

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF INDIVIDUAL GRADES

2.1 During the year, we were invited by the Administration to advise on a number of improvement proposals dealing with individual grades. A summary of our deliberations and recommendations on these proposals are set out in the following paragraphs. The letters to the Governor conveying our advice are reproduced at Appendices D to G.

Alternative Appointment Requirements for Personal Secretary II [Appendix D]

2.2 Despite improvements made to the pay scales of the Personal Secretary grade as a result of our recommendations in the 1989 Salary Structure Review, recruitment difficulties persisted in the Personal Secretary II rank. This was due to a shortage of candidates with the stipulated shorthand skill required for appointment. According to the findings of a survey conducted by the Administration, the use of shorthand at the Personal Secretary II level was diminishing while demand for word-processing was on the increase. The Administration proposed therefore to modify the entry requirements for Personal Secretary II so that word-processing or audio-typing could be regarded as an alternative to shorthand in order to overcome the recruitment problem.

2.3 While we agreed that office automation had reduced reliance on shorthand, we did not totally endorse the view that word-processing or audio-typing could replace shorthand entirely. We were particularly concerned that the Administration's proposal would eventually lead to a dilution of standards at the Personal Secretary I level, a promotion rank for Personal Secretary II, where shorthand was still required. We were assured by the Administration, however, that such a situation would not arise since there was at present a large pool of Personal Secretary II equipped with shorthand skill who were capable of meeting demand at the higher rank in the foreseeable future. In addition, the Administration would continue to recruit candidates with shorthand skill and provide in-service shorthand training for other staff. On account of such assurances, we accepted the Administration's proposal but urged that it should conduct more detailed study of the problem with a view to identifying longer-term solutions.

2.4 Our advice was accepted by the Administration which has since implemented the proposal.

Creation of New Grade of Primary School Master [Appendix E]

2.5 At present, teaching posts in primary schools were filled by members of the non-graduate grade of Certificated Master/Mistress. To cope with the increasing complexity of primary school management and demand on teachers, the Education Commission recommended in its Report No. 5 the creation of a separate stream of graduate teachers in primary schools. This recommendation was accepted by the Administration. In May 1994, the Administration finalised details for the creation of a new degree grade of Primary School Master and sought our advice on its proposal. The new grade would consist of a four-tier rank structure made up of the Assistant Primary School Master (MPS 19-29), Primary School Master (MPS 30-33), Headmaster II (MPS 34-39) and Headmaster I (MPS 38-41). The stipulated entry qualification was a relevant degree plus a post-graduate Diploma/Certificate in Education or a Teacher's Certificate. The structure of the new grade was modelled on that for the existing Education Officer grade which was also a degree grade. In addition, the Administration proposed that Primary School Masters who filled headship and deputy headship posts should be awarded an allowance in recognition of the higher level of responsibility assumed by them.

2.6 We supported the creation of the new grade and endorsed the proposed rank structure and the payment of a responsibility allowance to Primary School Masters filling headship and deputy headship posts. We considered, however, that the entry salary point for the basic rank of Assistant Primary School Master should be set at MPS 17, instead of MPS 19, for appointees who possessed only a relevant degree. Appointees who possessed a post-graduate teaching qualification in addition to a relevant degree, however, would qualify for entry at MPS 19. This arrangement was in line with that for appointment to the Education Officer grade.

2.7 We were concerned about the sizable differential between the maximum salary point of Headmaster I (MPS 41) in the proposed Primary School Master grade and that of Principal I (MPS 49) in the Education Officer grade, notwithstanding that they were deployed separately in primary and secondary schools. In order not to hold up the proposal, we recommended that the Administration should undertake a separate review of this issue after the new grade had been created.

2.8 Finally, we were informed by the Administration of the impending establishment of the Hong Kong Institute of Education to provide tertiary level training for prospective teachers and that in due course, the Administration would have to determine the salary point at which graduates of the Institute would enter the Primary School Master grade. In the light of this, we recommended that when the Administration was in a position to do so, it should also make use of the opportunity to undertake an overall review of the rank structure and pay scales of the Primary School Master grade.

2.9 Our recommendations were accepted by the Administration and the new Grade of Primary School Master was created on 1 September 1994.

Creation of New Rank of Assistant Cartographer in Cartographer Grade [Appendix F]

2.10 The Cartographer grade was a relatively small grade responsible for providing policy input to, and technical advice on, the production of maps, plans and related illustrations. Since no degree course on cartography or related subjects had been offered by tertiary institutions in Hong Kong until recently, the rank structure of the grade did not provide for an assistant rank, common in other professional grades, to serve as a training rank to enable fresh graduates to acquire the necessary experience for advancement to the basic rank.

2.11 With the introduction of degree course in Cartography by the Hong Kong Polytechnic and the coming on stream of the first batch of graduates in 1994, the Administration proposed the creation of a new rank of Assistant Cartographer (MPS 16-21) in the Cartographer grade in order to absorb these graduates and to provide them with an opportunity, not readily available in the private sector, to acquire the necessary experience for advancement to the Cartographer rank. This would also secure the supply of qualified Cartographers to meet the needs of the grade which was forecast to run into staff retention problems.

2.12 Having regard to the need to provide training opportunity for local graduates in the specialised subject of Cartography and the Administration's assurance that the proposal would not result in dilution of the quality of the grade, we supported the Administration's proposal for the creation of the new rank of Assistant Cartographer.

2.13 The Administration has since implemented the proposal.

Special Allowance for the Social Secretary and Housekeeper in Government House
[Appendix G]

2.14 The Administration informed us that the workload and responsibilities of the Social Secretary and Housekeeper in Government House had increased considerably over the last two years, with the result that the present remuneration of these two officers had become incommensurate with the duties demanded of them. In normal circumstances, this would call for an overall review of the pay and conditions of service of the two officers in question. The difficulty faced by the Administration was that until the future Chief Executive had been appointed and his/her requirements were known, it would not be appropriate to introduce any permanent change to the Government House establishment or the pay scales of staff. As indicated by the Administration, a major review of the entire Government House establishment would take place post-June 1997.

2.15 In the view of the Administration, retaining the service of these two officers for the less than three years remaining in which there would be a British Governor was desirable because of their considerable experience and the anticipated difficulty in securing suitable replacements for a short contract of two years or so. The Administration therefore proposed that a special allowance equivalent to two increments and one increment be paid to the Social Secretary and Housekeeper respectively.

2.16 Having regard to the significant increase in the complexity of work and level of responsibility of the officers concerned and the need to provide sufficient incentive for them to continue their service in Government House until 1997, we supported the Administration's proposal.

2.17 Our recommendation is under consideration by the Administration.