

LCQ19: Manpower of teachers

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 11):

Question:

It has been reported that over 2 000 teachers of government-subsidised schools withdrew from the provident fund scheme for teachers on grounds of retirement or resignation, etc. in the last school year. Such figure hits a record high in seven years, and quite a number of these teachers were experienced teachers with over 15 years of service. Regarding the manpower of teachers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number and percentage of teachers who departed (with a breakdown by their length of service) and (ii) the number and percentage of newly-joined teachers, in each of the past four school years and since the beginning of the current school year; and

(2) whether, under the circumstances of a continued decline in the source of students, it has assessed if there is an oversupply of graduates from teacher education institutions in recent years; if it has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, whether it has made adjustment to the supply of teachers?

Reply:

President,

The Education Bureau (EDB) has been closely monitoring the recruitment and wastage of teachers in public sector schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools every year to ensure the quality of education and smooth operation of schools. The data would also serve as reference for the Government in planning the education policies. There are various reasons for teacher wastage, which mainly include retirement, pursuing further studies, changing to other types of schools (Remarks 1), taking up employment outside the teaching profession, and leaving the post due to other personal reasons. According to our observation, although the wastage rate is slightly higher this school year, the operation of schools is smooth in general and schools have employed sufficient qualified teachers. With the declining school-aged population, the demand for teachers would decrease correspondingly. The EDB must make optimal use of the limited public resources so as to ensure the proper use of education spending with a view to providing quality education for students.

Our reply to the Hon Tang Fei's question is as follows:

(1) In respect of public sector schools and DSS schools (Note 1), the numbers and percentages of newly recruited teachers (Note 2) and drop-out teachers

(Note 3) from the 2017/18 to 2021/22 school years are as follows:

Item	Finance type	School year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 (Provisional)
No. of newly recruited teachers (Note 2 & 6)	Public sector	3 240	2 840	2 620	2 400	3 140
	DSS	440	420	500	440	650
Percentage (%) of newly recruited teachers (Note 4)	Public sector	7.1	6.1	5.5	5.0	6.6
	DSS	8.1	7.7	9.2	8.0	11.7
No. of drop-out teachers (Note 3 & 6)	Public sector	1 860	2 130	2 090	2 100	3 580
	DSS	300	290	290	280	470
Wastage rate (%) (Note 5)	Public sector	4.2	4.7	4.5	4.4	7.5
	DSS	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.0	8.4

Notes:

1. As the arrangements for appointment of teachers in private or international schools are different from that of public sector schools and DSS schools, the table above shows only the related figures of public sector schools and DSS schools. Public sector schools include government schools, aided schools and caput schools, and include primary schools, secondary schools and special schools.

2. "Newly recruited teachers" refer to teachers who had not served in any of the local schools (irrespective of whether primary or secondary schools) as at mid-September of the preceding school year but were serving in a local public sector/DSS school as at mid-September of the school year concerned, except as at mid-October for the 2020/21 school year. They included those who had not been serving as teachers in local schools before as well as those re-joining the teaching profession after having left the teaching profession for more than one year.

3. "Drop-out teachers" refer to teachers who were serving in local public sector/DSS schools as at mid-September of the preceding school year but were no longer serving in any of the local schools (irrespective of whether primary or secondary schools) as at mid-September of the school year concerned, except as at mid-October for the 2020/21 school year. Teachers transferred from ordinary schools to special schools (and vice versa) were counted as "drop-out teachers".

4. "Percentage of newly recruited teachers" refers to the number of "newly recruited teachers" as a percentage of the total number of teachers concerned as at mid-September/mid-October (for the 2020/21 school year only) of the same school year.

5. "Wastage rate" refers to the number of "drop-out teachers" as a percentage of the total number of teachers concerned as at mid-September/mid-October (for the 2020/21 school year only) of the preceding school year.

6. The numbers of teachers are rounded to the nearest ten.

The EDB does not collect information on the lengths of service of the leaving teachers, and is therefore not able to provide the relevant figures.

(2) The Government has been prudent in the planning for teacher education places under the triennial planning cycle to meet the changing needs of our society. In view of the anticipated declining demand for teachers in the coming years, the University Grants Committee funded first-year first-degree intake places for the teacher education-related disciplines in the 2022/23 to 2024/25 triennium will be reduced.

As it is anticipated that the future decrease in school-age population will not be transient but structural, the EDB will adopt a multi-pronged approach in addressing the challenges posed by the structural changes in student population in the long term (Remarks 2). We will maintain close communication with the sector, encourage the sector to plan ahead for effective arrangements for manpower resources according to the school-based situation, and to positively address the challenges arising from the decline in student population.

Remarks:

1: For example, teachers may transfer from local schools to schools offering non-local curriculum, from ordinary schools to special schools.

2: Please refer to LC Paper No. CB(4)1638/20-21(02) dated October 18, 2021, for details (www.legco.gov.hk/yr20-21/english/panels/ed/papers/ed20211018cb4-1638-2-e.pdf).