

Teacher Buoyancy: Advancing Understanding of What, Where, How, Why, and When

Teachers in Hong Kong face exceptionally high job demands, routinely working longer hours than their international counterparts. While their dedication has supported outstanding student achievement and a strong global reputation for educational excellence, it has also led to increasingly severe burnout and job dissatisfaction. Alarming, nearly one-third of all teachers have left the profession in the past three years, mostly unrelated to retirement. This trend poses significant risks to the stability and quality of Hong Kong's education system. To address these challenges, this research systematically investigates teacher buoyancy—the ability to cope with and recover from everyday work challenges—by focusing on five guiding questions: what are the types and dimensions of teacher buoyancy in Hong Kong; where is buoyancy particularly needed in our educational context; how can it be effectively enhanced; why is it so important for our teachers; and when does it fluctuate during daily professional experiences. By structuring the inquiry around these core questions, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of buoyancy's role, mechanisms, and practical implications within Hong Kong's educational environment. The project consists of four interconnected studies. Study 1 involves qualitative interviews and panel discussions with 45 teachers to generate context-specific scenarios that deepen our understanding of teacher buoyancy in Hong Kong schools. Study 2 uses a quantitative cross-sectional survey of 300 teachers to examine the structure and key factors of teacher buoyancy. Study 3 adopts a longitudinal design, surveying 588 teachers twice to explore how job demands and resources influence buoyancy over time, and how buoyancy relates to well-being, perceived teaching quality, and intentions to leave. Study 4 implements a 10-day diary approach with 138 teachers to capture the dynamic, state-like aspects of buoyancy and its daily antecedents, coping strategies, and teaching outcomes. The significance of this research is threefold. First, it will advance theoretical understanding of the dimensions and contextual features of teacher buoyancy in Hong Kong. Second, the findings will inform evidence-based, buoyancy-focused interventions for school leaders and policymakers to promote teacher well-being, sustain teaching quality, and reduce attrition. Finally, the project will identify effective coping strategies that empower teachers themselves to navigate daily setbacks and challenges. By investigating the processes that foster better buoyancy among teachers, this research aims to support a healthier, more engaged, and more effective teaching workforce, ultimately enhancing student outcomes and broader educational landscape in Hong Kong.