



Hong Kong Association of  
the Heads of Secondary Schools



Hong Kong Centre for  
International Student Assessment  
香港學生能力國際評估中心

# **SURVEY REPORT ON STUDENT WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL AND TEACHER TURNOVER**

## **「學生退學及教師離職問卷調查」 研究報告**

**DECEMBER 2021**



## **Survey Report on Student Withdrawal from School and Teacher Turnover**

The recent trend of student withdrawal from school and teacher turnover has sparked much social concerns. In November 2020, HKAHSS conducted the first survey on the issue and a summary of the results was sent to members. Due to the far-reaching impact of the issue, HKAHSS has endeavoured to conduct the second survey in collaboration with HKCISA. We hope to collect the latest comprehensive data that would help reflect the actual frontline situation to the Government of the HKSAR to facilitate the subsequent discussion of corresponding intervention strategies.

To enhance professionalism has always been the mission of HKAHSS and student welfare is our prime concern. The present survey is apolitical and we merely hope to explore education issues from an education perspective.

This survey was conducted between September to October 2021 through a questionnaire filled by secondary school principals. The total number of valid questionnaires collected is 140. Amongst them, 120 (85.7%) are from Aided Schools, 13 (9.3%) from Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools, 5 (3.6%) from Government Schools and 2 (1.4%) from Private Schools (Local, ESF and International).

### **(A) Findings**

#### 1. Student Withdrawal from School

- (a) A comparatively acute situation in student withdrawal from schools in 2020-21 is evident.

The numbers of students withdrawing from schools in 2018-19 and 2019-20 are quite similar to each other at about 2700 each, an average of 20 students per school. Yet, in 2020-21, there is a sharp increase of around 70% to 4460, an average of 32 students per school.

- (b) The withdrawal rate is more serious at junior secondary level in 2020-21.

In 2018-19 and 2019-20, the withdrawal rate at junior secondary level is a little bit higher than that at the senior secondary level. Yet, in 2020-21, the withdrawal rate at junior level is close to double of that at the senior secondary level.

#### 2. Teacher Turnover

With 987 teachers leaving in 2020-21, the number has soared as compared to 517 in 2018-19 and 498 in 2019-20. There are on average 7.1 teachers leaving in each school.

#### 3. Movement of Students After Withdrawal

Students leaving Hong Kong (for studies overseas, in Mainland China and Macau as well as emigration) totaled 907 (34%) and 1348 (49%) in 2018-19 and 2019-20 respectively. In 2020-21, students leaving for the same reasons totaled 2643, which constitute 60% of student withdrawal. This net outflow rate has evidently increased.

#### 4. Movement of Teachers After Leaving Schools

- (a) In the 3 school years from 2018-2021, the numbers of teachers leaving schools due to change in career plans and normal retirement remain relatively stable.
- (b) In 2020-21, the numbers of teachers emigrating or taking early retirement have risen sharply. There is a seven-fold increase in emigration, and thus reflecting a comparatively high figure of brain drain.
- (c) The turnover rate of experienced teachers is on the rise.  
Among the teachers not yet reaching retirement age, there was a sharp rise in the turnover rate of teachers with more than 10 years' experience. The turnover rate of this group in 2018-19 and that in 2019-20 were 37% and 38% respectively. And in 2020-21, it sharply rose to 54%.

#### 5. Trends in Student Withdrawal and Teacher Turnover

- (a) Principals filling in the questionnaire are not very optimistic about the future development of the trend. While less than 20% of them believe that the trend will fall, most believe that the trend will continue on the rise and a few even predict an acute increase.
- (b) The future plan of principals should not be taken too lightly. 12.1% of principals indicate that they will retire soon while 12.9% report that they are not sure if they would still be in the post within the next 3 years. Some express that they might even take early retirement. All these will have great impact on schools and thus warrant further probing.

#### 6. Reasons for Teacher Turnover and the Impacts on Schools

- (a) The data collected reflect that the main reasons for teachers leaving in 2018-19 and 2019-20 are mainly related to school working environment and job/promotion prospect. In 2020-21, the main reasons are more personal or beyond school control which include overall social atmosphere, change in education policy and curriculum as well as teachers' professional status. At the same time, concern for family members has emerged as one of the prominent reasons.
- (b) In general, school principals opine that the social atmosphere, COVID-19 challenges, teachers' morale and challenges they face all attribute to teacher turnover.
- (c) School operation, development and stability have been affected in one way or another by the massive turnover rate.
- (d) School principals have also been invited to express their views freely on reasons regarding teacher turnover. Some of the reasons raised include: social conditions, COVID-19 challenges, the unprecedented and rapid rate of changes in educational policies, the rather difficult ecology in the education field, the disrespect for and distrust of the teaching profession, etc.

#### 7. Impact of Student Withdrawal and Teacher Turnover on Schools

- (a) School principals are worried about the impact on the ecology in the education system which include brain drain, talent gap in the school leadership team and the pressure on student admission in many districts.
- (b) The massive teacher turnover will affect the standard and quality of the teaching profession if teaching posts left vacant cannot be filled with teachers with training or experience.

## 8. Possible Solutions to Address the Problems (for Students)

- (a) The most common three suggestions include:
- (1) Enhance the quality and reputation of the education system in Hong Kong
  - (2) Strengthen the support for cross-border students
  - (3) Implement small-class teaching (definition regarding the student number in small class teaching is not indicated)
- (b) Principals also list different views on this issue which include:
- The scenario gives us the opportunity of upgrading the quality of basic education ... Once the better quality of education is observed, it attracts students around the region moving in, so that the supply of students will be kept in terms of quantity as well.
  - Implement small-class teaching for better care for students
  - Utilize the opportunity well for greater interactive learning strategies and enhanced teaching efficacy
  - Help young people see the opportunity for upward mobility
  - Solve the clearance procedures across the border

## 9. Possible Solutions to Address the Problems (for Principals and Teachers)

- (a) The most common three suggestions include:
- (1) Enhance the professional status, social recognition, autonomy and morale of teachers
  - (2) Increase the number of teachers (improve student/teacher ratio)
  - (3) Teacher training and small-class teaching
- (b) Principals also list different views on this issue which include:
- Enhance the education quality actively and no reduction in educational resources even in face of financial challenges
  - The Education Bureau should strive to protect principals and teachers from malicious attacks. At the same time, it should aim at enhancing the social trust in and respect for the teaching profession
  - Streamline teachers' workload to reduce work pressure
  - Stabilize education ecology, trust the leadership of school principals and be good to teachers
  - Middle leadership training should be enhanced to prepare sufficient teachers for succession
  - Extend the retirement age
  - Avoid further introduction of new measures, which distract teachers' effort from focusing their work on students

## 10. Prime Concern of Principals

- (a) The youth is our future. Let's work together to give hope to our teenagers.
- (b) Experience of teachers is invaluable asset to society.
- (c) The government should formulate clear and effective policies to minimise the dropouts of both students and teachers, and also tackle the impact of the dropouts.
- (d) More frequent and honest communication between the government and the education sector
- (e) To respect and treat teachers well with dignity
- (f) To maintain a stable social environment so that schools can focus on education which is their core work
- (g) In face of the great challenges, all education workers should be united in the professional spirit, which is the way out of the woods.

## **(B) Issues of Concerns and Follow-up**

1. Teacher turnover and teachers leaving Hong Kong reflect the problems of brain drain we face today. We will face the same problems in the future as some students are leaving Hong Kong today. Talents have been very important resources and the issue of brain drain will affect the future development of Hong Kong.
2. As the student population is decreasing gradually, we should make good use of this opportunity to reduce the class size so as to ensure better care and more personalized learning for each student.
3. Among teachers who are leaving, the number of those with 10 years' or less experience is the highest. Yet, the number of those who have more than 10 years' or even 20 years' experience should not go unnoticed. It takes time to hone and accumulate experience. With a number of experienced teachers leaving, there will certainly be a talent gap in the teaching force. In face of the ever-changing education policies and challenges arising from students' mental health, those who stay behind will definitely be overloaded with looming challenges and pressure. This may eventually accelerate further turnover of serving teachers.
4. As teacher turnover has been quite extensive across various years of teaching experience, we are much concerned about whether there would be enough trained teachers to fill the vacancies. In recent years, many principals have expressed difficulties in staff recruitment. If teacher training is not planned according to the real needs in advance, it would be much more difficult to find suitable teachers in the future.
5. One of the goals of the Education Reform in 2000 is to offer equal education opportunity for each student. In face of the increasing trend of student withdrawal and teacher turnover, we cannot help but ask the following questions:
  - (a) Will the goals of the Education Reform 2000 be faltered by the 'musical chair' effect set off by the movement of teachers and students?
  - (b) Will this affect equal opportunity in the education system?
  - (c) Will the disadvantaged students/schools be even more disadvantaged?
6. With teachers and students leaving the local education system, we may wonder if this signifies a lack of confidence. How to rebuild social as well as teachers' trust on education is certainly a very big issue that deserves in-depth deliberation.

- End -



## 「學生退學及教師離職問卷調查」研究報告

學生退學及教師離職趨勢，近日引發不少社會關注。香港中學校長會早於 2020 年 11 月進行第一次問卷調查，報告撮要已匯報各會員學校。鑒於相關問題對學校教育影響至為深遠，香港中學校長會與香港中文大學香港學生能力國際評估中心（HKCISA 中心）合作，進行第二次問卷調查，收集最新數據，藉此向香港特區政府反映學校前線實況，亦期盼與學界同工共商對策。

秉承香港中學校長會一直以來的教育專業精神，調查純以教育角度探討教育議題，一切以學生的福祉為最大依歸，不涉任何政治考量。

問卷調查於 2021 年 9 至 10 月期間進行，由中學校長完成自填式問卷，收回的有效問卷共 140 份。120 份 (85.7%) 來自資助學校，13 份 (9.3%) 來自直接資助計劃學校，5 份 (3.6%) 來自官立學校及 2 份 (1.4%) 為私立學校(本地及國際學校)。

### 一．學生退學及教師離職問卷調查研究結果

#### 1. 學生退學

##### a. 2020-21 學生退學情況較前嚴重

2018-19 及 2019-20 兩個學年，學生退學數字接近，約 2700 人，平均每校約 20 人退學。及至 2020-21 學年，退學人數驟升近七成至 4460 人，平均每校 32 人退學。

##### b. 2020-21 初中學生退學情況較前嚴重

2018-19 及 2019-20 兩個學年，初中學生退學情況只比高中的略高。及至 2020-21 學年，初中退學人數為高中退學人數接近兩倍。

#### 2. 教師離職

2020-21 教師離職數字飆升，離職人數達 987 人，平均每校 7.1 位教師離職；遠高於 2018-19 的 517 人及 2019-20 學年的 498 人近倍。

#### 3. 退學學生的去向

2018-19 及 2019-20 離開香港（海外、內地、澳門升學及移民）的學生數字分別為 907 人（34%）及 1348 人（49%）。2020-21 離開香港數字為 2643 人，佔退學學生數字近 60%，「淨移出」數字較前高。

#### 4. 離職教師的去向

a. 2018-21 三個學年，轉換行業及正常退休的教師數字相對穩定。

b. 2020-21 學年，移民、提早退休的教師數字大幅飆升，其中移民數字升幅達七倍多，顯示教學人才的「淨流失」人數比前高。

c. 富經驗教師離職率飆升

在未達退休年齡的教師當中，10 年以上教學經驗者於 2018-19 及 2019-20 兩個學年，分別佔離職教師的 37% 及 38%。2020-21 學年，10 年以上經驗的教師離職率飆升，佔離職教師的 54%。

## 5. 學生離校及教師離職的趨勢

- a. 學校對學生離校及教師離職這趨勢並不樂觀，不多於 20%相信這趨勢會減少。大部分學校相信這趨勢會延續、或輕微增加。小部分相信會再顯著增加。
- b. 校長的未來去向亦不容忽視，在未來三年，12.1%的校長表示將會退休，另有 12.9% 校長表示未來三年去向未定、甚或提早退休。這現象對學界影響不少，需要更深入瞭解。

## 6. 影響教師離職因素及教師離職對學校影響的人數統計

- a. 調查數據顯示，2018-19 及 2019-20 學年，教師離職的主要原因是學校工作環境及個人就業/晉升機會。及至 2020-21 學年，教師離職主要是個人或學校非能控制的因素，包括社會整體氣氛、教育政策及課程變更，以及教育專業地位。另外，家庭成員考慮，亦是導致教師離職的主要考慮因素。
- b. 學校一般認為社會氣氛、疫情影響與教師士氣及面對的壓力，都是造成教師離職的原因。
- c. 大量教師離職，影響了學校運作、發展與穩定性。
- d. 問卷調查邀請校長們以文字表達他們對教師離職因素的意見，當中包括有：「社會情況」、「疫情影響」、「教育政策改變之大及速度前所未見」、「教育生態艱難」、「社會對教育專業的不尊重，不信任」等。

## 7. 學生退學及教師離職對學校的影響

- a. 學校憂慮離校離職潮對學校以至整個教育生態的影響，包括教育人才的流失、學校領導斷層及地區收生的壓力。
- b. 大量教師離職，未能填補合適人選，影響了教學專業質素。

## 8. 解決學生退學及教師離職的各種問題 (學生方面)

- a. 問卷中最常見的三個建議包括：(1) 提升香港教育體系的質素及聲譽；(2) 加強支援跨境學童；(3) 推行小班教學（小班教學未有顯示人數定義）。
- b. 校長亦以文字表達多樣的意見，包括：“The scenario gives us the opportunity of upgrading the quality of basic education ... Once the better quality of education is observed, it attracts students around the region moving in, so that the supply of students will be kept in terms of quantity as well.”、「推行小班教學，給予學生更佳的照顧」、「善用機遇，減低各班人數，強化互動教學策略，改善教學效能」、「讓年輕人看到他們將來向上流動的機會」、「解決通關問題」等。

## 9. 解決學生退學及教師離職的各種問題 (教師及校長方面)

- a. 問卷中最常見的三個建議包括：(1) 提高教師專業地位、認受性、自主性和士氣；(2) 增加教師人手；(3) 培訓及小班教學。
- b. 校長亦以文字表達多樣的意見，包括：「積極提升香港的教育質素，在財政壓力下，不減少(總金額)對教育的投放」、「教育局應努力保護教師和校長免被惡意攻擊，且提升社會對教育專業的信任和尊重」、「精簡教師工作，減輕工作負荷」、「穩定教育生態，信任校長領導，善待老師」、「“Middle leadership training should be enhanced to prepare sufficient teachers for succession”、“extending the retirement age”、“avoid further introduction of new measures, which distract teacher effort from focusing their work for the students”等。

## 10. 校長眼中 - 我們關注的問題

- a. The youth is our future. Let's work together to give hope to our teenagers.
- b. Experience of teachers is invaluable asset to the society.
- c. The government should formulate clear and effective policies to minimise the dropouts of both students and teachers, and also tackle the impact of the dropouts.
- d. More frequent and honest communication between the government and the education sector.
- e. 尊重及善待老師。
- f. 希望社會環境穩定，讓學校回歸教學的工作。
- g. 現時教育界正面對重大挑戰，同工必須團結合作，發揮專業精神，才能走出困境。

## 二·值得關注及跟進的重要事項

1. 教師離職離港，顯示著今日人才的流失，學生離港，代表著未來人才的流失。人才一直是香港至為重要的資源，人才流失，直接影響香港未來發展。
2. 整體學生人數下降，能善用契機進一步減少每班人數，讓每一位學生能獲得更充足的照顧，學習能更個別化、個性化。
3. 離職教師中，年青教師（1-10年經驗）離職率最高，但10年或20年以上經驗教師離職的亦不少。教學及行政經驗需要累積、磨煉，有經驗者離職率高，學校青黃不接，教育質素受嚴重影響。面對許多新教育舉措不斷推出、學生精神健康正出現嚴重問題之際，除教育及照顧學生的質素將受影響，留下的經驗老師工作壓力倍增，或許加速仍在職的教師提早離職。
4. 各年齡層的教育工作者均出現大數量的離職潮，如何在短時間內培訓足夠的合適教師？這學年已有不少學校表示聘請教師困難，若培訓未及時、未到位，未來會否更難聘請合適教師？
5. 二千年教改的初心是讓每一個學生都得到均等的教育。學生轉校、教師離職等音樂椅現象，老師、學生均力求「上移」，會否影響教改初心？會否影響平等教育？「弱勢」學生會否更弱勢？「弱勢」學校又會否更弱勢？
6. 教師、學生離開本地教育體制，是否代表信心問題？如何重建社會對教育的信心？如何重建教育工作者對教育的信心？值得深思。

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