

1985
MAIN FINDINGS AND SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

The Main Findings

1. The Scheme clearly provides valued professional support to teachers and lay administrators. The second important benefit was improved staff-employer liaison. Also noted were improvements in kindergarten programmes and in the professional development of teachers.
2. A sizeable proportion (25-33%) noted gaps in the ST/SHT's performance of their duties as listed in Circular 1981/102, but most said they were to do with the structure of the Scheme and/or local circumstances. The reason most often cited was the high ratio of kindergartens to ST/SHT.
3. General Duties were generally given lowest priority in order of tasks by ST/SHTs, and many of these had to be omitted or else carried out in personal time. It was not always clear what ST/SHTs meant by 'personal time'.
4. Personal support of teachers took a considerable amount of time.
5. A big majority (78% of ST associations and 97% in SHT associations) said there were snags in the Scheme. In ST associations, they were referring to too many tasks and/or kindergartens to cope with in the time available. In the SHT associations, they mostly said the same thing but also described the stress and complexities for those teaching in the SHTs' own kindergarten.
6. Conditions for the staff and new children in .5 SHT kindergartens were not favourable in the staff and committee's opinion if the SHT was away half the time with a .5 reliever substituting and an additional .6 appointment had been made. There was less concern when two full-time teachers worked with the SHT.
7. The teachers teaching with SHTs are in an anomalous situation where, without prior consultation, they find themselves acting-HT for anything up to half-time and without a higher duties allowance.
8. A high proportion of teachers sharing with SHT (44%) had been teaching one or two years only at the time of the survey - hence, in their first weeks of teaching they found themselves acting as HT regularly although for varying periods. Making the SHT's reliever the acting-HT was an option only a few chose.
9. The conditions of work were found wanting in several areas:
 - The allowances for SHTs were too low to act as an incentive, and any acting-HT allowance is non-existent.
 - The SHTs' office and resource space was often inadequate or non-existent.
 - The travel reimbursement rates at 23.25c per kilometre (1984) are too low to cover all running expenses; therefore ST/SHTs were paying a proportion of these expenses out of their own pockets.

.5 SHT Kindergartens -

Several options were suggested:

1. Making all .5 SHTs full-time STs.
2. Lowering the ratio so that an association with 10 kindergartens would be eligible for a full-time ST - this would leave three .5 SHTs in existence. Others suggested lowering the ratio to a full-time ST being appointed when an association had 12 kindergartens - this would leave seven .5 SHTs in existence.
3. Improving the staff arrangement in .5 SHT kindergartens. The appointment of .6 teachers seemed to introduce one too many part-time teachers (- the third). Most staff and administrators associated with these kindergartens suggested that the .5 relievers become full-time and the .5 SHTs would become additional teachers who may or may not remain attached to their kindergartens during their term as SHTs.
(Note that this proposal allows for the possibility that the SHTs be part-time employees during their term. It also allows for the possibility that the SHT be recruited from outside the existing pool of HTs, although recent HT experience would need to be a qualification).
4. Appointing the teacher sharing as acting-HT (and paying them accordingly) for the duration of the .5 SHTs' term if they are qualified and willing. Otherwise, the long-term relievers could become the acting-HTs.
5. Reviewing mechanisms in administrative systems so that the teacher's situation is considered whenever SHT and/or teacher in SHT kindergarten appointments are made.

Conditions for ST/SHTs and Staff in SHT Kindergartens -

1. The ST/SHTs' mileage allowance is low relative to public service rates. A review of rates is called for. (Note: This is underway.)
2. A high proportion of SHTs were dissatisfied with their allowance. Some felt there was no incentive to apply. This allowance seems in need of review.
3. Staff sharing with SHTs who acted as HT when the SHT was absent are given no higher duties allowance. This situation seems anomalous and should be reviewed according to a large majority of employers and teachers associated with these kindergartens. Some called for back-dating to 1981.
4. Office and resource space was reported to be inadequate or non-existent in some smaller associations. Provisions for such space should be reappraised.
5. .2 SHTs had great difficulty in doing the tasks they felt necessary in the release days allowed, partly because they had least time flexibility. Three options were suggested:
 - (a) increasing the number of release days,
 - (b) employing a part-time teachers' aide, and/or
 - (c) the SHT and association (with teacher consultation) agreeing to a manageable set of tasks from the guidelines in the draft Handbook.

4. Provision for extra part-time SHTs when ST associations are nearing being eligible for another ST.
5. Full-time STs be employed on a set ratio (e.g., 1:15 or 1:20) throughout the country; that is, not employed on a by-association basis.
6. Association boundaries are redefined so that each association would be about the right size to employ a ST (or teams of STs); say, with 15-25 kindergartens per association.
7. Smaller adjacent associations amalgamate. (Note that not all are geographically well-placed to do so, and many see advantages in staying small.)
8. Some agreement about how selected, willing associations may form 'federations' solely for the purposes of employing a SHT or ST, with matching conditions for relievers, acting-HTs and ST/SHTs as apply to staff in associations who are the sole employers. Obviously, the ST/SHT in a 'federation' would have different accountability patterns. It is likely that 'federations' will have different forms to suit local circumstances. (For example, the most common proposal was for ST/SHTs to travel across boundaries which implies the biggest association might loan their ST/SHT to a small one on an agreed-upon formula.)

Any working party on this proposal needs to think about the short-term and long-term consequences for every type of person affected and for the associations (that is, put themselves in each group's shoes) before settling on the structure and functioning of the 'federation'.

Some of these suggestions can stand alone. Others can only lead to improvement if they are combined with others. The 1981 Scheme was a complex one, and improving it is also likely to be a complex task.

It seems likely that changes will be a matter of detail in the associations with STs. More comprehensive changes of the SHT Scheme may be needed to produce effective solutions to the stress points in the smaller associations - to the many penalties to children, SHTs and other staff present in the existing SHT Scheme.