

Legislative Auditor

OVERVIEW

STUDY OF A NEW SALARY CLASS FOR TEACHERS

Honolulu, Hawaii

January 1990

Summary

Hawaii's teachers are the only public employees whose job classifications are set by statute. Section 297.31, Hawaii Revised Statutes, establishes seven teacher classes and their requirements, and Section 297.32 assigns these classes to pay ranges.

Teacher classification in Hawaii follows the model of a "single salary schedule" like that used in over 90 percent of American school districts. The schedule treats all teachers alike, regardless of grade or subject taught. Teachers are promoted from one class to the next based on their education, experience, and the courses they accumulate. To a large extent, therefore, teachers control the rate at which they advance in their careers. The State supports these efforts by providing opportunities for teacher training.

The 1989 Legislature asked the auditor to study the impact of revising the current qualifications for Class VII from a doctorate to five years of college education and 60 earned credits, and also establishing a new Class VIII for teachers who have earned a doctorate. The revised class would give teachers without a doctorate another opportunity to advance.

In examining the proposal, the study found no research evidence that adding another class will raise the quality of education in Hawaii. The proposal represents a large expenditure of funds for uncertain benefits. The Legislature might consider exploring the use of incentive and other compensation programs that are now being pursued for teachers in 25 other states.

FINDINGS

A revised Class VII will likely have a substantial financial and administrative impact upon the State, amounting to more than \$20,000,000 by 1992-93. Actual costs will depend on whether credits already earned by teachers would apply toward reclassification. Many teachers who already have the credits to qualify for the new class will receive an automatic promotion and pay raise. The revised class would not be an incentive for these teachers. The proposal will also have a substantial administrative impact upon the department. The department will need lead time and extra clerical positions to implement the change.

A revised Class VII would have little impact on significant personnel issues such as the retention and recruitment of teachers, particularly those in shortage categories.

There is no research evidence that the proposed Class VII would promote more effective education. Many states are experimenting with incentive compensation systems based on such standards as job function, individual competence, and productivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *In view of the potentially large cost and the lack of evidence that it will improve the quality of public education, the Legislature should not change the classification system for teachers contained in Section 297-31.1 and 297-32, HRS, by revising the current Class VII or enacting a new Class VIII.*

2. *The Legislature should consider exploring alternative ways to compensate teachers for their experience and continued growth. This exploration should include the incentive and reward programs of states and school districts with noteworthy educational programs.*

RESPONSE

The Board of Education had no comments to offer on the recommendations in the report.

The Department of Education responded that it found the study to be satisfactory.

The Hawaii State Teachers Association disagreed with the findings and recommendations in this report. It stated that professional development does improve the quality of education based on the experience of teachers. The association believes that the new class would have a positive impact on recruitment, retention, and shortages. The association also stated that there is no research evidence to support the use of incentive compensation systems.