

**Under pressure from quit calls, Wee defends track record in MOE**  
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**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 5 — Datuk Wee Ka Siong insisted today the teacher shortage in Chinese primary schools has declined since he became deputy education minister in 2009 after an opposition MP repeated calls of Chinese educationists for him to resign.

The MCA Youth chief told Parliament that when he joined the Education Ministry in 2009, there was a shortage of 4,991 teachers in Chinese schools which has been reduced each year to 1,870 this year.

“These results don’t just fall out of the sky,” Wee (picture) said in response to Petaling Jaya Selatan MP Lee Hoy Sian.

The Ayer Hitam MP added that this was despite the number of vacancies increasing each year, citing for example, the addition of counsellors in each school meant the government had to place more than 1,200 additional teachers.

During its March 25 rally, the United Chinese School Committees Association (Dong Zong) accused the government of compromising Chinese education by “deliberately” not training enough Chinese school teachers, resulting in a shortage that has lasted for up to 40 years.

Dong Zong president Yap Sin Tian told a crowd of over 5,000, who had chanted for Wee to resign, this was so the government could send in those without SPM Mandarin qualifications to fill the gap.

Wee, who was chased out and claimed he was assaulted after the rally, responded by saying he was willing to quit as deputy education minister if it could resolve the teacher shortage in Chinese primary schools.

“There are other ways to solve this issue. Would jeering and hurling abuses resolve the shortage? And if stepping down would solve this issue once and for all, I, Wee Ka Siong, would immediately do so,” he had said.

PKR’s Lee had also asked today why the government could not provide Mandarin-speaking bilingual teachers for all subjects in Chinese primary schools.

But Wee said the government would stick to having bilingual teachers who were well-versed in Mandarin to teach English and Malay from Primary One to Three but then Mandarin would not be compulsory for Primary Four to Six.

He said this was the formula agreed to by all stakeholders and questioned if the opposition “wanted to see no non-Chinese at all in Chinese vernacular schools” which would negatively impact interracial harmony.

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