these activities were well-regarded by NETs and local English teachers, but there were few structured opportunities for ideas and resources presented in workshops and courses to be shared among members of the English Panel in schools.

Taking a broader view, the management team suggested that parental support for the Scheme and community fears of declining standards of English without the Scheme were arguments for its maintenance and extension. The authentic nature of the language environment that NETs brought to the school system was seen as the strongest argument for its benefits and continuation. In addition, it was suggested that the ENET Scheme had promoted career impetus for some groups of students and there had been a better acceptance of English in the broader community over the duration of the Scheme than might otherwise have been the case.

Members of the management team proposed that the outcomes of the ENET Scheme needed to be examined in terms of:

- achievement in English language proficiency;
- establishment of an English language environment in the school;
- attitudes of both staff and students towards the use of English;
- internationalization of the curriculum in the schools; and
- realization of Hong Kong's role in a global economy

An argument was forwarded that the benefits of the ENET Scheme for Hong Kong should be viewed in terms of student understanding of English as a medium of communication within diverse cultural contexts and that access to a NET over 12 to 15 years of schooling could be expected to engender lifelong patterns of learning that might not be observable within the shorter term. The development of student confidence and enthusiasm towards learning and using English could hold implications not only for their own attitudes and proficiency, but also for their influence as parents of future generations of students.

The members of the Regional NET Coordinating Team suggested a list of the achievements of the ENET Scheme, as follows:

- The overall proficiency of English among students and perhaps in the community had been affected, but it was not known to what extent.

- There had been a change in the nature of pedagogy related to English language learning, but there was still a rigid concentration on exam preparation in many of the schools.
- Students had shown an increased willingness to speak and read English and follow the English media which could be seen as indicators of a change in their attitudes to learning English.
- The objective of the ENET Scheme to increase students' exposure to the culture of English-speaking countries and improve their awareness of world issues appeared to have been successfully met. In general, Hong Kong students were thought to be more comfortable with Western people than was the case prior to inception of the Scheme.
- The ENET Scheme was believed to be particularly influential in CMI schools.
- The importance of English to the economy of Hong Kong and its social fabric was being given recognition by the ENET Scheme
- Parents were positively disposed to the ENET Scheme - schools needed to deploy NETs as an assurance to parents of their commitment to the English curriculum.
- The schools were committed to their support of the ENET Scheme and saw it as filling an important role in the implementation of the NSS curriculum.

4.2 School Principals

The Principals provided a list of positive outcomes of the ENET Scheme from their perspective:

- Increased opportunities for students to *enjoy* learning English. The Scheme helped to shift the emphasis of the English program from learning to pass exams to learning to communicate in English.
- The NETs were viewed as giving more encouragement to students' attempts to use English than local teachers. Principals claimed that local teachers tended to correct even small grammatical errors in language and focus on deficits, but the NETs shifted focus to the power of English as a tool of communication.
- The Scheme had given the students exposure to English language and people from English-speaking countries. It enabled them to hear native English spoken within a Chinese context. This was seen as particularly beneficial within the CMI schools.
- A valued effect was the growth in confidence of local teachers to use English.

The Principals made a number of recommendations for the future of the ENET Scheme, with particular emphasis upon the way that the ENET Scheme was implemented in schools. They argued that, for the Scheme to be effective, more NETs would be required in schools. They also felt that both Principals and Panel Chairs would benefit from advice to help them understand how best to support their NETs and gain the most benefit from the Scheme for their students.

4.3 English Panel Chairs

As a group, the English Panel Chairs suggested that the overall impact of the ENET Scheme was that:

- Better standards of English provided Hong Kong with an economic advantage over other Asian countries.
- English proficiency of some of the students and some of the teachers had improved. Students were better equipped to study overseas and to work with foreigners as a result of their exposure to the NETs.

- NETs had provided an authentic environment for the use of English in schools, by exposing students and teachers to the idioms, accents and diversity of English.
- NETs provided a language rich English environment.

Some of the Panel Chairs reasoned that, without a NET in the school, exposure to English diminished in both quality and quantity until the language use within the school became exclusively Cantonese. Several Panel Chairs also believed that there was a link between access to a NET and improved opportunities to study at tertiary level for students, although they cited no evidence for this assertion.

4.4 NETs

Many of the NETs argued that the return on investment in the ENET Scheme should be considered in terms of Hong Kong's role as an economic force in the Asian region, and its competitive advantage in relation to other countries in the region. The NETs reflected on their understanding that they had been deployed to address a perceived slide in English standards. Most agreed that all Hong Kong students needed to have opportunities to achieve basic competence in English, and that the ENET Scheme played a central role in achieving this ideal.

4.5 Heterogeneous Groups

One of the heterogeneous groups devoted some time to consideration of the value of the ENET Scheme to Hong Kong and the changes that had come about due to its implementation in schools. Members of this group noted that, since the inception of the Scheme, there had been demonstrable changes in the English curriculum and in the way in which English was taught. They drew attention to changes in the use and distribution of resources, and argued that the Education Department and school leadership *initiated* change but that this was followed by individual NETs *supporting* change in schools.

Reflecting back ten or more years, it was noted that some areas of Hong Kong had been populated by squatters living in conditions of poverty. Members of the group asserted that the opportunity for students in such communities to develop English skills was nearly non-existent. They argued that the deployment of NETs had wrought considerable positive change for these students.

The parent representative in this group said that it was difficult to imagine the system without the ENET Scheme. He regarded it as an indispensable component of the education system in Hong Kong. Similarly, the Panel Chairs in the group saw the Scheme as essential and voiced the opinion that Hong Kong people would be less capable in English and therefore less economically secure without the ENET Scheme.

Thus, the overall view was that, without the ENET Scheme, the English language skills of Hong Kong people would decline in quality. There would be an economic impact on Hong Kong and, if the Scheme were to be lost to the system, an alternative way of improving and sustaining English language development would have to be found.

There were several important benefits to Hong Kong that, in the opinion of the participants in each of the heterogeneous discussion groups, were directly or indirectly attributable to the ENET Scheme:

- There had been a noticeable improvement in English standards in schools and, by extension, in the Hong Kong community although there was a belief that the examination system had not allowed this to be demonstrated.
- English proficiency was recognized as important from a commercial and social point of view, so that Hong Kong could remain competitive with other Asian economies such as Singapore and Japan.
- The Scheme gave the Hong Kong teachers and students valuable, accessible and authentic exposure to other cultures and other teaching and learning strategies. A major benefit of NETs to the schools was the internationalization of the school and the cultural exchanges that took place. The Scheme provided opportunities to exchange language and cultural activities, ideas and innovations across cultures and across languages.
- Resources and facilities for teaching English had improved in schools, and the ways in which teachers used resources had altered as a result of the ENET Scheme. NETs were valued for their ability to model new and different teaching strategies.
- Community concern over perceived falling English standards had caused a drop in morale for many local English teachers. Sensitively deployed, access to the professional support of a NET was seen as one way to provide local teachers with new ideas and to lift their self-confidence as teachers.
- The ENET Scheme was valued for its ability to foster collaborative and reciprocal professional development between local teachers and NETs. However, it was acknowledged that this needed to find culturally appropriate avenues of expression to be of most benefit.
- There was increased excitement and motivation among students, with an associated impact on their willingness and confidence to use English inside and outside school. Reduction of fear of using English among the local students and teachers was an important contribution of the ENET Scheme.
- The Scheme was praised for fostering an experiential rather than examination-driven approach to teaching. This was seen as a “work in progress” for many schools where preparation for the public examinations still dominated the English syllabus. NETs were seen as championing the concept of English as a skill to be acquired and enjoyed, rather than English as an examination subject to be studied and passed.
- Schools were proud to deploy a NET, and felt some loss of prestige if they did not include at least one NET on their English teaching staff.

Perhaps the most telling comments about the impact of the ENET Scheme, from more than one group, were that there were both tangible and intangible benefits to Hong Kong, and acknowledgment of the value-added nature of the Scheme to the education system and broader community. To build on this idea, it was suggested that Principals and NETs could examine the question: “What can the NETs do to add value to Hong Kong, and to education in Hong Kong, and how can school leaders build in procedures to maximize these benefits?” One group concluded their discussion by agreeing that the most important return from the ENET Scheme was a change in the culture of the schools, even though this change was difficult and sometimes painful. But, as one of the Panel Chairs asked, “How else could change come about?” The NET, as an “accessible foreigner”, could introduce change to the schools in ways that were not possible for local teachers. In summary, the participants in focus groups acknowledged that the potential impact of NETs on schools and, by extension, the Hong Kong community was very large, but they believed it was up to the schools and community to make sure they made good use of the NETs and the ENET Scheme.

5. Recommendations for the ENET Scheme

This chapter sets out observations and recommendations for the ENET Scheme. It opens with some suggestions made by local English teachers and NETs in response to survey questions, and acknowledges the central importance for the success of the ENET Scheme in schools of the leadership of Principals and Panel Chairs. It then proceeds to outline strategies for the revitalization of the ENET Scheme built around a current shift to the establishment of collaborative teams of teachers and connections between team-based decision-making and student outcomes. This shift acknowledges the importance of the classroom teacher, whether local English teacher or NET, for effecting improvements in students' language proficiency and targets change at that level. It also acknowledges the importance of adapting and working with existing structures in schools, such as English Panels, and of acknowledging the crucial role of school leaders in the success of the ENET Scheme. Finally, it connects the ENET Scheme to system-level innovations and sets out a role that the management of the Scheme could adopt as schools undertake the transition to a new curriculum for senior level students and a new, standards-referenced approach to assessment.

5.1 *Effective Leadership in Schools: English Panel Meetings*

It was widely acknowledged that, unless NETs have been deployed at their school for an extended period of time and are highly experienced teachers, they are unlikely to occupy roles of influence and leadership. Their opportunities to effect change in the English program at their schools are limited. Rather, in most schools the English Panel Chairs take responsibility for the deployment of NETs within the broader context of management of the English program. Meetings of the English Panel provide opportunities for Panel Chairs to structure and focus the teaching program at their schools, and to target and support the work of the NET and local English teachers. When asked about the Panel meetings at their schools, many local English teachers and NETs recommended changes they would like to see made to the form and function of those meetings. The possible changes are summarized as follows:

Local English teachers would like English Panel meetings to:

- permit more time for teachers to discuss and share successful teaching strategies and resources;
- help teachers to collaborate on setting up teaching programs and sequences;
- support teachers' efforts to devise teaching programs that were clearly linked to better outcomes for students;
- help teachers to plan strategies to support students of different ability levels;
- allow teachers to discuss their students' class performance, areas of weakness and areas of improvement;
- be reduced in duration and tightly controlled by an agenda so that the meetings are better focused and more productive; and
- include time to check that decisions taken in earlier meetings have been put into practice and to discuss outcomes of those decisions.

Similarly, the NETs would like English Panel meetings to:

- place emphasis on setting clear objectives for the English program;
- allow all teachers opportunities to add items to the agenda and to contribute to discussions;
- reduce emphasis upon administrative tasks and formal meeting procedures;
- include regular reports from teachers on successful strategies and programs;

- help to identify professional development needs and incorporate professional development opportunities for teachers;
- be of shorter duration and conducted on a regular (perhaps monthly) basis to allow short term teaching and learning goals to be set, strategies to be trialed and outcomes to be reviewed;
- focus on one or two major discussion points at each meeting, and permit more debate and sharing of ideas and resources; and
- include strategies for dealing with problems, reporting back on outcomes and making sure that initiatives are adopted.

It was clear that the NETs would like changes to the administrative structure and function of the Panel meeting and the local teachers would like the meeting to focus more on teaching and learning. This was a surprising difference, given the reports of the focus groups, but relatively few local teachers attended those groups and so their opinions were better represented by the survey data. In any case, the two recommendations are complementary. In order to provide the changes requested by the local teachers, the Panel meetings have to change according to the strategy suggested by the NETs.

Several of the NETs also suggested that group meetings of teachers who were working with students of similar year levels would be of more practical assistance than formal meetings of the full English Panel. Some NETs reported that Panel meetings at their schools were very well organized and structured, while some others were roundly critical of the meetings at their schools.

NETs were asked about their perceptions of their own contributions to the English Panel. More than half replied that they provided advice and ideas to their English Panel Chair and to other Panel members at least once per month, and most believed that this was quite effective in terms of improving English teaching at the school.

Local English teachers were asked about the contributions that the NET at their school made to English Panel meetings. Most made very positive comments, praising the NETs' capacity to bring new and interesting ideas to the Panel. However, a small number of the teachers noted that NETs could sometimes be critical of colleagues, or that the NET at their school did not make a contribution to the Panel. In summary, local teachers described the NET as being able to:

- offer objective opinions and provide useful and innovative solutions to problems;
- prepare teaching materials that are creative and interesting for students;
- share their expertise and offer many new ideas;
- recommend useful programs and strategies;
- suggest ways to improve the syllabus and assess student progress;
- report on their own activities in terms of enriching the language environment and improving student skills;
- take minutes of the meetings;
- act as 'walking dictionaries'; and
- share their experience of teaching in their home countries.

The latter point was made by many of the local teachers and expanded upon with enthusiasm by several. Many of the local English teachers were appreciative of opportunities to hear about the NETs' teaching experiences in other countries.

5.2 Relationships to System-Level Innovation

The combination of the analyses discussed in the previous sections indicates that there is a place for restructuring and redirecting English Panel meetings to be more of a collaborative teaching team, focusing on improving student learning outcomes and English competence in particular. The impression gained is that the panel meetings focus on administration and examination scores. Our concern is that a focus on learning outcomes is broader than on score improvement. With the advent of the new curriculum and a standards referenced examination and reporting system, the foundation for such a change will be present. There is however some concern whether the teaching force and even the NETs are ready for such a change. This is ironic because language teachers the world over have been oriented towards the use of proficiency scales as a reporting device for decades and have led education into this approach to assessment and reporting. Hong Kong's emphasis on grades and scores may be inconsistent with language teaching and reporting across the world. The suggested approach however is consistent with the New Senior Secondary curriculum with a standards referenced outcome. It was supported by the consultant's discussions with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) in terms of the kind of change needed in the teaching and learning to move from the old system to the new assessment and curriculum. In the report on the Primary NET Scheme (Griffin et al., 2006) advice was given that, unless teaching and learning change is aligned with assessment and curriculum, the changes will not be sustained. The same message is proffered in this evaluation of the ENET Scheme. The details of the systemic and school-level changes required are beyond the brief of this report, but they are currently being implemented on a large scale in Australia. The panel, acting as a collaborative teaching team, is as one possible way of assisting the ENET Scheme in Hong Kong to support the changes in curriculum and assessment currently emerging at a system level and at the same time improving the approach to teaching and learning through the deployment of the NET..

It is clear that, with the support of their school leaders, NETS and local English teachers can have an effect on the way that the language curriculum is implemented in a school. The curriculum *is* changing, and the students *are* learning. However, the teachers are clear that they need more assistance for working with students, especially on oral interaction, and that this could be achieved through additional and focused professional development and deployment patterns of the NET. Teachers expressed a desire to better understand the connections between teaching strategies and student outcomes, and to be able to make wise and well-considered decisions for students at different levels of proficiency. For teachers in CMI schools the need is perhaps greater than that of their counterparts in EMI schools, but this assistance would be received positively in most, if not all, of the schools.

Most teachers were aware of the approximate proficiency level of their students, and have additional information about their discrete skills and abilities. Synthesis of information about the students' levels of development and discrete skills, and assistance for teachers to use developmental progressions, proficiency scales and described developmental scales, such as those in the new curriculum and assessment regime, can provide important data to guide teachers' knowledge and understanding about ways to support the learning of every student. Change to the curriculum involves, at a minimum, three approaches, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. In reforming any education program, there is a need to change coincidentally the teaching and learning strategies, the assessment and reporting procedures and the curriculum and resources. If these are not changed together, the chance of introducing sustainable improvements in the classroom is minimized. In the ENET Scheme, emphases are placed on teaching and learning and on curriculum and resources. There needs also to be a shift in the assessment and reporting procedures. Under the regime of the new curriculum reporting of

student development will necessarily have to emphasize proficiency rather than discrete skills or test scores.

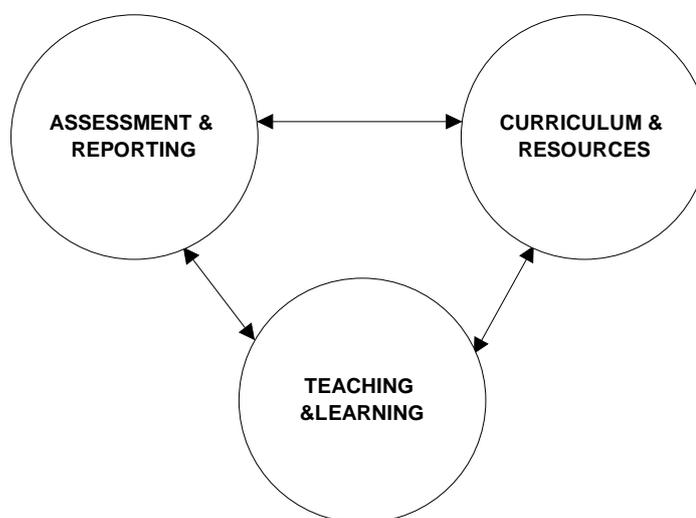


Figure 5.1. Approaches to curriculum change.

Historically, attempts to reform curriculum such as those proposed with the New Senior Secondary curriculum and the introduction of criterion- or standards-referenced assessment have been littered with failures. The new curriculum documents contain information about a major shift in thinking about learning and development, but the shift will be difficult to achieve in the schools and classrooms. This is especially true when the shift is from a process or content approach to teaching and learning, emphasizing drill, rote learning for a normative assessment system, to an outcomes approach emphasizing competence or proficiency and a criterion-referenced assessment system. This shift has been successful in other educational systems over the past decade but the integrated contributions of assessment and reporting need to be acknowledged.

The current emphasis of teaching and assessment in Hong Kong is focused upon scores and letter grades. The curriculum change has to be accompanied by an associated change in assessment that demands that skill levels and outcomes are reported or teachers will interpret the change in idiosyncratic and unintended ways. Reporting grades and scores simply emphasizes the importance of grades and scores. By contrast, reporting skills and developmental levels emphasizes that skills are what really matter, not just a grade or score, and encourages teachers to focus on generalized developmental learning for their students. Further, unless a change in assessment and reporting procedure is also accompanied by support and assistance for teachers to change their attitudes and beliefs, and clearly linked to teaching and learning strategies, changes in curriculum towards an emphasis upon outcomes and developmental learning will not and cannot be fully realized. In many ways the shift to a proficiency reporting approach and away from grades and scores will empower teachers.

5.3 English Panels as Collaborative Teaching Teams

With the introduction of the new curriculum and assessment regime, there is a need for corresponding alterations to the teaching and assessment approaches. This is a challenge for the ENET Scheme and for English language education in Hong Kong. There is a further need to examine and change the way teachers use student data to support their language teaching practice. At present, the common practice reflects a deficit model where language problems

and inadequacies in language development are identified and remedied in order to obtain better student performances on examinations. This is common among the comments of the students who differentiate the approach of the NETS and the local teachers. NETs are encouraging the use of oral language and are not fixated on errors but encourage development and practice. Local teachers typically focus on and correct errors. The implications of a shift from a deficit model to a developmental approach would mean a change in teaching orientation with a corresponding move to encouragement of development. NETs can play an integral role in this shift. One objective would be to encourage teachers to use data within a developmental framework to improve the English language performance of all students. The teachers would work in a culture where evidence is challenged and discussed rather than one where there is only mutual endorsement of shared teaching strategies. They would become increasingly skilled in the theory and application of assessment and the developmental language constructs they are teaching and better able to link evidence of student learning readiness to targeted intervention.

The strategy has been employed with success in Australia (Griffin, Murray, Care, Thomas, & Perri, 2009). In this work, collaborative teams of teachers were led by the schools' language arts coordinators. The team members engaged in discussions based on challenging peer evidence of learning and links between intervention and learning outcomes. In particular, gains in comprehension were compelling (Griffin et al.). Building on comments made by local English teachers who responded to surveys, this approach to collaboration between local teachers of English and NETs may act as a powerful support to the work of the English Panels either through Panel meetings or regular Form-level meetings of teachers.

For the ENET Scheme, the premise is that teachers who use a specific style of evidence-based teaching, and operate within a developmental learning paradigm, will have a more positive effect on student learning outcomes. The role of collaborative teaching teams (within the framework of the English Panel) in the use of data to enhance teacher decision-making needs to be enhanced in line with the suggestion of the local English teachers and the NETS. Pilot work in Australia suggested that, with a data-driven, evidence-based approach to teaching and learning, teachers could manipulate the learning environment and scaffold learning for every student, regardless of the student's development or intellectual capacity (Griffin, 2007).

Internationally teachers were shown how to differentiate between deficit and developmental teaching and learning approaches. The relationship between teacher behaviour, knowledge and values and student learning was a key issue addressed. The criterion in Hong Kong of English proficiency can be measured using standardized tests developed by the HKEAA. The effectiveness of the intervention could then be measured and would depend on teacher knowledge and understanding of how best to use assessment data to improve learning outcomes. In examining this relationship, teachers need to be assisted in interpreting data and in linking their interpretation to targeted intervention in a differentiated instruction framework model (Perkins, 2006). There is a convergence of research that this is an effective practice in improving teaching and learning (Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson & Rodriguez, 2005).

Given the test and examination culture of the Hong Kong system, there is an excellent opportunity to use the tests in slightly different ways to inform teaching and thereby improve learning. Merely having and using tests, on their own, is an insufficient condition to inform teaching and improve learning (Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, & Thomas, 2005). Ways to access and interpret test data in an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning appears to be central. Using standardized assessments formatively requires that tests can provide sufficient information to profile students' learning and to identify the zone of intervention for individual students. It also requires teachers to link their interpretation of data, at both group and

individual levels, to teaching interventions, in order to examine and explain any improvement in student learning. This has been enhanced by a process of critical and collaborative analysis and discussion of data (Griffin et al., 2008). The common theme among these studies has been that it is essential to have a process by which teachers can be engaged in interpreting assessment data, linking the information to their own teaching, and testing the links using the discourse of evidence and accountability among peers. Many teachers do not link their teaching to student achievement, and attribute learning outcomes to factors beyond their control such as student home background or to the predominant Band level of students in the school. In some of the school visits there was a resignation to the fact that the students would not enter further education and the motivation to learn was lost. This resignation was repeated many times despite the international evidence that teacher/classroom effects can account for up to 60% of the variance in student achievement (Alton-Lee, 2004; Timperley & Robinson, 2001). Improvement of teaching can and does lead to improved student performance and the systematic use of assessment data can and does lead to improved teaching. The success of the ENET Scheme can thus be linked to its ability to support teachers in their use of the large amount of assessment data to improve and inform teaching strategy, whether local English teachers or NETs, as they incorporate system-level innovations into classroom practice and strive to improve language proficiency for their students. An appropriate level of intervention to effect change in Hong Kong secondary schools is via the leadership of the Principal and the Panel Chair, and through the meetings either of the full English Panel or smaller collaborative teams of teachers working under the aegis of the English Panel.

Teachers need to understand their own practices and how they affect student achievement. This point was made in different contexts by local teachers of English, NETs and English Panel Chairs, who spoke of the need to link decision-making about the English program and NET deployment to outcomes for students. In particular, teachers need an understanding of the developmental nature of the English language and this must precede or underpin their understanding of developmental assessment. Collaborative discussions, where teachers test their ideas about the links between evidence and strategy, are an important vehicle for this. In addition, team-based models are an effective form of professional development in comparison to traditional workshop models. This would be substantially enhanced by the presence of the NET. Change in teaching practice can occur when teachers are engaged in examining their own theories of practice (Deppeler, 2007). The Australian project emphasised this approach which, for the ENET Scheme, could be implemented in a trial set of schools that enrolled Bands 1 to 3 students in EMI and CMI schools

There is growing evidence of the link between teachers' collaborative reflections and their link to improved student achievement (Phillips et al., 2004; Griffin, et al. 2009) and changed teacher perceptions (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). Collaboration in professional learning teams have been shown to enable teachers to have access to a greater number and divergence of theories to test their own against, particularly if the team draws on differing expertise, but it also can be a slow and painful process of cultural change (Ladson-Billings & Gomez, 2001). A peer approach to accountability within the team, can be shown to enable teachers to draw constructively on the expertise of their colleagues (Griffin et al., 2009). Larger teams of teachers, school leaders, policy-makers and researchers appeared to accelerate learning when they were involved in rigorous examinations of teaching and learning, rather than simply sharing ideas (Robinson & Lai, 2006). This could be emulated by the inclusion of RNCT members across networks of schools in the ENET scheme. The shift from sharing to challenge was important and facilitated when the discourse of challenge was based on observable evidence – what students do, say, write or make - not on the interpretation or inferences that are deduced from that evidence (Griffin 2007). This changes the discourse

from a teacher-centred focus to one based on evidence of student outcomes and a concentration on evidence of student learning outcomes.

Deficit approaches to student learning focus on the things that students cannot do and the correction of errors and failure. These include inaccuracies in language pronunciation or syntax that are commonly corrected in schools in Hong Kong. In particular, they focus on a 'rescue' package for lower achievers. By comparison, developmental models scaffold existing knowledge bases of all students. They focus on readiness to learn and follow a generic thesis of developing the student. For this approach the expertise of the teacher, both in content and in developmental learning and assessment, is critical (Wilson & Draney, 1999).

5.4 Curriculum and Assessment: Opportunities for the ENET Scheme

The proposed approach is part of a strategy to assist in the implementation of the new curriculum and assessment regime under the assumption that, without functional English language skills, members of some Hong Kong communities are disenfranchised. They do not have access to basic skills needed for economic or educational participation or to maintain a prosperous lifestyle. There are several aspects of this proposal that set it apart from other Hong Kong work in this area. Rather than only addressing the technical qualities of language assessment, the ENET Scheme could well incorporate research on evidence-based instructional intervention, collaboration between teachers in professional learning teams, peer accountability, teacher discourse and differentiated instruction.

With the cooperation of the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and HKEAA, as well as work on school based assessment in Hong Kong, student assessment data can be interpreted in a developmental framework, drawing on the work of Rasch (1960), Glaser (1981) and Vygotsky (1974). This work should follow a synthesis of these frameworks outlined by Griffin (2007). This recommendation would use evidence of explanatory factors at work in schools and put in place structures that sustain the practices across year levels, student band level and medium of instruction. It should monitor the development of teacher activities, beliefs and knowledge over time and relate teacher changes to levels of student achievement. Such work is timely, given the Hong Kong system's insistence on evidence of improved learning outcomes, especially in language proficiency, and the need to maintain learning outcomes at levels comparable to an international context.

The normal practice in teacher professional development programs and in pre service training is to focus first on teaching strategy. The Australian study made it explicit that there was a prior student condition that had to be measured and generalized to a level of development. Only after these steps, was it appropriate to design intervention linked to an overall level of development (Griffin et al., 2009:). Resource allocation and decision making about instruction then followed generalization. For the ENET Scheme, it is recommended that the system monitor English Panel or collaborative team activity and cohesion and relate the discussion to clarification of decisions and their links to learning outcomes. In the Australian project, how teacher teams developed the capacity to use data to improve student learning was also linked to the way in which teacher teams developed data-driven instructional systems to improve classroom practice and monitor student learning. Griffin (2006, 2007) and Alton-Lee (2008) have shown how school leaders (such as panel chairs, deputy principals and principals) and teachers developed formative feedback systems. Timperley (2008) and Alton Lee (2008) have also shown that teachers in teams need to develop as members of their teams. Cohorts of teachers need to learn how to use evidence to discuss specific issues in a professional experience-based learning approach. Follow-up and support is needed in the school. In particular, professional development must be shown to match the learning needs of students so that the new skills can transfer into the classroom. The Australian study is testing

the proposition that professional development needs to be preceded by measurement and generalization in order to link the professional development to the classroom learning development. There also needs to be a whole-of-school commitment to the required cultural change, hence the role and support of the Panel Chair and the Principal is mandatory if innovations in the ENET Scheme and shifts to the new Curriculum are to succeed.

The provision of learning opportunities for teachers, consistent with principles that underpinned the CLaSS project (Hill & Crevola, 1997) as a school improvement strategy (Hill, Crevola & Hopkins, 2000), can and does lead to improved teaching practice. It was also consistent with the recommendations of Fullen, Hill and Crevola (2006), who highlighted the importance of professional learning. They identified three core elements that enhanced sustained change in schools: personalisation, precision, and professional learning. They argued that assessment for learning, although frequently spoken about, was not broadly or effectively practiced in schools. It may be better to describe the process as *assessment for teaching* and emphasize the process of collecting data to inform and improve teaching and hence learning outcomes.

In the ENET Scheme, such a shift in thinking would provide an opportunity to integrate Fullen et al.'s (2006) emphasis on professional learning with Johnson's (2000) recommendations on the effectiveness of *teams* working at different levels. Level 1 teams would consist of local English teachers and, in some schools, NETs operating in the classroom, Level 2 teams would consist of the Panel Chairs and experienced NETs, and Level 3 teams would consist of the RNCTs and system level project management personnel. Within each level, team members would be accountable to each other rather than to an external system or top-down accountability structures. Their work would incorporate the combination of internal, work-based, and external input of theory and practice. It may have the best chance of improving teacher effectiveness if it is linked to English Panel activities. This recommendation is based on a range of propositions:

- Student achievement is a function of teacher pedagogy, values, beliefs, knowledge and peer accountability.
- Teachers' classroom pedagogy and use of resources is a function of their theoretical and practical knowledge, beliefs and peer accountability.
- Teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes about evidence-based and developmental learning are a function of peer accountability, their theoretical knowledge of the construct they are teaching, and the theory and practice of assessment and data interpretation.
- A supportive but challenging environment of a team (i.e., an English Panel or collaborative team of teachers) is a function of teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge and understanding of the constructs they are teaching and of data use and assessment.
- Peer accountability and increased emphasis on an evidence based culture and challenge within English Panels or teams of teachers is a function of networking Panels or teams across schools.

5.5 Proposed Role for the ENET Scheme

In order to build knowledge and understanding of the relationships between teacher decision-making and collaboration and student achievement outcomes, records would need to be maintained over several years via school and teacher self assessment, observation logs and a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures, including focus group discussions of the issues associated with the implementation of the process.

The members of the RNCT might manage this as part of routine work within the ENET Scheme. They would need to monitor, albeit informally, the effects of teacher intervention on student learning outcomes and how these teacher measures could be sustained. They also need to monitor teacher beliefs, accountability, use and knowledge and discuss how these are altering over time to determine the needs for teacher professional development and their relationship to changes in student learning.

Under this model, teachers use standardized test data but need professional development in order to interpret student outcomes within a developmental model. The data should be used by teams of teachers within English Panels working collaboratively across a cluster of schools and supported by members of the RNCT. Panel Chairs and NETs should attend in-service programs conducted by the RNCT and focusing on the use of data and its link to developmental learning. In turn they would then be responsible for the professional development of Panel members in their schools, linking the schools to a general developmental paradigm espoused in the changes introduced in the new curriculum and the assessment regime via the HKEAA.

If NETs, and indeed the ENET Scheme and members of the RNCT, are to be valued for their contributions to the development of English language proficiency in the Hong Kong community, they must be able to clearly link their own activities to student outcomes, and to help schools and teachers to do the same. Without this, the worth of the ENET Scheme can be called into question. Educators, and the broader Hong Kong community, need to be able to link pedagogy to student outcomes, and the ENET Scheme has an opportunity to take up that challenge.

The management of the ENET Scheme and the members of the RNCT are well placed to lead schools as they learn to connect student assessment data to collaborative decision-making by teachers in ways that effect the most positive outcomes for students. Through a series of workshops, teams of teachers need to learn how to structure evidence-based intervention for individual student learning needs and styles in a data-driven approach to intervention. Following procedures outlined by Griffin et al. (2009), teachers need to learn to be accountable to peers within their English Panel or teacher teams for the way they use evidence of student development, for decisions about interventions and resource use, and how these link to student development in the key learning outcomes. Through workshops led by the RNCT, Panel Chairs, NETs and local English teachers should learn how to link the developmental level of individual students to an intervention strategy only after defending each selected strategy with their colleagues. Decisions taken collaboratively by teachers working in their teams or in the broader context of the English Panel should drive all interventions. The meetings should also allow teachers to explore the theory, research, and information about practices in their own and in other schools and the team leader or Panel Chair should maintain logs of these discussions to account for decisions about strategies and their links to evidence of student proficiency and learning. Panel Chairs should also be supported to compare and defend teaching practices across schools and develop skills in the technical aspects of the use of data and analysis. This is so that they can be the conduits for programs to be disseminated into the teams in their respective schools.

Between-school discussion needs to be built into communication between the Panel Chairs who learn from, and report to, each other and external specialists, perhaps the RNCTs, about mentoring, coaching and translating technical aspects into practice and practical advice for their team members. Thus, the classrooms would be linked through the Panel members so they could learn from and guide each other, discussing, challenging and evaluating information and theory presented by outside specialists. The relevance of professional development would be the driver for the diverse range of students in their classes. The Panel

Chairs should also be responsible for introducing and implementing curriculum and assessment reforms into the school. In addition, all teachers could monitor their own understanding, use of and attitudes towards student assessment data, targeted teaching interventions, and differentiated instruction and associated classroom management. The Panel Chairs should be provided with formal professional development on strategies provided by the members of the RNCT in curriculum, assessment and reporting. They would also need to develop skills in team leadership, curriculum reform, assessment and testing, school reform and action research. Thus, the work of school leaders, and in particular of English Panel Chairs, is central to the process of developing the teachers' confidence in using an evidence-based developmental framework.

The ability to link student outcomes to school and teacher decisions about the English program, and to vary these to appropriately target the learning needs of students, is a fundamental requirement if the English proficiency of the Hong Kong community is to be strengthened. This is an effort that will require the combined skills, experience and will of school leaders, teachers (both local and NET), and the management of the ENET Scheme. It is an effort that provides the ENET Scheme with structure and focus for professional development programs, and makes explicit the contributions made by different stakeholders. Ideally, Panel Chairs and NETs should be accountable for documenting teaching strategies and resources for later evaluation and evidence of links between intervention and learning. Workshops led by the RNCT should provide specific training in the use of criterion referenced reports. The data can be used to discuss differentiated intervention and targeting of teaching strategies. Indicators of success for the ENET Scheme would then include change in teacher discourse, targeted intervention practices and resource use and the link between these and student development.

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Appendix A. Participants in Focus Groups

Eight focus groups were held at the headquarters of the NET Section, Hong Kong Education Bureau, in Tsuen Wan during December 2008 and January 2009. Two groups were made up of participants representing the management of the NET Section and the Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT). Three of the groups were heterogeneous in composition, and included representatives of school leaders (Principals and English Panel Chairs), NETs, local English teachers, graduate students and parents of students who had been taught by a NET. One group brought together NETs from different school contexts, a second group was intended to include only English Panel Chairs but was also attended by one NET, and a third group was made up of Principals from schools enrolling students of different Band levels. A more detailed description of the background and experience of participants in the latter six groups is set out below:

Heterogeneous Discussion Group One

- Two English Panel Chairs, each of whom had more than ten years of experience working with NETs.
- A student from Chinese University of Hong Kong representing secondary school graduates who had been taught by NETs.
- A NET who had seven years experience working in Hong Kong, including three years as a primary school NET and four years as a secondary school NET.
- A parent with two grown children who had both finished school and were currently studying overseas in an English speaking country.
- A Principal from a Chinese medium of instruction school with two NETs and four to six other native speakers working in the school in a support role.
- A local English teacher who had more than ten years experience in that role and had worked as an Advisory Teacher within the Primary NET Scheme for three years.

Heterogeneous Discussion Group Two

- A NET with more than ten years experience in the Scheme.
- Two Panel Chairs who came from quite different schools and backgrounds. One had been an Advisory Teacher in the Primary NET Scheme and the other was an experienced school-based teacher.
- A parent who was also an experienced NET.
- A school Principal who was a former mathematics teacher. He examined the role of the NET from an administrative point of view rather than the point of view of an English teacher.
- Two local English teachers who each had extensive and varied experience in the ENET Scheme and as teachers.

Heterogeneous Discussion Group Three

- An English Panel Chair for junior forms, who had more than ten years of experience in her current school which enrolled Band 2 students in a CMI school with 1000 students and ten English teachers. She had also worked as an Advisory Teacher for the Primary NET Scheme.
- An experienced English Panel Chair from a school that enrolled Band 2 students in a CMI school in a relatively remote New Territories location. The school had 1000 students and 15 English teachers. She explained that this higher ratio of teacher to students was needed because the school used split class teaching to cope with the

wide diversity of abilities among students. The school enrolled many students from the mainland, who travelled into Hong Kong each day to attend school.

- A NET who was a very experienced English teacher, but who had joined the ENET Scheme only in the last twelve months. He described his CMI school which enrolled band 2 students in glowing terms. Indeed, he said that he could not imagine a better school or better students.
- A NET who was also a very experienced teacher and who had arrived in Hong Kong six years ago.
- A graduate student, who had been so inspired by her NET that she decided to major in English literature and to become an English teacher.

Discussion Group for Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs)

This group was attended by nine NETs who came from a range of school contexts and brought a diversity of experience to the group, as described below:

- A NET who came from a school with band 1 students and was in the third year of deployment at that school.
- A NET who had six years experience at his current school. He taught 26 lessons in an eight-day cycle but had very little work involving marking and virtually no paperwork.
- A NET who was teaching at S6 and S7 level in a school with Band 2 students. He had been teaching in the school for eight years. The school operated on a ten-day cycle and its medium of instruction was Chinese.
- A NET who was working in a school for Band 1 girls. The teaching load consisted of 19 lessons per week in Language Arts for students in S1 to S3.
- A NET who was working in a school with Band 3 students. She was teaching S4 and S6 students for 24 lessons per week. This was considered to be a full teaching load with additional oral language and English corner duties.
- A NET who was working in the ninth year of deployment in one school. He joined the school as a regular teacher and later was contracted as a NET and had remained at the school from that time. He brought to the focus group experience both as a local teacher and as a NET.
- A NET in a school with Band 2 students and had previously been deployed in another school. He talked about his experiences of an induction period of establishing trust in the school. It was generally agreed by the NETs that it takes the first year of a contract to established credibility with other teachers and school leaders.
- A NET who had joined a CMI school at the very beginning of the NET Scheme. After six years she returned to Australia for one year and then returned to Hong Kong to take up a position in an EMI girls' school. She reported that her time at this school has been a very good experience. She taught 24 lessons per week to S6 classes and found it possible at that level to teach students in small groups without discipline problems.
- A NET who was in her second year in Hong Kong. The school at which she was deployed had employed expatriate teachers since 1988. She reported that, initially, she was given lower classes to teach Language Arts and always given a junior class. At the start of her first contract, she was expected to teach oral English classes across all years but had now been given a class of more able students to teach oral language. She reported that most of the students at the school were Band 1 level and there were no discipline problems.

Discussion Group for English Panel Chairs

This group was attended by four English Panel Chairs, and one NET who accompanied her Panel Chair to the meeting. This group comprised:

- An Panel Chair from a CMI school with Band 2 students in the New Territories, who had been teaching English for more than 20 years.
- The NET who worked with this Panel chair at the school. She was a teacher with considerable previous experience working in elite schools, and had been deployed as a NET for three years in her current school.
- A Panel Chair with 15 years experience who worked in a school with Band 2 students that used Chinese as the medium of instruction for junior students and English for senior students. Her school had recently employed a new NET, after a series of earlier unhappy experiences with NETs who proved unreliable and left the school abruptly.
- A Panel Chair with 12 years experience and who came from a school with Band 3 students in New Territories West. The school used Chinese as the medium of instruction to S5 and then English for S6 and S7. The NET at this school had been deployed in her current role for more than seven years.
- A Panel Chair with 14 years experience at a CMI school with Band 3 students. She had worked with two NETs at the school. The first NET had stayed at the school for five years, and the new NET had been at the school for two years. The Panel Chair described the students at the school as coming from impoverished home backgrounds.

Discussion Group for School Principals

Four Principals attended the meeting. They were:

- A Principal from a school located in the New Territories, who had been working in his current role for seven years. The school enrolled approximately 600 students, and was described by the Principal as a CMI school with Band 3 students. In addition to the deployment of a NET, the Principal had employed four native speakers to support English language practice for the students in the school.
- A Principal from a school located in the New Territories that used Chinese as the medium of instruction and enrolled approximately 1200 students. The Principal reported that the school currently deployed three NETs. According to the Principal, these NETs worked well and co-operated well with local teachers. He perceived their role in the school as the enthusiastic promotion of English language coupled with a willingness to listen to the students and other teachers.
- A Principal from a school that enrolled Band 1 students and used Chinese as its medium of instruction.
- A Principal who had recently retired from many years heading an EMI school with Band 1 students..

Appendix B. School Visits

The purpose of visits to schools was to examine the use of, and contributions to, resources made by the NETs in different school contexts. The major emphasis was to address the following questions:

- How does the NET interact with and influence the staff and students in the school and affect the human resources of the English Panel?
- How are materials and facilities at the school focused on the improvement of English language, and what is the NET's impact on this?
- How is the language program in the school influenced by the NET?

Nine school visits and observation studies were conducted in January 2009. Schools were invited to volunteer interest in being visited by the researchers, and were chosen to represent the different types of schools in which NETs were deployed. The diversity of contexts that were taken into account when choosing schools were:

- The primary medium of instruction at the school.
- The academic Band level of most students at the school – Bands 1, 2 or 3.
- The geographic location of the school.
- Duration of deployment of the current NET.

Descriptions of each of the schools, and deployment strategies for their NETs, are set out below.

School A

An elite girls' secondary school on Hong Kong Island (EMI, Band 1 students), School A had deployed a NET for ten years, and taught all subjects, including physical education and visual arts, in English. It had an EMI primary campus which acted as its main feeder school. Sixty percent of the students came from this primary school, and so did not require any bridging program or support to allow them to study effectively in English. The school provided a bridging program over summer to meet the needs of students who arrived at the school from CMI primary schools. The NET took an important role in the organization of this bridging program. He alternated management of the program with another member of the English teaching staff.

The school had an expectation that the NET would be able to teach both English Language and English Literature at all Form levels, and would be able to contribute to other enrichment programs offered by the school. The school had a strong tradition in the teaching of dramatic arts, and expected the NET to assist with this program.

The current NET had been working at the school for ten years, and spent his first contract at another school in Hong Kong. He taught three classes of English Language (S1, S3 and S6) plus English Literature at senior level. The Principal's expectation was that the NET should be able to carry out his duties in much the same way as any other English teacher. She expected that he would be able to teach the same number of classes as other members of the English Panel.

School Principal

The Principal placed strong emphasis on matching the strengths and skills of the NET to the needs of the school and extended this practice to all EPMs, and not just the NET. She said

that deployment of teachers needed to be negotiated with the whole English Department, and that it was important to maintain perceptions of fairness.

The NET's role in professional development for other teachers was taken as a given by the Principal, with the proviso that this occurred within a climate of mutual sharing and support and under the direction of the English Panel Chair. The Principal expressed pride that the current NET took a role not only in PD for teachers within the school, but was active in sharing ideas and resources with other NETs. She said that the NET shared many materials, suggestions and new ideas both with the teachers at the school and other NETs in the district cluster.

The Principal said that she wished there could be more than one NET in the school, even though she regarded her local English teachers as very proficient. She said that they benefited a great deal from the stimulation and input of a teacher who has worked in a different system and can bring new ideas, strategies and training to the school.

English Panel Chair

When asked about the qualities and experience she expected from a NET, the Panel Chair said that the NET should be a committed and resourceful teacher who didn't just implement the curriculum but also showed a willingness to take students out for activities. She said that a particular strength of NETs was their ability to teach English through drama and debating, and that these were quite new and unfamiliar for local teachers.

The NET

The NET felt that his length of tenure in the school meant that the school had confidence to put him in front of an exam preparation class. He said that the nature of the exams in Hong Kong meant that it was necessary to teach more than just knowledge of the language. Students also needed careful preparation in exam technique. According to the NET, this was an area of strength for the local teachers but something that NETs must take time and effort to understand and master.

The NET pointed out that his own background and training was in literature, modern languages and teaching English as a first language, which was appropriate in an EMI school with Band 1 students. He said that it would be "disastrous" to deploy a NET with his background in a CMI school with Band 3 students, where what was needed was a teacher trained and experienced in teaching English as a second or foreign language.

The NET also commented on the negative impact of large classes on a teacher's opportunities to meet the individual needs of students. He said that the one thing that would really improve English teaching in Hong Kong would be smaller class sizes and more split class teaching, so that teaching could be tailored to the needs of students, more feedback could be provided, and there could be opportunities for independent learning that was effectively designed and monitored.

Speaking of the problem of matching NETs to the requirements of schools, the NET suggested that new NETs appointed to CMI schools needed a longer induction process that included introduction to the Chinese language. He said that there should be more focus on securing teachers with TEFL training and experience, preferably in Asian countries so that they had an appreciation of the culture.

The NET thought that the deployment of two NETs simultaneously in a CMI school was a good policy, and endorsed the concept of overlapping deployment so that a new NET could learn about the school and students from a more experienced NET.

The NET made several recommendations for optimal deployment of a NET:

- Do not allocate all oral lessons to the NET because it is not possible to make an impression on students if the NET only sees them for 30 minutes per cycle. This leads to a situation where NETs spend one half of a term teaching oral English to 1000 student and then the other half trying to assess them.
- Do not keep deploying the NET for the same year levels because they, like all teachers, become stale if repeatedly teaching the same class level and material. If the point of deploying a NET is that they suggest new ideas then it is important for them to be moved around within the school so that they can contribute more broadly over time.
- Take time to find out about the skills and experience of the NET, and then deploy them according to their strengths.
- Consider using NETs for activities not directly related to teaching English, such as coaching sporting teams or running cookery classes. This gives excellent opportunities for students to engage in real conversation with the NET.

The NET said that he would welcome support from the NET Section that was modeled on the PLP-R and provision of high quality teaching resources. He would particularly like the NET Section to work on a reading program for the secondary schools. He felt that the *NETworking* books were very helpful for sharing good resources on drama and poetry and hoped that they would be carried into every elective. The NET thought it might be helpful for advice to be shared about optimal NET deployment and ways to tailor the use of the NET to the needs of different schools and students. The NET raised the possibility of seconding experienced NETs to work in other schools and to support new NETs, to help share knowledge and skills with both local English teachers and NETs.

Summary

The Principal and the NET at School A agreed that the purpose of the ENET Scheme was to make a contribution to the standard of English and language teaching for students and teachers. The Principal commented that, without a NET, it would just be too easy for students and local teachers to revert to discussion in Cantonese. The NET provided a constant and valued reminder of the need to practise English.

School B

School B (EMI Band 1 students) had 1000 students and 12 English teachers including the NET. Most of the students attended CMI primary schools, and so arrived at Form 1 with quite limited experience in English. The school ran a bridging program for students who were making the transition from a CMI primary school to the English environment of the S1 classroom. The NETs had not taken a role in this language bridging program because they usually took holidays in summer. Rather, the school brought in external service providers and assigned one of the local English teachers to take charge of the program.

School Principal

The Principal said that she was grateful to the English Panel for the efforts they had put into the English environment at the school. She said that all teachers, not just teachers of English or NETs, shared responsibility for supporting students' language development.

The school had employed NETs for ten years, and had seven or eight NETs in that time. The Principal described their experience with NETs as an unhappy one. The school experienced difficulty finding a NET who met their expectations of what a good NET should be like. The qualities the school leaders sought in NETs were that they got on well with students and other teachers, provided a resource at the school and brought new ideas and practices, and did not place a burden on other members of the English Panel.

English Panel Chair and Local English Teachers

The Panel Chair acknowledged that different schools have different requirements from their NET. She said that it was very hard to find an appropriate NET, and that the school usually had little idea of the skills and experience of the NET until that person actually arrived at the school.

The Panel Chair described conflicts between previous NETs and local teachers over the setting of exam papers. This was regarded as a shared task between all English teachers and the intention was to test students on items that had been taught in class. However, if the NET did not conform to the expected teaching schedule his students were disadvantaged in the exam and this caused complaints from parents about unfairness. Parents also complained that NETs did not provide sufficient feedback to the students and did not mark every mistake on their written work in the same way as the local teachers. Discussion with two of the local English teachers also touched on the misunderstandings between local teachers and previous NETs at the school about the activities that constituted exemplary English teaching. The local teachers were well versed in grammatical conventions of English language, and expected the NET to be at least as knowledgeable as they were in this area.

One of the local teachers said that the chief advantage of working with a NET was the opportunity it provided to learn how to teach English using poems, short stories and drama. He said that he sometimes co-taught with the NET, and this gave him a chance to learn how to choose interesting materials for students. He said that NETs helped local teachers by sharing their books and materials from the NET workshops.

Similarly, the other local teacher said that some of the NETs she had worked with were very creative and had lots of interesting ideas to share with the local teachers. She said that their approach to teaching differed to that of local teachers, and that they had helped her to modify teaching materials and try to be a bit more interesting for the students. However, she said that it was sometimes difficult to find time to sit with the NET and talk about new ideas and teaching materials. She occasionally had opportunities to co-teach with the NET but this always took the form of the NET leading the class and the local teacher helping to maintain discipline. It was an opportunity to observe the NET but not really to co-teach or to work together to plan a lesson and understand why the lesson should be organized in that manner.

In this local teacher's opinion, misunderstandings often occurred between NETs and local teachers because the NETs were not well informed about the Hong Kong education system and the expectations that this placed on teachers and students. She said that in most schools it takes several months to bring a new NET up to date with the school's culture and the Hong Kong system, and that this was a problem for a school with a high turnover of NETs.

The Panel Chair said that the primary role of the NET should be as a resource person in schools and to create an English-rich environment to overcome the influences of home environments that lacked any English. She said that her main concern was that a NET taught effectively in the class and was friendly and open to contact with students. Ideally, the NET should be willing to arrange more enrichment activities beyond the classroom. She said that the school had experienced many disappointments with previous NETs in terms of the quality of their teaching, their ability to manage a large class of students, and a mismatch between the school's expectations and the skills of the NET.

The Panel Chair wondered whether assigning a NET to each school was the best possible use of these teachers, especially in EMI schools. She conjectured that perhaps an English Language Centre staffed by highly experienced NETs, which students could attend as part of an immersion program, might be a better option.

The NET

The school deployed the current NET as a Form 1 teacher, and he also helped with Form 3 oral classes. The school used split class teaching to allow the NET to work with some of the more challenging students. The NET said that, without such intensive small group work, these students would avoid the use of any English. The NET said that he particularly liked to work with less able students. He also said that the school did not routinely use co-teaching, as all teachers were confident to teach in English. However, he said that other teachers sometimes observed his classes when he was teaching language arts content. He said that he did not feel that he had many opportunities to influence other teachers or share ideas, either formally or informally. He said that local teachers were reticent about trying new things that they dismissed as "too creative" because this might be a waste of valuable exam preparation time. He said that, like all teachers, the NET was judged by his students' results in the exams and if his students did not do as well as students who have been drilled in exam preparation he would be seen as a failure.

The school was well resourced for the teaching of English, and the NET had access to internet, textbooks, audiovisual equipment for listening exercises and a projector in classrooms. However, despite all the encouragement of an EMI school and access to lots of English resources, he felt that many students were quite frightened about using English and making mistakes.

Classroom Observation

The NET was observed teaching a language arts class. He started by reading a short poem written from the perspective of a train engine. His reading was so expressive that he quickly gained the interest of the students. He had written up key words on the board, and asked students to help him discover the meaning of the words by looking into their English translation dictionaries and suggesting possibilities. There was much laughter in the class, but the students seemed interested in working out the meaning and attempting the pronunciation of new words. The NET used play acting and demonstration with students as helpers to explain meanings. He also incorporated discussion of grammatical concepts, such as tense, nouns and verbs, seamlessly into the activity.

Students were very confident to answer questions and offer suggestions. There was no sign that they were frightened to speak in English, even with an observer in the classroom. After working out meanings and pronunciation with the use of their dictionaries, the class attempted the reading of the poem with different groups reading stanzas. They did this with confidence

and obvious enjoyment. The NET applauded efforts, but also corrected mistakes and explained the use of onomatopoeia in the poem. This word caused much hilarity, but the students worked hard to master it and were very quickly able to volunteer examples from the poem and animal sounds.

The students' understanding was repeatedly checked and demonstrated by their ability to offer suggestions and examples. The NET made corrections where necessary and offered clear reasons for his corrections. However, the students did not seem to find his corrections in any way dampening to their confidence. He also challenged them to think imaginatively about the train engine as a person, and to describe what sort of train engine each of them would be. Would they be a hard-working and responsible engine like the one in the poem? Most of the girls thought they would be, and most of the boys thought they might be a lazy engine who tried to get out of doing too much work. The impression created was of an active learning environment in which many difficult concepts were taught with flair and success.

Form 6 Student

A Form 6 student also contributed her perspective on the ENET Scheme. She was the English representative for her Form 6 class, and had volunteered for this position because of her enjoyment of English. She said that she was also involved in an "English at Work" program, in which she cooperated with the NET and worked with him for one hour per week. As a student in an EMI school, she said that she had many opportunities to practise her English. All of her subjects were taught entirely in English, except Ethics/Religion and Physical Education. Although she mainly spoke in Cantonese outside school, the student said that her parents were very interested in her English studies. They encouraged her to read newspapers in English every day and to watch English television programs. She said that she was very lucky to have parents who took a strong interest in her studies.

The student said that the NETs taught in a more creative and interesting way than other English teachers. She had been taught by three different NETs during her time at the school, and she said that they were less concerned about following the schedule and more likely to make English classes exciting and fun. She said that, by contrast, the local teachers were constrained by a very tight schedule focused on exams. She said that local teachers were less interesting than the NET but that they provided good grounding on the grammatical aspects of English. She felt that the local teachers taught as they did because of the exams. Every teacher, she assured the researcher, would like to have a more interesting class if they only had the freedom to do so.

Summary

The impression of the operation of the ENET Scheme in School B was one of a very positive atmosphere for English language studies. The students seemed enthusiastic and engaged, and the NET was a lively and well organized classroom teacher who spoke with warmth about other teachers but a degree of uncertainty about his own ability or opportunities to effect change in the school. The teachers spoke with optimism about their own ability to gain new ideas and materials from the NET, but there had been several unhappy experiences with NETs in the history of the ENET Scheme at the school.

School C

The Principal of School C was a former English teacher, very supportive of the ENET Scheme, and very articulate in terms of his vision for English in a CMI school. The Panel Chair had recently been seconded to the Education Department as a consultant in the Language Section. There were 14 teachers in the English Panel in the school.

The NET had been deployed at the school since 2001. It was clear that the NET shared a parity of esteem with the other teachers and was regarded as an equal member of staff. The NET also acted as deputy Panel Chair in the English Department. However, the NET was not regarded as an expert or as a person who could be used for professional development of the local teachers. The difference in emphasis of the NET and the local teachers was based on the preparation of students for examinations versus the development of language and cultural understanding.

There were considerable resources in the school for language education. Each class was equipped with a computer linked to the internet and with projection facilities. There was a language laboratory and a multimedia room, although the language laboratory was placed away from the major thoroughfares of the school. The room was new and very few students had had the experience of learning in the room. The library contained numerous books, movies and other resources for the students and teachers. The use of these materials was slanted towards preparation for examinations and school-based assessment (SBA).

School Principal

The Principal of School C expressed his strong support for the ENET Scheme. He was conscious that the personality of the NET would be important for compatibility with local English teachers and for the success of the program in the school and had travelled overseas to interview the NET before the start of his employment at the school.

The Principal commented that there was a potential for misunderstanding between the NET and other English teachers because of different emphases and ideas about the most important components of English language instruction. Non native speakers may well have learned English in a way that emphasized grammar rules and structures, and they carried this understanding into their teaching in a way that was not shared by the NET. He noted that there was often a poor match between the skill base of the NET and the expectations of schools.

English Panel

The senior English staff at School C contributed their observations of the ENET Scheme and its relationship to the English program at the school. Apart from the Panel Chair and the NET, there were also three deputy or acting Panel coordinators.

The Panel Chair explained that the role of the Chair was to coordinate workloads, assure the quality of the English-language program, and to establish and maintain links between the school, the teachers and students with external agencies and language opportunities. As part of the language coordination role, the Panel Chair indicated a preference for the New Senior Secondary Curriculum in English. It was described as being similar to the Form 5 examination that was part of the previous Hong Kong General Certificate of Education (the GCE). It was expected that the new curriculum would emphasize the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition to the core of the new curriculum, the school intended to emphasize three electives based upon the needs of the students. However,

the NET was not directly involved in the implementation of the new curriculum, and the electives that the school would adopt focused on songs and poetry, stories and narratives, and workplace English.

School C's planning for the professional development of the local teachers, in preparation for the new curriculum, did not engage the background or experience of the NET to any great extent. There seemed no expectation that the expertise of the NET would be used as a facilitating mechanism for the implementation of the new curriculum. Rather, teachers had attended familiarization workshops for the new curriculum.

It was common practice in the school for teachers to observe each others' classes. There was no self-consciousness or tension between teachers when another teacher came into the room. Peer observation was regarded as the norm, and moderation within the framework of SBA was seen as a good opportunity for teachers to learn from each other.

Classroom Observation

An English class conducted by the NET for the Form 7 class was observed by the researchers. The lesson was conducted around a controversial topic of the change of medium of instruction in schools. The students were role playing and given the opportunity to practise their English from the point of view of a parent, a teacher, a student from a CMI school and student from an EMI school. This gave them the opportunity to use English at a fairly advanced level. It was noticeable that the teacher did not drill or overtly practise for examination purposes. Despite this, the teacher was building his teaching towards the sorts of activities students were likely to face as part of their A-level examination. He pointed out to students that it was highly probable that a topic on medium of instruction in schools, or a similar controversial topic, would be set for the exam and the NET wanted to give the students practice in dealing with such a topic. The resources being used included newspaper articles, the internet and video, and the students' imagination in terms of roles that they were playing.

Form 7 Students

Following the lesson, the researchers talked with eight of the Form 7 students. They were all articulate and willing to discuss matters associated with the ENET Scheme at their school. They expressed admiration for the NET's style of teaching and appreciation of the opportunities provided to them to study English in an authentic manner through excursions, movies and media.

Exam preparation was regarded as something separate from learning English by these students. They said that tutorial groups were the best avenue for exam preparation, but that the role of the NET was to help them to learn about English language and culture. One student said that the NET was not as good as the local teachers when she needed help in exam preparation, as he could not go into the depth of explanation (in Cantonese as well as English) she required to fully understand difficult concepts. The students acknowledged that the examination pass rate was a very important consideration for the local teachers, who would be judged against this outcome.

The students expressed their strong appreciation of the NET's contribution to their ability to develop skills in English, experience study tours and field trips, learn about the culture of Western society and develop an internationalized view of the world.

The students appreciated the shift from the disciplined approach of learning for examinations to the experiential approach to developing English proficiency which they associated only with the NET, not the local teachers. They all claimed to enjoy learning English and said that an important outcome of the ENET Scheme was the impact on their confidence to use English at school. This seemed to be in contradiction with their confidence in using English generally. None of the students used English outside the school or believed that they were likely to use English after leaving school.

The tension that these students experienced between the need to gain high grades in the examinations contrasted with their pleasure in studying English with the NET. One student had been on an international study tour to London and Paris organized and led by the NET. She was articulate and confident in her use of language, but admitted that she did not use English outside the school. Time spent on English was restricted to those hours that the student spent in school and, more closely, to those hours interacting with the English-speaking teachers. Some blog, YouTube, SMS and email interaction in English between the students and the NET was evident, but communication between the students was conducted always in Chinese.

The students commented that they were very focused on exam preparation, and really did not have time to look at English materials that were not directly linked to the exams. They pointed out that, from their perspective, the exams were more important for their future success than learning English. They said that Hong Kong is an exam oriented culture, and that it was really challenging to combine an interest in learning English with a desire to do well in the exams. They clearly saw these as two discrete, if not opposing, goals.

Summary

The organization of the English Department in School C involved the NET acting as deputy Panel Chair and this provided opportunities for him to influence the overall English program. The local teachers and the NET routinely used peer observation in a tension free atmosphere. The classrooms and the language media centre were very well-equipped and the school placed emphasis on the use of technology to support learning.

The NET's time was devoted largely to teaching at the senior levels. However, he also organized international study tours and excursions. The NET was available to students outside school hours via blog and email contact. The Year 7 students talked about the time pressure of exam preparation and the way that this detracted from their ability to explore aspects of their English studies that, while interesting and enjoyable, they could not link explicitly to better chances of success on the exam.

School D

School Principal

School D was a CMI school with a long history of NET deployment. The Principal had been a pioneer of a program to hire expatriate English teachers in 1987. His experience in that program led him to believe that it was better to employ younger native-speaking teachers. He had also travelled overseas to recruit teachers for the ENET Scheme. His objective was to ensure that there was an exchange of culture, not just a supplement to the teaching program. He required the NET to have an open mind, and to have a broader view of teaching than merely teaching English as a subject. He preferred that NETs deployed in the school had experience in another country to illustrate that they could settle in a culture other than their own.

The Principal's view of the deployment of the NET was very firm. He stated that it was best to have the NET allocated to two or three classes within the school, and he ensured that co-teaching was practised. The Principal regarded deployment of more than one NET as a problem for many schools. It became difficult to identify sufficient appropriate classes to allocate to the NETS. The Principal did not believe that NETs could take classes with more challenging students because they could not maintain discipline or provide sufficient explanation of difficult concepts (in Cantonese).

The Principal's most important expectation was that the NET should assist local teachers and students to develop their confidence in speaking English. He expected the NET to exchange teaching and cultural ideas with the local teachers. He also pointed out that the NET's collaboration with the local teachers and with the students was facilitated by the expertise and confidence of the Panel Chair. If the Panel Chair had good coordination skills and was able to assist the NET, collaboration between NETs and local teachers was generally more successful.

However, the Principal argued that it was important that NETs did not feel that all the pressure of improving English in the school fell to them as their responsibility. This had to be a shared responsibility of all the English teachers in the school.

The NET needed to be treated as an additional teacher, according to the Principal, rather than one of the school's allocation and, in School D, funding was available for this to be realized. This enabled the notion of partnership teaching to be used extensively throughout the school. The NET worked with a local teacher for two months at a time. After a two-month period of partnership teaching, the NET moved to work with another teacher.

The Principal acknowledged the importance of ensuring that the Panel Chair understood the school's vision for the role of the NET and how to support the NET in the oral language program of the school. Contribution to oral language practice was seen as the main area of special talent for NETs. Consequently, the NET's role in School D tended to emphasize being a leader in the choral language, drama competitions, English clubs, festivals and general English extracurricular activities.

The school had invested a great deal of money in language development facilities. There was an English Corner and, since 1995, a language laboratory in the school. In 1997 sufficient money was obtained by the school to develop a multimedia room and, in 2005, a computer-assisted learning room had been established. These were complemented by a specifically designated English room. However, local teachers and the NET were having difficulty in using the hardware in their teaching. It introduced a new style of teaching to the teachers and the NETs and most were finding it difficult to use. It was clear that some professional development was required and the Principal had gone to some trouble to provide training for teachers in the use of the equipment and software. The funds for the multimedia room were obtained from the Education Department. The funds for the language laboratory were provided by a patron of the school. The school had also been able to obtain \$3 million through the English Enhancement Scheme to provide training for teachers in teaching English through language arts.

English Panel Chair

The Panel Chair at School D said that she would very much like the NETs to be able to play a leadership role in the English program at the school but that this could cause problems when there was a high turnover of NETs. The Panel Chair felt that the two year contract did not

work well for the school. She said that “in their first year NETs are adjusting to the school, and in their second year NETs are adjusting to leaving the school”. The Panel Chair said that it took at least half a year for a new NET to adjust to the ways of the school. Retention of NETs was a problem for the Panel Chair because she was charged with the tasks of attracting new and suitable NETs to the school, coping with the bureaucracy and visa arrangements, helping them to find accommodation, and settling them into the life of the school. The loss of a NET created a good deal of additional work for the Panel Chair.

The Panel Chair concluded with a comment that the English Panel was open to suggestions and contributions from all teachers, including the NET, because they attempted to build a community based on sharing, collaboration and mutual support.

Classroom Observation

The researchers observed a Form 1 oral English class taught by the NET with the assistance of a local teacher and support teacher. The NET distributed a worksheet with vocabulary that might be useful for the class. As the NET spoke, the local teacher wrote key phrases and words up on the blackboard and also provided quiet explanations in Cantonese to students who were struggling to understand the NET. There were no problems with discipline in the class, as the NET was confident and ably assisted by two other teachers. Many of the students made efforts to produce answers to the NET’s questions and she was very warm and encouraging. She was positive about any attempt to say something in English, regardless of the grammatical accuracy or fluency of production.

The NET asked the students to work in small groups, and to talk about something that had been given to them as a gift, with all three teachers moving around the groups and checking that students were on task. After one or two minutes, the NET asked individual students to relay their discussion to the whole group. It was difficult to convince them to try to do this. They were extremely shy, so that the NET had to repeat their comments for others to hear. There seemed to be good cooperation and spirit between the NET and the local teachers.

The NET

The NET was in the second year of her two year contract with the school and had recently been offered a second contract. She felt that her second year had been much better than her first, because she had built more trust with the English Panel during that time. She expressed satisfaction with her role within the school’s English program, and felt that her professional judgment was valued and that she was integrated into all aspects of decision making about the teaching of English at the school.

The NET was given opportunities to express her preferences in terms of which classes she would like to teach, but this was subject to negotiation with the Panel Chair. She was currently teaching two Form 3 classes (of the most able students) and co-teaching a Form 7 oral language class with the Panel Chair for four periods per week. In addition, she co-taught oral English classes for all Form 1 students. She said that, ideally, she would like to teach oral language exclusively with older students, but that this was not possible because the school had trialed this with previous NETs and been dissatisfied with the outcomes. The school policy was to deploy the NET with the most able students because it was believed a NET could “add value” beyond the capacity of the local teachers with these students. The NET said that the school expected the students’ exam results to be improved by their contact with the NET. It was also argued that NETs could not cope with lower ability students, because NETs could not revert to Cantonese to explain difficult concepts. In the class that was observed, this function was taken up by the local English teacher and the teaching assistant.

In addition to teaching duties, the NET was responsible for many extracurricular activities related to English at the school. She organized student participation in competitions (both within the school and between schools), assembly talks, Hong Kong Speech Festival, and lunchtime and after school enrichment programs (e.g., playing games such as Scrabble and Monopoly with students). Students were encouraged to volunteer to take part in competitions and activities, and it seemed that many did so.

The school also encouraged students to use online speaking and reading programs, but there had been a problem with non compliance (students searching the internet and chatting on MSN rather than completing the assigned tasks), so the use of these computer-based activities now took place only under teacher supervision.

Local English Teachers

Two local English teachers agreed to talk with the researchers about their experiences of the ENET Scheme. Both had been teaching English for more than ten years and during this time had worked with several NETs. They felt that problems arose in the ENET Scheme because NETs sometimes arrived at the school with insufficient or inaccurate information about what to expect and what would be expected of them. They said that many of the NETs' complaints about the low proficiency of the students, large class sizes and discipline problems could be minimized if NETs had a better understanding of the conditions in the school before they arrived.

Both teachers enjoyed their opportunities to co-teach with a NET, and felt that there was good cooperation and collaboration between parties in the classroom. They said that co-teaching usually took the form of the NET leading the lesson and the local teacher supporting the NET. The local teachers could tell when students did not understand the NET, and could fill in the gaps. In terms of their own professional development as a result of co-teaching with a NET, the teachers said that they were impressed with the NETs use of non textbook materials for teaching. They liked the way that she used newspaper articles to teach current affairs topics, and the use of songs and other popular culture to spark students' interest. They were expecting to draw on the NET's expertise in language arts and to cooperate with other Panel members and attend professional development to come to terms with the new curriculum.

More than anything else, the local English teachers believed that the success of the ENET Scheme depended on the quality of the NETs. A good NET was welcomed into the school with enthusiasm, while a poor NET "caused misery for everyone".

Teaching Assistant

School D was the only school in which the use of a support teacher working with the NET was observed. Discussion of his role revealed that he had two major responsibilities in addition to the assistance he provided to the NET. As a native Cantonese speaker with excellent English, he supported teachers of subjects other than English (liberal studies, integrated science and maths) when they were teaching subject matter in English, and managed the tendering process for external service providers. The school had secured a large bank of grant money. Service providers were used to support drama lessons, in particular, and to provide professional development workshops to bring teachers up to date on language arts aspects of the English curriculum (poetry, drama and short stories). The role of the NET was to act as an advisor when the school was choosing what types of services they wanted to bring to the school and which providers would be most suitable for the school's requirements. She was expected to help write proposals to secure some of the school's grant money and to

observe and report on the external service providers. The NET and the teaching assistant agreed that there was disparity in the quality of the service providers, and it was the NET's responsibility to prepare reports on the value of individual programs for students and teachers.

Form 3 Students

Fifteen Form 3 students were interviewed as part of the visit to School D. They were accompanied by the Principal, who prompted them and encouraged them to try to answer questions. They were initially very shy and reticent. However, over the duration of the meeting they gradually became more confident and started to try to answer questions.

When asked about the NET, several students said that they liked the opportunity to hear about other cultures and others said that they thought the NET's pronunciation of English was very good and that it was helpful to hear how a native-speaker pronounced difficult words.

The students commented that English is very different to Cantonese. They said that it was very difficult to learn the rules of the grammar but that they all liked listening to songs in English. There was a short discussion about favourite songs and movies, in which the students became quite animated and started to freely volunteer information and ideas.

Summary

School D had deployed NETs over an extended period of time, and had developed several strategies for integrating the NET into the English program. The school was very well-resourced and active in securing funding to support English teaching. There was an established protocol to support collaboration between all members of the English Panel, including the NET, and to ensure that local teachers and students had many opportunities to draw upon the NET's skills and experience.

School E

School E was a well-resourced school for boys, with access to a Multimedia Learning Centre, a Student Activity Centre and every class room was equipped with internet and projectors. There was an English Centre, a chapel and a computer laboratory. There were 16 English teachers in the school and over 1000 students allocated over 24 classes for English. The Panel Chair was given the responsibility of organizing and allocating workloads for all the teachers and to make sure that the NET felt confident to ask for advice, and to give advice to the Panel Chair when it was sought.

School Principal

The Principal was in his first year in the position. He had previously been the Deputy Principal and Head of the English Department for a number of years. As Head of the English Department he had already shared one year with the current NET and six or seven years with a previous NET in the school. He discussed the English curriculum and the history of NETs being appointed to the school. The NET was regarded as a regular English teacher in the school with a load that consisted of three classes of teaching and some work on oral language for the local teachers. Other schools tended to use the NET to teach only oral language for all students, but this was regarded by the Principal at School E as erroneous because the NETs could not teach so many students effectively and, if they attempted to do so, they could not get to know the students. The best deployment practice, according to the Principal, was a mix of normal classes and oral language teaching. This meant that the NET began to understand the English style of teaching a little better at the school.

The Principal believed that it was common for NETs to have problems dealing with classroom discipline. He suggested there was a need for preparation of the NETs to understand the notion of discipline in the Chinese classroom. The standards of classroom behaviour and classroom organization are different in the Chinese culture from those many NETs experience in their home countries. In many instances, noise is regarded as a discipline problem. Many of the NETs were trained to give practice in oral language and to encourage the students to talk. However, this was something of a problem for local teachers who heard the noisy classrooms and regarded this as a problem. Oral language classes conducted by local Chinese teachers were quiet. Choral language was the norm when students spoke out loud. In all other instances they spoke only when spoken to by the teacher. They responded but they did not initiate communication. Ideas about how to conduct an oral language class, and also about what constitutes a problem of classroom discipline, differed between NETs and local teachers.

The NET's terms of service, salary and conditions including allowances had been put forward as a problem in many schools but these were not considered a problem in this school. It was important, according to the Principal, to set the expectations for the NET and to ensure that the norms were shared by both NETs and local teachers. There would always be a need for compromise with culture in the school. The local teachers needed to understand the culture of the NET and the NET needed to understand the culture of the Hong Kong system and of the school. It was important that both the local teachers and the NET understood the difficulties that the NET faced and the way in which these difficulties might be resolved. Both the NET and the local teachers had to be ready to adapt and to cooperate. As part of this process, the Principal said that meetings in this school were now regularly held in English. This was a major compromise by the school in order to accommodate the NET.

The NET

This was the eighth year that the NET had spent as a teacher in Hong Kong. Four years had been spent in the Primary NET Scheme. This was his second contract in secondary schools. His first contract was spent in an inner-city school enrolling Band 1 students along with an international clientele and students. So moving to a school in the New Territories represented a new experience for the NET. He clearly relished the challenge and had established a warm rapport with the Principal, teachers and students at the school.

The NET was very well-integrated into the environment of School E, chatting with students in a natural and friendly manner. He was routinely available to help the students and teachers after classes at the end of the day. He had many formal and informal chances to mix with colleagues and elicit their cooperation. The NET reported that he certainly did not feel isolated.

Students from Forms 5 and 7

Two Form 5 students and four Form 7 students took part in a discussion of their ideas about being taught by a NET at School E. They related with enthusiasm that the NET provided lessons on idiomatic English and cultural aspects of English-speaking countries. He gave the students opportunities to practise English in their daily life. Outside of the school, students had little or no opportunity to use English and if they tried to do so they met opposition and resistance by most Chinese speakers who regarded them as inappropriately using English in the Chinese community.

The students thought that the local English teachers could not teach them about Western culture. The NET showed them how language and culture were intertwined. They observed that the English language of the classroom was different to those language aspects used in normal conversation in an English speaking culture.

It was important to the students that the NET was not exam oriented, or did not appear to be so to the students. The students felt that they needed non-class time to converse with the NET in English and they found that the NET was both a friend and a mentor in English.

Summary

Conversations with the NET indicated that his position at School E was a fortunate and privileged one. The Principal and the NET were friends, approximately of the same age group, and sharing a similar value system. The NET appreciated the opportunity that the school had given him and showed flexibility and capacity to adapt to different contexts. The researchers left the school with the impression that this was a relaxed, family-oriented and excellent institution. The students expressed an earnest desire to improve their English skills. The Principal and the NET were keen to provide information about the ENET Scheme at their school and showed a strong mutual commitment to the school's English program.

School F

School F had 1030 students in 29 classes – five in each year level up to Form 5, and then two classes in Forms 6 and 7. The school was described by the Principal as “mixed Banding” with most students in Band 2, about a third of students in Band 1, and a small number of Band 3 students. Students in S1 – 3 were taught in their mother tongue but the school also made efforts to promote English for junior Forms. There were many English activities organized for the younger students, including an English Week once a year and an English Day every week. The Principal's description of the efforts made at the school to promote the use of English were borne out by an environment decorated with signs in both English and Chinese, and notices being read over the public address system in English and Cantonese.

The school was well resourced for the teaching of English. Teachers could draw on textbooks, resource books, online resources stored on the school server, and there was a culture of sharing resources and ideas with each other. In their efforts to gain the interest of the students, they had recently shifted to using resources that were described as more “authentic”, including newspapers, videos, TV programs, magazines, food menus and maps. The Panel had a regularly time-tabled co-planning meeting every cycle that allowed teachers to discuss and exchange materials.

Originally, School F was an EMI school, and was still fed by an EMI primary school, but the school management supported the principle of mother tongue education for lower forms. This caused some concern among parents, who were anxious about their children's access to classes taught in English. The Principal said that parents expected to see the NET when their children started at the school, and so it was vital that the NETs be deployed in the junior Forms.

School Principal

The Principal explained that the school deployed two NETs. They had decided to cut one of the local English teachers and instead deployed an additional NET. The Principal said that they started to employ NETs ten years ago (one of the current NETs) and that at that time they had not been sure how to use a NET in the school. He initially gave the oral classes for

all students to the NET. Later, he decided that this was not the best arrangement because the NET felt cut off from the students. The Principal's expectations of the NETs were that they helped students in oral classes, were able to take up some classroom teaching and, ideally, some duties as a homeroom teacher. He said that parents always asked "Who will be my son's homeroom teacher?" so the school grouped the most able students into two classes and assigned the NETs as homeroom teachers to these classes.

In general, the Principal's opinion was that it was better to employ a NET who was a devoted teacher rather than someone who styled himself as an 'expert' and tried to tell the other teachers what they should do. He looked for NETs who were well prepared for their lessons, used different activities to arouse the interest of the students, and could devise activities that encouraged students to participate.

English Panel Chair

The Panel Chair had been an English teacher for ten years and had occupied the role of Panel Chair at School F for three years. She spoke about the new curriculum and the challenges it would pose for local English teachers, saying that many of the teachers felt unprepared to teach the Language Arts content. However, the Panel Chair did not believe that the NETs should be expected to assist the local teachers in the transition to the new curriculum. She said that it was important for the local teachers to equip themselves rather than to rely on the NETs. The Panel Chair planned to use grant funds to ask publishers to offer training workshops and would bring in external service providers so that local teachers could observe their programs.

The NETs took leading roles in preparing students for the Speech Festival, but the Panel Chair was concerned about overloading the NETs with too many extracurricular duties. It was clear that NETs were seen as a precious resource in the school, and one that needed to be used wisely. It was acknowledged by both the Principal and Panel Chair that it was difficult to secure the services of a good NET.

The Panel Chair said that she would like opportunities to learn from the NET Section or other Panel Chairs about the best ways to deploy NETs and, in particular, how to motivate boys to be interested in learning English. She said that the students were very keen on maths and science, but reluctant to practise oral English. She said that, in general, it was accepted that NETs provided opportunities for students to speak English in an authentic environment. However, she added that local teachers, students and parents felt concern over whether or not a NET could prepare students for the exams.

The NETs

School F deployed its two NETs in quite different ways, and it seemed that this strategy was driven in large part by the strengths and interests of the NETs.

The first of the two NETs at School F explained he was deployed with two regular Form 1 classes, took five other classes for oral English, helped to organize the English Corner, selected service providers to run programs, and organized English games that were popular with younger students. He said that his full teaching load meant that he did not have much time to organize extracurricular activities.

The NET said that he tried to attend at least 50% of the NET cluster meetings because he valued opportunities to hear about new strategies that worked with the local students. However, he did not think that he would be able to share any of the strategies from the NET

meetings with the local teachers because many of them were quite specific to the problems faced by NETs (e.g., how to communicate when there is a language barrier) and so not relevant for the local teachers.

The second NET had been in Hong Kong for seven years and working at School F for six years. She opened her comments by saying that she felt there was a perfect match between the school's requirements and her own interests in teaching. Her teaching experience in her home country included working with students with behavioural problems, and she had asked to be given duties as a Form teacher because she wanted to take on a pastoral care role. The NET was pleased when the school asked her to teach Form 6 students. She took this as a personal challenge, and wanted to see if she could teach these students in a more dynamic and motivating way.

As part of her role, the NET had been given opportunities to chair meetings and model collaborative discussion. She said that it was usual for teachers to be told what to do in such meetings, but that she had gradually introduced the concept of asking questions at meetings, seeking clarification and offering alternative ideas.

Although very happy with her current deployment, the NET thought there was a need for more accountability in the ENET Scheme. She argued that the NET Section, Principal and individual NET needed to jointly negotiate a scheme of work that met the needs of the school and the strengths of the NET at the start of a contract and that this should be subject to annual review. She said that there should be differentiation between EFL trained teachers and English teachers, and that they should be deployed in schools that would most benefit from their different types of training.

Local English Teachers

Three of School F's local English teachers (ranging in experience from two to 17 years) commented that the best way to improve the ENET Scheme was to have more NETs in schools because they pushed the students to speak in English. They said that there was too much emphasis on the qualifications of the NET, when what really mattered was the willingness of the NET to run lots of activities for the students. They said that students would also benefit from access to more native speakers, rather than NETs, especially if these were young people who could talk with the students about topics of interest to them.

The local teachers said that they would love to have more time to share ideas with the NETs and to learn about Western culture so they could pass this information on to their students. Asked about their own opportunities to work with a NET, the teachers said that they valued a chance to ask about the pronunciation of difficult words, to discuss colloquial terms and their meanings, and to share new and creative ideas. They also liked to have opportunities to help the NET by translating for them, working together in the classroom and helping the NETs to understand the ways that Chinese students learn English. The teachers expressed a hope that the New Senior Secondary Curriculum would give them opportunities to learn from the NETs and to find ways to make teaching English more enjoyable for their students.

Summary

In School F, as in several other schools, NETs were regarded as a scarce resource to be used wisely and with discretion. The Panel Chair was very concerned that the school might not be getting the best value from its NETs and was keen to find ways to learn more. Both the Principal and Panel Chair spoke about the need to accommodate the interests of the NETs and make sure that they felt valued and happy in the school. This was shown in the different

patterns of deployment of the NETs at the school, and the different responsibilities they had been assigned. School F gave both NETs a full teaching load and did not differentiate duties between NETs and local teachers. This was seen as positive by the NETs, who both expressed their satisfaction with their deployment at the school, but the local teachers were unsure whether this was the best possible use of NETs and conjectured whether NETs might be better deployed so that they were available as a resource for all students and teachers.

School G

School G was a CMI school enrolling 980 students, all of whom were described by the Principal as working at Bands 1 or 2. He explained that 50% - 60% of the students aspired to attend university after leaving the school. The current NET was on the second year of her contract at the school, and had worked as NET in a primary school prior to her deployment at School G.

School Principal

The Principal said he was confident to leave most decisions about English teaching and NET deployment at the school to the English Panel Chair. His primary requirement of a NET was that she be willing to talk with the students. The Principal believed that the deployment of a NET was mandatory at School G, in order to maintain parental confidence in the English program. He said that parents demanded that their children be taught in English at least some of the time, and would complain if the school did not have a NET. However, they also complained if the NET's correction of students' written English was not the same as that of a local English teacher so the Principal thought it was prudent to deploy the NET to oral classes.

The problem of finding a NET who would be a good match to School G's requirement had caused the Principal some concern, but he said that he relied on the judgment of the Panel Chair. The school did not want the NET to teach senior forms or to take a position of responsibility within the English program. Rather, they were hoping that the NET could break down barriers and encourage students to speak in English.

School G used money from the English Enhancement Fund to organize extra English classes for students on grammar and phonics, and he believed that the NET might have a role in the teaching of phonics. However, he stated that it was the role of the Panel Chair to decide which service providers to bring to the school and to ensure the quality of those services.

English Panel Chair and Local English Teacher

The English Panel Chair at School G had been in that role for twelve years. She was accompanied by a senior member of the English Panel, who had been teaching English at the school for 20 years. Both said that they did not have any opportunities to work with the NET because they taught at senior level and the NET only worked with junior students. They said that, as local teachers of English, they were more experienced than NETs at preparing students for the exams.

When asked about the qualities of a good NET, both teachers mentioned the importance of creating a natural environment for speaking English. They said that the current NET had a background as a primary teacher, and so was not intimidating for the younger and less able students. They said that they expected a NET to conduct a lesson entirely in English, and to take oral lessons with perhaps a little reading. However, they said that there was a danger that the new and unfamiliar teaching ideas of the NET could confuse the students. In particular,

the local English teacher said that parents and students were best satisfied with the English program at the school when they had lots of “tangible evidence” of effort such as notes and handouts on grammar. These reassured parents, who often did not speak any English themselves, that their children were indeed being given a good grounding in English.

The teachers hoped the NET would be able to help other teachers when the New Senior Secondary Curriculum was introduced, by contributing ideas about teaching Language Arts. They expected the major challenge of the new curriculum would be making it accessible for the students of lower ability. They argued that the new curriculum was modelled on teaching English as a first language, but that most of the students in Hong Kong were second language learners. They also pointed out that, in their opinions, students and teachers in Hong Kong were very pragmatic. They said that it would not take the coaching clinics long to work out how to drill students for the new exams. They said they would wait until they could see how the students would be examined, and then they would work out a strategy to prepare their students.

At School G, the Panel Chair did not think it was appropriate to deploy a NET to teach regular classes. She said that this would just constrain the NET with too much marking and administration and detract from the school’s expectation that the NET work to encourage students to speak in English. The Panel Chair said that it would be useful if the NET could help out with drama, poetry and other English activities but that the NET should have different goals when working with students of different levels of ability:

- With young and lower ability students, it was important that the NET was not intimidating but rather encouraged students to at least try to speak in English.
- Next, the NET might help to introduce Language Arts content in the classroom.
- If possible, the NET should then help by contributing ideas for the examinations.
- Finally, and only when other goals were successfully met, the NET should organize enrichment activities such as debating teams.

Ideas were shared between members of the English Panel through informal channels at School G. There were no timetabled opportunities for the NET and local teachers to co-plan or discuss strategies for teaching English. Rather, the NET was located close to the Panel Chair and other members of the English Panel in the staff room and there were many opportunities for casual conversation.

At School G, there was a policy of keeping meetings brief (never longer than two hours) and there was no expectation that teachers would remain on school premises after 3.30pm unless they had a specific reason for doing so. The Panel Chair said that the Principal fostered an atmosphere of mutual trust with his teachers, and that they responded in kind.

The two teachers said that they understood that different schools had quite different ideas to their own about how best to deploy a NET, but that they were confident that they had chosen wisely in the interest of their own students. They said that, more than anything else, the school wanted to make sure that students did not reject English.

The NET

The NET spoke with admiration about the Principal and Panel Chair and said that so much of the school’s positive atmosphere came from the personality of the leaders. She pointed out the bright colours of the buildings, and said that the school made an effort to be a warm and inviting place.

The NET said that there was a culture of compliance in Hong Kong schools that meant it was very difficult to question existing practices or bring about change. Asked about the introduction of the new curriculum, she acknowledged its strengths but wondered whether Hong Kong teachers would be able to teach it, at least in the short term. She said that the teachers were concerned about the Language Arts content, and she also questioned the value of using formative assessment at the end of education rather than as an ongoing process of assessing and then adjusting teaching. The NET spoke with regret about the lack of remedial classes or use of split class teaching at the school. She said that there was no chance to tailor teaching to suit the needs of individual students in most schools, so that once students fell behind they stayed behind.

From the NET at School G's perspective, NETs needed better advice on ways to build good relationships with the local teachers. She said that it took quite a while for a new NET to work out the authority structures in the school and to understand the criteria against which a NET would be judged. The NET also said that it would be very helpful if the NET Section could provide more resources that were a balance between fun and preparing students for the exams. She said that the real challenge for the NETs was to adapt to the Hong Kong exam system but still extend the students.

Summary

This was a school in which the NET had been deployed only for oral classes, a strategy that had been rejected by many other schools. The Principal wanted the NET at his school to be pleasant and friendly with students and other teachers, and he felt that a NET's job was to "break down barriers". He said that he thought personal characteristics were more important than teaching qualifications when choosing a NET. The importance of maintaining harmonious personal relationships and mutual respect was raised by each person interviewed at School G.

The Principal and English teaching staff at School G agreed that recruitment and retention of a NET could be a stressful process for a school, and that parental pressure exacerbated that situation. They believed that, while many schools saw the deployment of the NET as a responsibility for the Principal or English Panel, it was preferable if the whole school was involved with the ENET Scheme. It was seen as especially important for other teachers to understand the deployment conditions of a NET to avoid ill feelings and envy. The Panel Chair commented that everyone in the school must understand *why* they had a NET and especially that a NET was not just extra manpower for the English Panel.

School H

School H had a current enrolment of 900 students, but student numbers were falling annually by approximately 100. By 2010 the number was expected to drop to 800 and then stabilize. The Principal indicated that, in order to retain enrolments, the school may have to become an EMI school.

The school had employed a NET since 1995. For six years a single NET had operated in the school. Then, for two years, a second NET had been deployed. One of these NETs had taught in Southern China and was familiar with the culture and language. That NET worked well with the local teachers and students and had learned to speak Cantonese. After this NET left the school, there was a period of two years when no NET was allocated to the school.

Student reluctance to learn English was considered a serious problem at School H. The Principal described some of the Form 3 students as unable to do more than list the letters of

the English alphabet. Many of the students came from very poor home backgrounds. Very few of them were expected to pass English in the A-level examinations.

The English Panel in the school consisted of 12 teachers, including the NET. It was organized so that there were coordinators for each of the year levels in the school. The NET had the role of Department secretary and coordinator of English activities in the school. He did not take a guiding role in the development of teaching programs or resources. This was left to the senior teachers in the department.

The school had obtained a grant from the English Enhancement Scheme to spend over a period of six years to develop language materials for the school. This was regarded as a task for the Panel Chair but not necessarily one that would involve the NET. For the most part, the funds would be used to develop materials compatible and consistent with the new curriculum. Materials for junior classes would be developed focusing on learning English through songs and poetry, drama shows and short stories. These topics and content areas were chosen because most of the English teachers in the school had studied English literature as part of their university courses and felt comfortable developing these topics. Professional development for the teachers was consistent with these topics and was provided externally by local commercial publishers. The point of the professional development was to promote discussion through drama, songs and short stories as part of the language arts component of the new curriculum.

The school had a small English Corner in one of the classrooms, where students could watch television and films, or read books and comics, but larger events such as debates or drama activities were conducted in the school hall. The students also ran an English Club. This was a project for the Form 6 students who worked with the NET to develop oral language through the Club. One student, trained by the NET, had won second prize in a public speaking competition. This was regarded as a major achievement for the NET.

School Principal

Despite a negative experience with a NET in the past, the Principal was a strong supporter of the ENET Scheme. He ensured that there was a very early induction program for the NET so that there would be “no surprises” when the NET arrived at the school. With the English Panel Chair, he established internet and e-mail connections with the NET and together they informed the new teacher about the character of the school, the likely workload, living conditions and expectations. The NET expressed his appreciation of this information. A local teacher was also appointed as a mentor for the NET. This helped the induction and assimilation of the NET into the local community. The NET spoke Mandarin as well as English, but did not speak any Cantonese. Deployment of an Asian NET in a CMI school with Band 3 students, was regarded as a sound strategy by the Principal at School H.

The Principal said that it was important for the morale of both the NET and other English teachers that the NET be treated exactly the same as all other teachers. He did not think it was in the NET’s best interest to be deployed across all year levels, and there were no formal or informal arrangements for the NET to work with students who were not part of his regular classes. Students who were allocated to the NET had six English classes with him each week.

When asked about the resources available for English learning at the school, the Principal said that he would like to have more teachers rather than more equipment and resources. He said that people are always more important than things like computers, and expressed a negative view about the impact of IT and the internet on student learning. He said that he would ideally like to have more than one NET at the school.

English Panel Chair

The Panel Chair had occupied that role in the school for 15 years. She viewed deployment of a NET in a school with Band 3 students as very challenging. She was concerned that NETs might be more effective in schools with Band 1 students where discipline problems were less difficult to manage, and student enthusiasm and commitment to learning English greater. The role of the NET in a school with Band 3 students, however, could be beneficial if the NET was not considered part of the teacher allocation for the school. This would enable the NET to reduce workloads and take on roles and duties the local teachers normally had to carry out. The Panel Chair argued that, in a school Band 3 students, the NET should be considered as an added resource rather than one member of the normal teacher group.

The NET

The NET had been deployed in the school to teach A-level English to Forms 6 and 7 and one of the Form 3 classes described by the Principal as the “best students”. The NET was deployed by the English Panel Chair to the upper levels of the school mainly due to her previous experience with foreign teachers. This had shown the school, and the Panel Chair in particular, that inability to speak or understand Cantonese rendered the NET vulnerable to discipline issues among students who were disinterested in learning English.

The role of the NET in the school was well-defined and the relationship between the NET and the local teachers was very positive. The NET was clearly given parity of esteem with local teachers. The NET was also allocated the task of secretary of the English Panel. Hence, the NET took minutes of the meetings, prepared the newsletter, proof read all materials in English, assisted with Game Day and managed the English Club.

Peer observation of classes was common practice at School H, although only so that local teachers could observe the NET. The NET did not observe the local teachers. The procedure for observing the NET in the classroom was controlled by the NET who was in charge of inviting teachers to do so. This tended to restrict the peer observation to those teachers with whom the NET felt comfortable.

Classroom Observation

The NET was observed working with a class of senior students in a well-equipped, although sparsely decorated, classroom. The room was wired at the front for internet connection although there was no computer linked to the outlets. At the front of the room was a standard chalkboard and the NET used the chalkboard extensively throughout the lesson.

The lesson content was based on a 2007 A-level examination question on a controversial topic of animal cruelty in Hong Kong and the laws associated with this problem. The students were asked to undertake an exercise of writing a paragraph based on topic sentences. It was clear that the lesson and the subject focused on preparation for the A-level examination.

Students

A short meeting was organized with four of the senior students. The students said that they did not use any English outside school, apart from occasionally watching an English television program. They did not use the English Club at the school, or draw on any other resources that the school had available to support their English studies. The online reading

program had been available at the school for six years, but the students said that neither they nor their fellow students used it with any regularity.

From the perspective of the students, the teaching style of the NET differed from other English teachers because he used movies, made loans of books to students and used materials from his home country. The NET commented that Hong Kong was a very exam oriented culture, and differed from his home country where there was school-based assessment and more room for experimentation. He said that he needed to spend time before each class, persuading students that the activity would be helpful for their exam preparation and that he needed to do a lot of scaffolding for each class. He said that, in his experience, the students were not accustomed to speaking in class in either English or Cantonese, and were reluctant to do so because of their fear of making errors.

English Panel Members

A meeting was conducted with members of the English Panel, including the NET, the Panel Chair and the deputy Principal. Its purpose was to discuss the use and allocation of resources within the English department at the school and the impact, influence and involvement of the NET in the development, acquisition and use of those resources. The teachers made it clear that allocation of duties was the sole responsibility of the Principal and the Panel Chair. The role of the NET was to provide the teachers with an authentic opportunity to practise English. It was also important that the NET provided an authentic background and context for the A-level students. For this reason the NET was allocated senior classes in the school.

The teachers did not connect the NET, and the contribution he could make to teaching practices and resources, explicitly to changes associated with the New Senior Secondary Curriculum. Preparation for the new curriculum at School H had consisted of workshops on poetry, songs, drama and teaching strategies for the electives. School-based assessment was being used to assist in the transition to the new curriculum. The NET pointed out that the old curriculum encouraged students to think of English as a subject, to be used to get a better job, but that the new curriculum would make students think of English as a language and a culture.

The shift in the examination from a normative approach to standards referenced approach was greeted with some enthusiasm by the teachers. As was the case in many other schools, the teachers saw the change more as an alteration in content rather than a philosophical, organizational and learning issue. Minimal change in teaching strategy was envisaged. The shift to a language arts approach, with an emphasis on drama, poetry, songs and English activities, could well be an indication that the teachers understood the new curriculum change as an emphasis on content but not the emphasis on strategy or organization. The shift to assessment of proficiency rather than scores or grades was mentioned but without elaboration or connection to teaching strategies.

Summary

The Panel Chair at School H held the view that the NET should not be counted amongst the normal allocation of teaching staff within the school and a NET should allow some relief of teaching load for the local teachers. However, the NET at School H was regarded as an ordinary teacher and was used as such.

The school had been active in attracting grant funds. Access to grant funds meant that new resources were being developed. Multi media and IT facilities did not seem to play an important role in instruction and this may have reflected the Principal's negative view of the role of information technology in learning.

The consensus opinion between school leaders, teachers and the NET at School H was that success for the ENET Scheme depended on the quality of the communication between the NET and other teachers, and clear information being provided to the NET about the school's expectations and the conditions of deployment. The NET was accepted as a fellow teacher by other members of the English Panel, and had made a concerted effort to be well-integrated into the school and its community.

School I

School I was located on the outer edges of the New Territories. A CMI school that enrolled Band 3 students as well as many others with special needs, it was considerably smaller than other schools visited during this evaluation. However, it was cheerfully decorated with over-sized banners promoting an English Festival and other activities. It was English Week at the school, and the parents had visited that day to observe lessons and a drama performance.

Although class sizes at School I were around 40, they were split into three groups based on ability, with a ratio of 12 to 15 students per teacher, to cater for individual differences. The school received grant funding to help them employ additional teachers and implement special education programs.

The School Principal

The Principal had occupied that role at School I for four years, and commented that in addition to a new English Panel Chair he also had a very new NET who had only been with the school for two weeks. The Principal spoke of his difficulties finding an appropriate NET to suit School I, and his great relief in finally accomplishing this task. He said that the NET had an understanding of students with learning difficulties and so was able to relate well to the mission of the school.

The Principal commented on the challenges facing NETs who came from their own countries to work in Hong Kong. He said that he understood that some schools expected NETs to work very long hours but that this was not the case in his school. He did not believe it was important how long NETs spent at work; what mattered was that they finished all their duties. However, he felt that it would be most helpful if the NET Section briefed prospective NETs more thoroughly on the expectations and conditions they would encounter in Hong Kong schools.

As an ex English teacher, the Principal took a close interest in the English program at the school. He was closely engaged in the task of securing a NET for the school and commented on the distress for all concerned if a NET proved unsatisfactory. The school had been very disappointed over previous bad experiences with NETs, the most recent of whom had abruptly resigned without providing any explanation.

When asked about the qualities of an ideal NET, the Principal said that they should:

- cooperate with the other members of the English Panel;
- take extra duties even if not directly related to English teaching;
- be devoted to the students;
- be ready to use multimedia such as MSN and email to try to boost the interest of the students; and
- be able to handle student discipline, although this was acknowledged as hard if they could not cope with the language barrier.

The work of the NET was supervised by the English Panel Chair who gave feedback via classroom observation. The NET was also given opportunities to observe the teaching of other English teachers. Peer observation was considered to be a useful tool to help teachers learn from each other. The Panel Chair was expected to ensure that the NET implemented the school based curriculum.

Much information was shared between teachers at School I via informal conversation. The NET sat close to the Panel Chair in the staff room. The school also had a formal appraisal system, in which a summary of a written report was provided to the NET.

The philosophy of the school was strongly based on the understanding that every child was able to learn, and that it was not important or useful for students to be compared against each other. The Principal said that the NET was still a bit unfamiliar with the school's philosophies even though she had taught in other schools with Band 3 students..

The NET was assigned two classes of teaching and additional oral classes. She was also expected to help with activities for English Week and the school's drama production. However, her main task was to teach phonics.

The school had decided to join the Hong Kong Drama Competition, and had won five prizes in the English category. This was a source of considerable pride for everyone, and they had also been invited to perform for community groups. Participation in drama activities was seen as a way to coax students to attempt activities they might otherwise have resisted or rejected as too hard.

The school used a number of strategies to disseminate new ideas and give teachers opportunities for professional development, including classroom peer observation, co-planning sessions, use of resources from the British Council and school-based workshops. The NET was informed of any training opportunities and encouraged to attend. Indeed, the school tried to encourage local English teachers and NETs to participate in training activities together. The school provided translation for the NET for any workshops conducted in Chinese.

The English Panel Chair

The Panel Chair was newly appointed to that role (four months) after two years as an English teacher at the school, and had been a primary teacher prior to his decision to start working in secondary education. He was particularly interested in research on learning difficulties (dyslexia), and this had attracted him to the school. In addition, the Principal of School I had a Masters degree in Arts education with a particular interest in using drama to foster students' confidence to use English, and the Panel Chair had experience in implementation of a drama curriculum as part of his work as a primary teacher. He explained that he adapted drama materials to meet the needs of the students at the school, with an emphasis on the use of practical activities, building props, stage management, and learning how to write scripts, saying lines and brainstorming activities. He said that he gained a deep sense of achievement by seeing how students grew in self esteem and improved their ability to speak in English.

The Panel Chair had recently returned from a conference held by the Dyslexia Association in New Zealand. He had adopted the phonics curriculum from the Dyslexia Association of Singapore and was currently working with students on the development of phonological awareness. He said that they were at the beginning stage of working on the short vowel sounds.

The NET

The NET at School I had been deployed in Hong Kong schools since 1998. This was her fifth contract in five different schools. She commented that every school deployed its NET in a different way. She expressed great optimism about her current situation. From her perspective, the ideal deployment conditions were:

- having one regular class to teach so the NET understood the curriculum and the situation faced by other teachers;
- having freedom to make a contribution to the English Department across the school; and
- being well supported while settling into the school. She spoke with appreciation of the school's decision to give her a Teaching Assistant while she got to know the students.

By contrast, in her previous school she had not been given any information in English, could not find out which classroom she was expected to teach in, started teaching a full class of 40 students on her first day, had a very heavy workload of marking (200 pieces of written work per week) and a very heavy workload of oral classes, was expected to be on duty in the English Corner at lunchtime and after school, and also took extra oral lessons three nights per week after school hours. She did not get to know the names of any staff members, and felt that the school only had a NET because it meant a 'free teacher'. The NET commented that School I was a much better place to work than her previous school because of the efforts to create a good English environment. She also said that she thought that the ENET Scheme could benefit from adopting some of the practices of the Primary NET Scheme, particularly in terms of clearly set guidelines for NET deployment.

The NET spoke of the importance of small kindnesses when a person was new to a school. She said that it had been very helpful to her to be included in the school picnic and made to feel like a true member of the teaching staff, rather than an outsider. She said that it seemed obvious that schools should encourage all local teachers, not just the English teachers, to try to talk with the NET but that this was often not the case. She said that it could be very difficult and lonely for a NET in some schools. The NET also commented on how much she appreciated the open and honest communication of the Principal prior to her decision to accept the appointment.

Summary

At School I, the Principal had a sound philosophy of education and, as an ex English teacher, a vision of the way that he wanted English taught at the school. More importantly, he articulated these ideas clearly to his teaching staff. The school was smaller than many others visited during the evaluation, and this may have made it easier for the Principal to create a warm and supportive community in the school.

It was agreed by the Principal, Panel Chair and NET at School I that the ENET Scheme was potentially an excellent initiative if some common sense strategies were adopted. These included that:

- the NET should be made aware of expectations about classroom management;
- efforts should be made to help match NETs to schools; and
- schools should be encouraged to provide support to the NET while they settle into the life of the school.

Appendix C. Survey Participants

Thirty four Principals or Assistant Principals, 74 English Panel Chairs, 79 local English teachers and 64 NETS completed surveys that were conducted online in March 2009. Respondents came from different types of schools, well distributed across all geographic regions of Hong Kong and in terms of other factors that might be expected to hold implications for deployment of NETs. For example, while a majority of respondents came from CMI schools (70% of the NETs, 65% of Principals and English Panel Chairs, 60% of local English teachers), both EMI and CMI schools were represented. Similarly, when asked about the Band level of the majority of their students, 41% of English teachers responded that they were working mainly with Band 1 students, 26% of teachers were working with Band 2 students, and 33% of teachers were working with Band 3 students.

Schools

Most of the schools (approximately 80%) were coeducational and 88% of Principals or Panel Chairs described the financing model for their school as aided. As would be expected, schools using mother tongue as the medium of instruction reported higher enrolments of students who were newly arrived in Hong Kong.

Almost all of the Principals and Panel Chairs reported that all or very nearly all of the English teachers at their school had met the English Language Benchmark requirements. Only two schools reported that less than 80% of the teachers had attained this requirement.

More than 70% of Principals or Panel Chairs said that their school had deployed a NET (whether as part of the ENET Scheme or not) for a duration of ten years or more. Only five of the schools had deployed a NET for five years or less. Most schools were currently deploying one NET through the ENET Scheme, although six of the schools were deploying more than one such NET and two were not deploying a NET at the time of the survey. Twelve of the schools were deploying at least one additional NET who was not employed through the ENET Scheme, and 23 of the schools were employing additional native English speakers to assist in the English language program at the school.

NETs

Of the NETs, more than half (60%) were male and most (81%) were aged over 40 years. Over half were Australian, with NETs also represented from Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Africa, Hong Kong, the United States and China.

Almost half of the survey respondents had been working as NETs for more than six years, although they ranged from a small number who had just embarked on their first deployment as a NET to a few very experienced NETs who had been working in that role for more than ten years. Similarly, 78% of the NETs had been teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) for more than ten years and many had more than 20 years experience as EFL teachers. Only three of the NETs could have been described as inexperienced (i.e., with less than five years experience teaching EFL). Only one of these teachers was also relatively inexperienced as a teacher of English.

The distribution of NETs who responded to the survey in terms of their qualifications and training are shown in Figures C.1 and C.2. Unless otherwise stated, there were no differences between NETs deployed in CMI or EMI schools on the following characteristics.

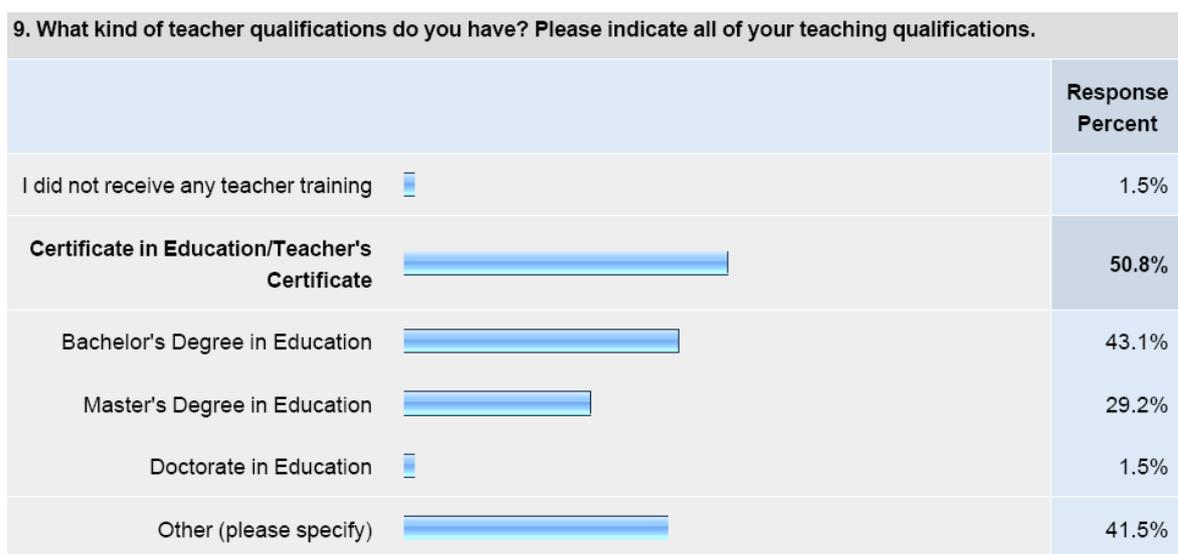


Figure C.1. Distribution of NETs in terms of teacher qualifications.

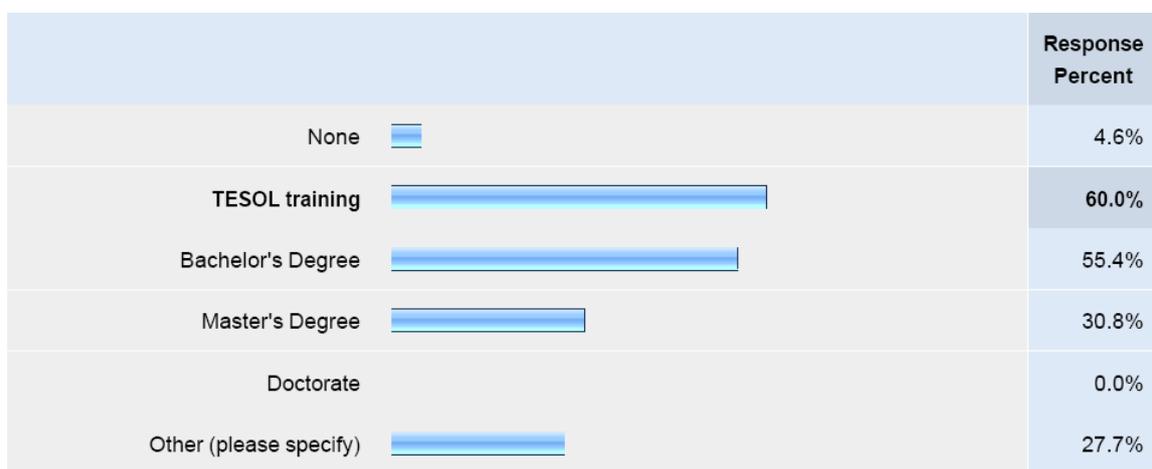


Figure C.2. Distribution of NETs in terms of specialized English teacher qualifications.

NETs deployed in EMI schools were more likely than NETs in CMI schools to have degree-level (Bachelor's or Master's) qualifications in teaching English. NETs deployed in CMI schools were more likely to have TESOL training. The three NETs who responded that they did not have specialized qualifications in teaching English were deployed in CMI schools.

NETs who described their qualifications as other than those listed above tended, in general, to have qualifications specifically related to teaching English as a second language (TESOL) or as a foreign language (TEFL).

The NETs were working across all year levels in their secondary schools, as illustrated in Figure C.3.

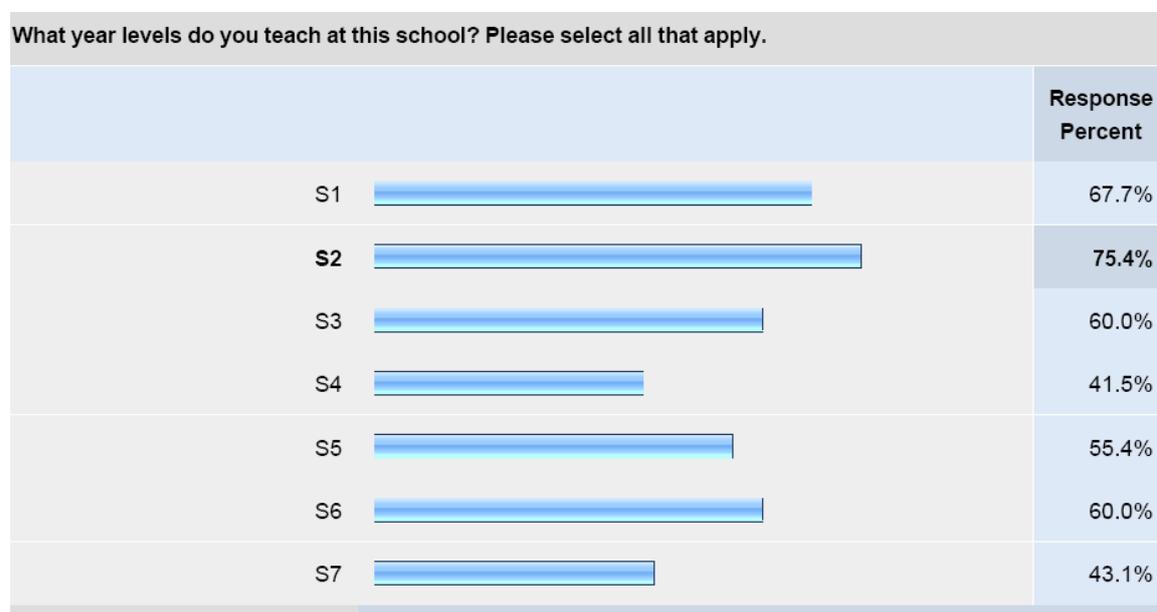


Figure C.3. Distribution of NETs in terms of year levels taught.

In general, NETs working in CMI schools were more likely to be deployed at the upper secondary levels than their counterparts working in EMI schools.

Across all school types, the NETs were teaching or co-teaching an average of 11 class groups, although this ranged from one NET who was not teaching any regular classes to thirteen NETs who were teaching more than 20 class groups. In most schools, class sizes were in excess of 31 students although this varied between schools as shown in Figure C.4.

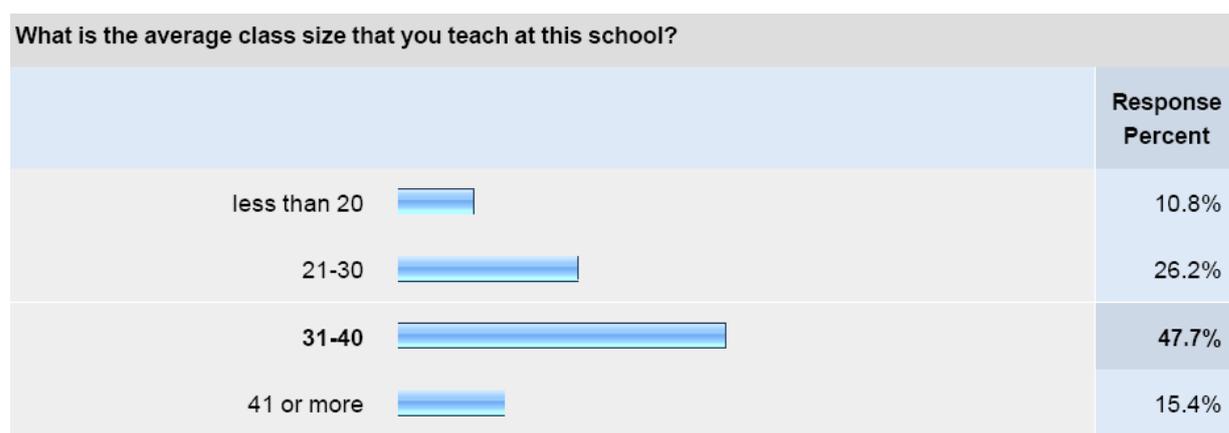


Figure C.4. Distribution of NETs in terms of class size taught.

NETs were asked to compare their workload at their current school with their experiences as a teacher in their home country. Their responses are illustrated in Figure C.5.

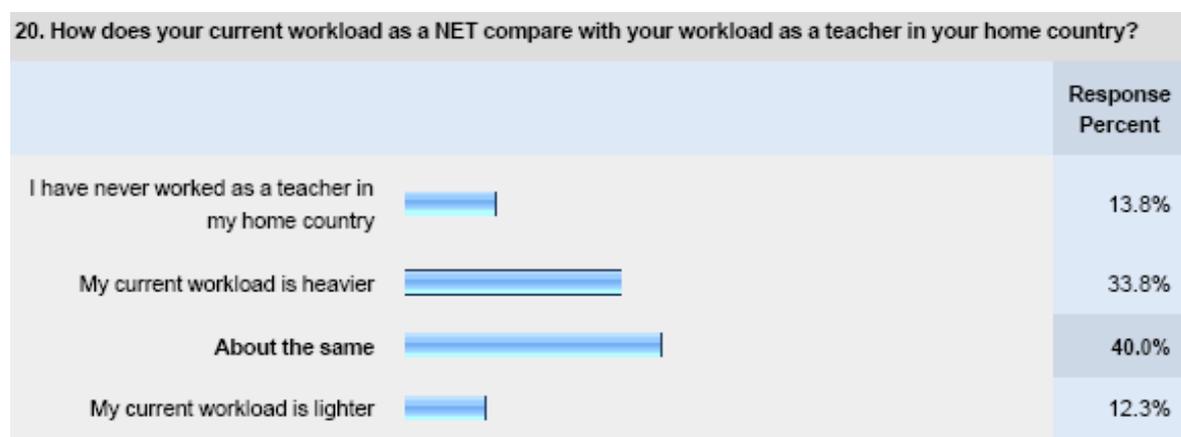


Figure C.5. Distribution of NETs in terms of workload comparison.

Local English Teachers

Of the local English teachers who responded to the survey, most (86%) were female and on average they were a little younger than the NETs. Approximately 60% of the local English teachers were aged less than 40 years. Thus, while a majority of the NETs were male and older than 40 years, most of the local English teachers were female and younger than 40 years.

Most of the local teachers had been working at their current school for more than six years. The distributions of local English teachers in terms of their qualifications and training are shown in Figures C.6 and C.7. Unless otherwise stated, there were no differences between local teachers deployed in CMI or EMI schools on the following characteristics.

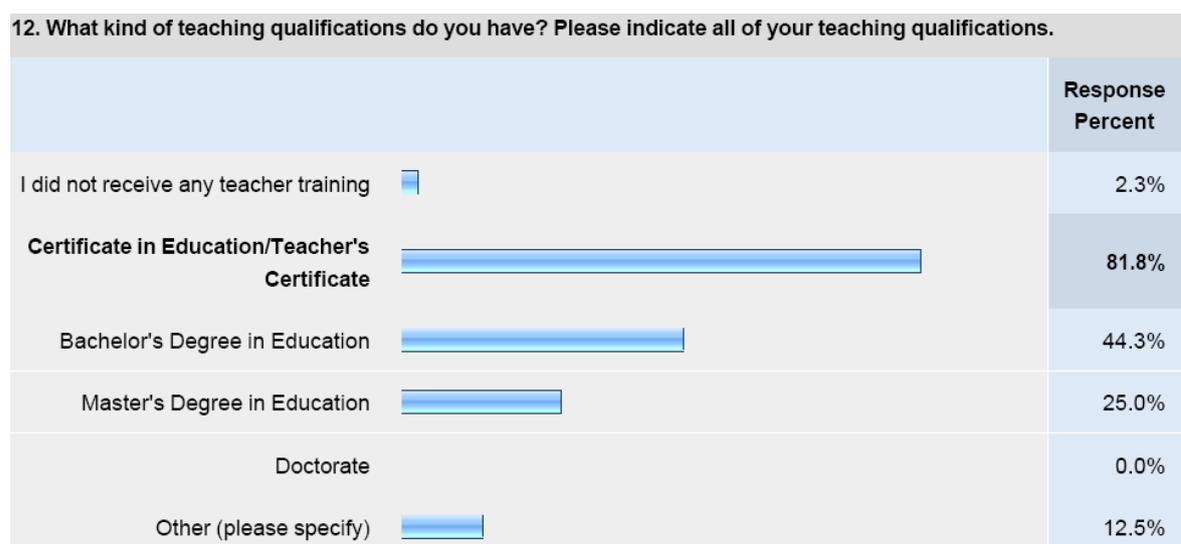


Figure C.6. Distribution of local English teachers in terms of teacher qualifications.

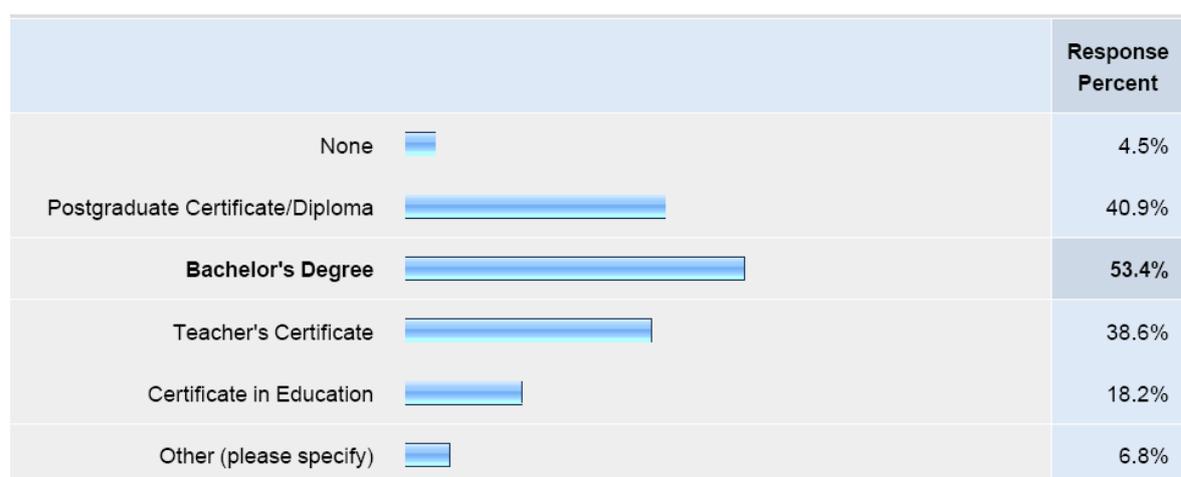


Figure C.7. Distribution of local English teachers in terms of specialized English teacher qualifications.

Local teachers who specified that their qualifications were other than those listed above tended to have Master's level qualifications in linguistics or literary studies.

The local teachers were teaching students at all year levels in their schools, as shown in Figure C.8.

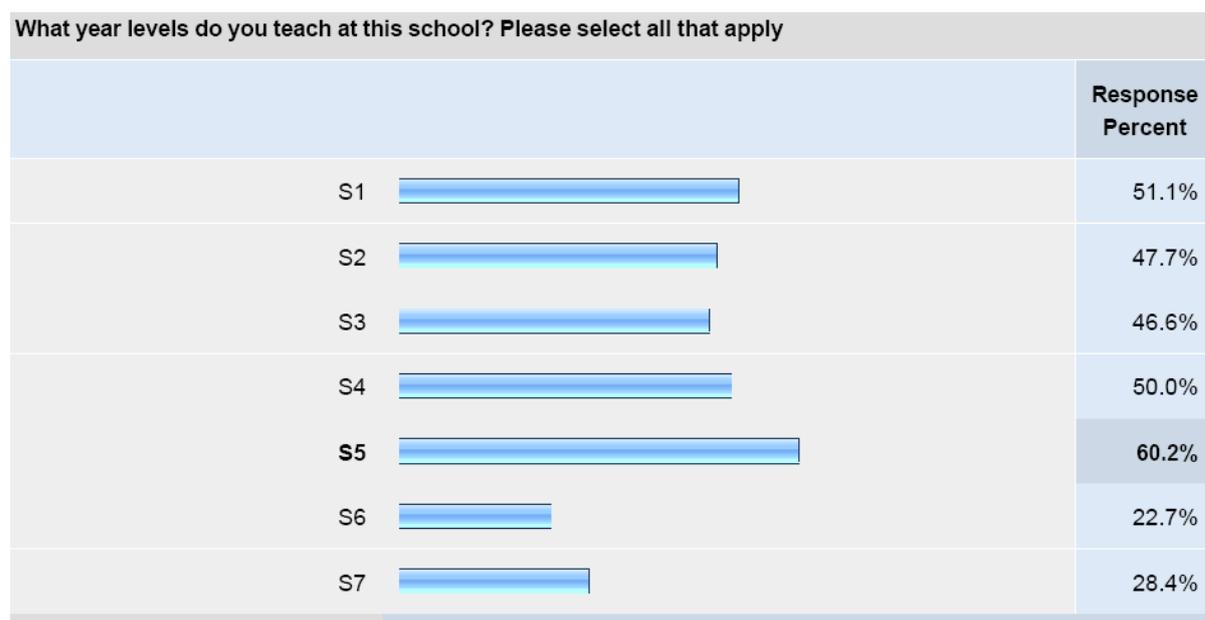


Figure C.8. Distribution of local English teachers in terms of year levels taught.

Local teachers working in CMI schools tended to use less English in instruction than their counterparts in EMI schools. All local teachers working in EMI schools reported that they used English more than 75% of the time during classes while only 57% of local English teachers in CMI schools gave this response. In addition, 28% of local teachers in CMI schools reported that they used English between 51% and 75% of the time in instruction, and 15% of the teachers responded that they used English less than half of the time. Local English teachers who were working in CMI schools were also less likely than their EMI school counterparts to speak English outside school on a regular basis.