

LCQ17: Manpower of teachers

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Chow Man-kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (January 10):

Question:

According to the Subsidized Schools Provident Fund Annual Report 2022 of the Education Bureau (EDB), a total of 3 493 contributors withdrew from the Subsidized Schools Provident Fund in the 2021-2022 school year. Among them, contributors with less than 10 years of service accounted for 24 per cent of the withdrawals. There are views that the figures reflect the serious wastage of teachers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of newly-joined teachers (and the percentage of such number in the overall number of teachers) and (ii) the number of teachers who departed (and the percentage of such number in the overall number of teachers) in each of the past three school years, together with a breakdown by length of teaching service (i.e. (a) newly-joined, (b) below 10 years, (c) 10 to 15 years and (d) above 15 years) and type of schools (i.e. (I) kindergartens, (II) special schools, (III) public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary schools and (IV) public sector and DSS secondary schools) (set out in Table 1 the numbers for (I) and (II), and in Table 2 the numbers for (III) and (IV));

Table 1 Type of schools:

Type of teachers	Length of teaching service	Number of teachers (and the percentage of such number in the overall number of teachers)		
		2020-2021 school year	2021-2022 school year	2022-2023 school year
(i)	(a)			
	(b)			
	(c)			
	(d)			
(ii)	(b)			
	(c)			
	(d)			

Table 2 Type of schools:

Type of teachers	Finance type	Length of teaching service	Number of teachers (and the percentage of such number in the overall number of teachers)		
			2020-2021 school year	2021-2022 school year	2022-2023 school year
(i)	Public sector	(a)			
		(b)			
		(c)			
		(d)			
	DSS	(a)			
		(b)			
		(c)			
		(d)			
(ii)	Public sector	(b)			
		(c)			
		(d)			
		(b)			
	DSS	(b)			
		(c)			
		(d)			

(2) whether it has studied the respective reasons for departure of the aforesaid experienced teachers and teachers with shorter length of teaching service, and formulated corresponding measures to retain talents;

(3) whether it knows the numbers of course places (broken down by full-time and part-time courses) of and the actual student enrolments in the teacher training courses provided by the five universities offering Bachelor of Education and Post-graduate Diploma in Education programmes (PGDE programmes) (i.e. the University of Hong Kong (HKU), the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK), the Hong Kong Baptist University and the Hong Kong Metropolitan University) in each of the past three school years and the current school year, together with a breakdown by level of education (i.e. kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and special education) and major teaching subject (including but not limited to Chinese Language, English Language, Geography and Economics); of the principles and criteria for allocation of places for the aforesaid teacher training courses; and

(4) given that the EDB will increase the number of places for part-time PGDE programmes of three universities, namely HKU, CUHK and EdUHK, in designated subjects for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years, of the specific number of additional places to be provided each year and the distribution of such additional places, and whether there will be consequential reduction in the number of places for PGDE programmes in certain subjects; whether it has assessed, by drawing reference from the number of departed teachers in the last three school years and the trend concerned, the supply of and demand for teacher training course places in the coming three to five years, so as to enable the relevant institutions to better plan for organisation of their teacher training courses, with a view to filling the vacancies for teachers?

Reply:

President,

The Education Bureau (EDB) has all along been committed to maintaining a teaching profession of high quality and closely monitoring the manpower situation of teachers with timely and appropriate measures taken to ensure the quality of education and smooth operation of schools. With the declining school-aged population, the demand for teachers would decrease correspondingly. We will continue to monitor the situation and maintain close communication with the school sector.

Our reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon Chow Man-kong is as follows:

(1) The numbers and percentages of newly recruited teachers as well as the numbers of drop-out teachers and the wastage rates in kindergartens (KGs) joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme (the Scheme) by length of service from the 2020/21 to 2022/23 school years are at Annex 1. The numbers and percentages of newly recruited teachers as well as the numbers of drop-out teachers and the wastage rates in public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary and secondary schools and aided special schools from the 2020/21 to 2022/23 school years are at Annex 2. Since the EDB did not collect data on the length of service of teachers in public sector and DSS primary

and secondary schools as well as aided special schools in or before the 2022/23 school year, we are unable to provide relevant figures by length of service.

(2) There are various reasons for teacher wastage, which mainly include retirement, pursuing further studies, changing to other types of schools, taking up employment outside the teaching profession, and leaving the post due to other personal reasons. To increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession and at the same time retain talent, the EDB has implemented quite a number of new measures for primary and secondary schools to support school development, and provide teachers with a stable teaching environment and a better career prospect in recent years. These measures include full implementation of the All-Graduate Teaching Force policy in the 2019/20 school year; establishment of the Professional Ladder for Teachers and improvement of the manpower of vice-principals in public sector primary and secondary schools, as well as the manpower of senior teachers and ranking arrangements of principals in public sector secondary schools in the 2020/21 school year; and improvement of manpower at the middle management level, rationalisation of the pay structures for school heads and deputy heads in primary schools starting from the 2022/23 school year to enhance teachers' promotion prospects. In tandem, through diversified professional development programmes, the EDB also strives to strengthen the professional competencies of in-service teachers and principals, and broaden their horizons.

As for KGs, to retain and attract quality teachers, KGs joining the Scheme (Scheme-KGs) are encouraged to establish a career ladder and offer competitive remuneration. Various measures have also been adopted to ensure that teachers are reasonably remunerated. We have set salary ranges for teachers of different ranks; requested Scheme-KGs to remunerate their teachers within the prescribed salary ranges; and would follow up on irregular cases. Scheme-KGs are required to prescribe 60 per cent of the unit subsidy as teachers' salary portion, which must be used on teachers' salaries and related expenses. KGs may deploy any portion of the remaining 40 per cent for teachers' salaries and related expenses, but not vice versa. The accumulated surplus exceeding the reserve ceiling of both the teachers' salary portion and the whole unit subsidy will be clawed back to the EDB. The above various measures encourage schools' optimal use of the subsidy on teachers' salaries. We will continue to maintain communication with the sector pragmatically, and keep making refinements to the Scheme with a view to providing high quality KG education to students.

(3) & (4) The Government has been prudent in the planning for teacher education (TE) places. The overall planning of the Government-funded TE programmes is made under a triennial planning cycle so as to meet the needs of our society. When conducting the planning exercise for the 2022-25 triennium, having taken into consideration the declining school-age population and anticipated decrease in the demand for teachers, it was planned that the number of undergraduate intake places at primary and secondary levels would be gradually reduced in the 2022-25 triennium. The numbers of places in TE programmes offered by local TE universities and the enrolments in the past three and the current academic years (i.e. 2020/21 to

2023/24 academic years) are at Annex 3.

On the other hand, in view of the higher than expected number of untrained newly-joined teachers in the 2021/22 and 2022/23 school years, the EDB has promptly responded to the keen demand from the school sector for part-time TE programmes by providing extra funding for the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Education University of Hong Kong to increase 239 and 211 (i.e. 450 in total) intake places of part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programmes in specified subjects in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years respectively through the University Grants Committee to equip untrained teachers who are committed to the teaching profession, thereby raising the overall quality of education. While increasing the number of places for part-time PGDE programmes, we have, taking into account the information on the major subjects of untrained teachers, formulated the recommended allocation of places for each subject to provide reference for the TE universities in their planning. More of the increased places will be allocated to subjects such as English Language, Mathematics and Science Education, and the related increase will not affect the original number of places for PGDE programmes in other subjects.

The planning of teacher training places for the 2025-28 triennium has started. The Government will carefully consider a basket of factors, including the overall demand and supply of teachers, the sustainable development of TE universities, the quality of TE programmes, the future needs of our society and the latest development of the curriculum, when planning the teacher training places.