

Iran's education sector faces critical shortage of teachers



By Ali
Amiri

Staff writer

Social Desk

As the current Iranian school year in September 2023 enters its second month, a considerable number of classrooms across the country remain empty of teachers, leaving countless students without proper instruction. This alarming situation has sparked concerns of an educational crisis, as the multifaceted reasons behind the teacher shortage come to light.

On Sunday, October 23, the spokesperson of the Parliament's Education and Research Commission, while reading the commission's report on the causes and factors contributing to the current teacher shortage, highlighted key issues within the Ministry of Education and the Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organization.

"The weakness of the Ministry of Education and the delay from the Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organization are among the most important reasons for the shortage of teachers in the country," said Ahmad-Hossein Fallahi, according to Fars News Agency.

According to the commission's report, the Ministry of Education as "the primary guardian of the nation's education system" bears the crucial responsibility of ensuring "an adequate supply of teachers" before the commencement of each academic year.

The report enumerates 11 more reasons that are considered to be contributing to the current shortage of teachers:

Firstly, there has been a persistent issue of procrastination and delay within



A considerable number of classrooms across Iran remain empty of teachers more than a month since the beginning of the academic year in September, 2023.

the Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organization, particularly in regards to issuing ranks for the employment test as stipulated in Article 28 of Farhangian University's statutes. Additionally, there has been a deficiency in the number of permits granted for employment. Another contributing factor is the irregular payment of tuition fees for employees and retirees by the country's Planning and Budget Organization, which has led to a significant decrease in motivation among these individuals to cooperate. Moreover, there has been a notable reduction in the recruitment of student-teachers through Farhangian universities. The infrastructure of Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training

University has also been plagued with defects, resulting in a very limited capacity to meet the demands of the country's education system. Furthermore, Shahid Rajaei Teacher Training University has deviated from its original mission of teacher training in the past decade. Over the last decade, the recruitment process through employment tests has proven to be inadequate. The evaluation of candidates for the teaching exam has been unnecessarily prolonged, exacerbating the shortage of teachers. The high number of teacher retirements in the past three years has further exacerbated the crisis. Additionally, the prohibition of employing teachers through the purchase

of services has contributed to the shortage. The weakness of the human resources structure within the education system has hindered timely planning for the provision of adequate human resources. Lastly, the teaching profession has experienced a decline in attractiveness, further exacerbating the shortage of qualified educators. Despite efforts being made to address the teacher shortage, such as the rehiring of retired educators and increasing the number of student-teachers, the impact of this problem has already taken a toll on numerous students, particularly those in disadvantaged areas of Iran. While the majority of private schools have success-

fully completed their staff recruitment for the ongoing academic year and have even commenced classes ahead of schedule, a stark contrast emerges in the case of public schools situated in rural areas and disadvantaged cities. These educational institutions are lagging behind, exacerbating the already substantial divide between the quality of education available to the privileged compared to that which the general population and less fortunate individuals have access to – a divide which has led to a situation where the majority of seats in prestigious universities are occupied by privileged students who have succeeded in the national university entrance exam.

During an interview with an Iran Daily reporter, a school counselor shed light on the teacher shortage situation, emphasizing the contrasting severity between privileged cities and rural areas.

"Schools in larger cities have managed to maintain adequate staffing levels for the current academic year, while the shortage predominantly affects schools in villages and smaller cities," the counselor said. Additionally, the counselor expressed concern about the practice of assigning non-specialized counselors, "including myself and my colleagues, to teach classes outside our expertise."

Disturbing rumors have also circulated, suggesting that some schools have resorted to asking parents to fill in as substitute teachers due to the lack of qualified educators. It is evident that such measures place students at a significant disadvantage, compromising the quality of their education. Urgent attention and comprehensive solutions are needed to address the current shortage of teachers in our country, which in turn would prevent the divide from deepening and ensure equal educational opportunities for all students in Iran.

Among the numerous solutions proposed by the Education and Research Commission of the Parliament, article 4 stands out as a potentially enduring remedy for the teacher shortage in our country. This solution emphasizes the need to enhance the appeal of the teaching profession through the establishment of a fair payment system and the provision of educational facilities that prioritize the well-being of educators.

Tehran students show solidarity with Gaza children



Social Desk

The students from schools in Tehran gathered at Palestine Square, downtown Tehran, to show their support for Palestinian children and condemn the crimes committed by the Zionist regime.

The event saw the participation of 20,000 students, as well as officials from the Ministry of Education and Tehran Province authorities, IRNA reported.

During the gathering, the students chanted slogans denouncing the Israeli regime, expressed their condemnation of its crimes, and voiced their solidarity with the oppressed Palestinian people. They held Iranian and Palestinian flags, as well as placards with the message "Death to Israel."

One of the students, Maedeh, a ninth grader, proudly held a Palestinian flag and expressed her desire to support the oppressed students in Palestine. She stated that her biggest wish is to help Palestine, go to Gaza, and even become a martyr for the cause. Maedeh emphasized that Iranian students are always ready to support their counterparts in Gaza.

Zahra, another student present at the rally, held a photo of the martyred children of Gaza. She expressed her belief that Israel will soon be destroyed and that the Palestinian people will achieve freedom.

Masoumeh, a 12th grader, joined the gathering to show her support for all the oppressed children in Palestine. She wanted to assure them that they are not alone and that they have the backing of the students in Iran.

Hossein, an 11th grader, while attending the event stated that he was there to support the oppressed people of Palestine and to convey the message that their liberation from the Zionist regime is imminent.

Moheyyoddin, an eighth grader, also showed his solidarity with the oppressed people of Palestine, and emphasized that Israel's actions go against humanitarian laws, and that they stand against such crimes.

Mohammad Javad, another eighth grader, expressed his support for his peers in Gaza and reassured them that they are not alone. He echoed the sentiment that he hopes for the destruction of Israel in the near future.

Instagram linked to depression, anxiety, insomnia in kids

Dozens of US states are suing Meta Platforms and its Instagram unit, accusing them of fueling a youth mental health crisis by making their social media platforms addictive.

In a complaint filed on Tuesday, the attorneys general of 33 states including California and New York said Meta, which also operates Facebook, repeatedly misled the public about the dangers of its platforms, and knowingly induced young children and teenagers into addictive and compulsive social media use, according to Reuters.

"Meta has harnessed powerful and unprecedented technologies to entice, engage, and ultimately ensnare youth and teens," according to the complaint filed in the Oakland, California federal court. "Its motive is profit."

Children have long been an appealing demographic for businesses, which hope to attract them as consumers at ages when they may be more impressionable, and solidify brand loyalty.

For Meta, younger consumers may help secure more advertisers who hope children will keep buying their products as they grow up.

But the states said research has associated children's use of Meta's social media platforms with "depression, anxiety, insomnia, interference with education and daily life, and many other negative outcomes."

Meta said it was "disappointed" in the lawsuit. "Instead of working productively with companies across the industry to create clear, age-appropriate standards for the many

apps teens use, the attorneys general have chosen this path," the company said.

Eight other US states and Washington, DC are filing similar lawsuits against Meta on Tuesday, bringing the total number of authorities taking action against the Menlo Park, California-based company to 42.

The cases are the latest in a string of legal actions against social media companies on behalf of children and teens.

Meta, ByteDance's TikTok and Google's YouTube already face hundreds of lawsuits filed on behalf of children and school districts about the addictiveness of social media.

Mark Zuckerberg, Meta's chief executive, has defended in the past his company's handling of content that some critics

find harmful. "At the heart of these accusations is this idea that we prioritize profit over safety and well-being. That's just not true," he posted in October 2021 on his Facebook page.

In Tuesday's cases, Meta could face civil penalties of \$1,000 to \$50,000 for each violation of various state laws – an amount that could add up quickly given the millions of young children and teenagers who use Instagram. Much of the focus on Meta stemmed from a whistleblower's release of documents in 2021 that showed the company knew Instagram, which began as a photo-sharing app, was addictive and worsened body image issues for some teen girls. The lawsuit by the 33 states alleged that Meta has strived to ensure that

young people spend as much time as possible on social media despite knowing that they are susceptible to the need for approval in the form of "likes" from other users about their content.

"Meta has been harming our children and teens, cultivating addiction to boost corporate profits," said California Attorney General Rob Bonta, whose state includes Meta's headquarters.

