



PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS ON FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO TEACHER TURNOVER AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN UASIN-GISHU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Adequate teacher supply is critical to the future of quality education delivery and academic performance of students. Concerns about teacher turnover are reported widely as a global phenomenon (Rowan, 2002). Turnover translates into shortages in educator supply and poor learner performance due to disruption of learning programmes and continuity, as well as overcrowded classes (Ingersoll, 2001). The objectives of the study was to investigate the major factors causing teacher turnover in secondary schools in UasinGishu County. The study employed organizational commitment theory that posits that teachers' levels of commitment are determined by factors such as their belief and acceptance of the school organization's goals and values, the willingness to exert effort on behalf of the school and a strong desire to keep up membership in the organization. The study was conducted in Eldoret West sub -county. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. Purposive sampling was used to select 15 secondary schools in the County and stratified random sampling was used to select 100 respondents to constitute a sampling unit and a unit of analysis respectively. Questionnaires, face to face interviews and document analysis were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics was used to determine and explain proportions. The findings revealed that teacher turnover affected academic performance through disrupted learning. It also revealed that teacher turnover breaks personal and emotional attachment built between teachers and students, which is normally helpful in individualized instruction and student participation in classroom activities. The research findings would be of much importance to the government in coming up with measures to improve the image of teaching profession as perceived by the teachers currently in the profession and those yet to join the profession. Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) may consider adopting the recommendations outlined in this thesis so as to come up with better policies to guide the teaching profession. The study recommended that teacher turnover should be avoided as much as possible and when inevitable it should be done at the end of the school calendar year.

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INTRODUCTION

In the early 1980s, a series of highly publicized reports began to focus on the coming possibility of severe teacher shortages in secondary schools (Darling-Hammond, 1984). These studies predicted a dramatic increase in the demand for new teachers primarily resulting from converging demographic trends, increasing student enrollments and increasing teacher attrition due to a "graying" teacher force.

Boe & Gilford (1992) held that subsequent shortfalls of teachers would, in turn, force many school systems to resort to lowering standards to fill teaching openings, inevitably resulting in high levels of underqualified teachers and lower school performance. The inability of schools to adequately staff classrooms with qualified teachers has since been cast as a major educational problem, received widespread coverage in the media, been the target of a growing number of reform and

policy initiatives, and been the subject of a substantial body of empirical research. Although the Teachers' Service Commission Code of Regulations for teachers stipulates in article 25 (2) that a teacher may not be considered for transfer until he or she has served in a school for a period of not less than three years, or on proven medical and special circumstances, many teachers manage to transfer from one school to another for frivolous reasons. This has tended to destabilize staff balancing and teacher turnover. There should be a clearly stated transfer policy, which spells out the conditions and the circumstances for teacher transfer (Okumbe, 2004). This has made many talented individuals to be discouraged from pursuing teaching as a career (Demie, 2002). This applies mainly to college students preparing to start their careers.

The acute shortage in Kenya has been occasioned by the government freeze on employment of additional teachers, coupled with retirement, deaths and imbalance in staffing as a result of irregular transfer of teachers by the Teachers' Service Commission (Mulongo, 2001). Teachers teach the entire day with little or no time for lesson preparation, lesson analysis or exchange. Growing teacher dissatisfaction associated with these conditions poses a serious threat to the attractiveness of teaching as a profession (Mulongo, 2001). Talented youth are not considering teaching as a career, while capable teachers leave the profession after only one or two years. Until teaching becomes more of a profession, it is unreasonable to expect the field to attract a sufficient number of talented individuals to schools (Schletchy & Vance, 1983, Creemers, 1989)

According to Murnane (1981) concern over shortages has also provided the impetus for empirical research on teacher supply and demand. In particular, over the past two decades a substantial body of empirical analysis has focused on the departure of teachers from their teaching jobs. Access, equity, curriculum relevance, teachers turnover and quality challenges have characterized Kenya's secondary schools education system over the years. Despite efforts by various stakeholders, including the government, to minimize the negative effects of these factors, the internal and external efficiency of the education are questionable. A number of 'Commissions' and 'Ministerial Task Forces' have been detailed to review education sector policies. Examples include the Simon Ominde Commission in 1964, Peter Gachathi Commission in 1976, C.B. Mackay Commission 1981, James Kamunge Commission in 1988, and Davy Koech Commission in 1998.

In Kenya, the existing academic results show that teacher turnover is a significant phenomenon and a dominant factor behind the demand for new teachers and the difficulties schools encounter adequately staffing classrooms with sufficient teachers (Waihenya, 2004). Contemporary educational theory holds that one of the pivotal causes of inadequate school performance is the inability of schools to adequately sustain classrooms with sufficient teachers and also to retain them.

Teacher transfer has been found to affect academic performance at all levels. Teachers who stay in one school for a reasonably longer period of time are more efficient and more enthusiastic than those who have changed schools frequently (Demie, 2002). The risk of a decrease in salaries, sometimes accompanied by a decline in the status of the profession relative to others, is that teachers incentives to provide quality teaching might become (or remain) insufficient.

This worry has been expressed by the UNICEF (1999) that underlines the fact that low wages drive teachers into other activities to the detriment of teaching, or by the African Development Bank (1998) that identifies low salaries as the most harmful factor for the education sector in general. In recent years, in many developing countries high levels of teacher turnover and absenteeism have indeed become entrenched. Glewwe, 2003 argues that teachers are absent 20% of the time. What seems relatively clear is that the impact of an increase in the salary is probably related to the form of this increase (in particular, lump-sum increase vs. bonuses). Kingdon, 1996, using Indian data shows that teachers' characteristics that call for higher remuneration are not those that provide obvious learning benefits for students.

The consequences of teacher turnover and attrition are too ghastly to contemplate. Institute of Management (1999) posits that the impact of turnover is by way of increased costs to the organization, broadly categorized as separation, replacement, recruitment, selection, induction and training costs as well as loss of productivity while the newly hired teacher come up to speed (Carrel, 1998; Special Reports, 1999). Ingersoll (2002) postulates that staffing problems are created when employees leave the organization and have to be replaced, especially since teacher turnover is highest among new teachers mostly within the first five years (Mills, 2001). Teacher attrition disrupts schooling. This is especially so when teachers leave the profession during the academic year or whilst engaged in critical projects in school. Often there is no continuity when they leave (Borsuk, 2001). According to Ingersoll (2002) turnover influences the performance and effectiveness of the school since the school as an organisation has production processes requiring extensive interaction among educators and is therefore prone to suffer when subjected to high rates of turnover. The shortage of educators is perhaps the most significant effect of educator turnover. Duffrin, 1999 points out that it is difficult to fill the vacancies created by educators who leave the profession. Ingersoll (2002) attributes the shortage of teachers directly to turnover and posits that about 90% of newly hired teachers are simply replacements for recent departures. To address this situation, the temptation is reportedly the lowering of standards and compromising entry requirements into teaching (Kelleher, 1999; Chaika, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Teacher's turnover and the movement to other schools are a costly phenomena, both for the students, who lose the value of being taught by the same teacher consistently and to the schools and counties, which must recruit and train their replacements. Concerns about teacher turnover and attrition (man made and natural) are reported widely as a global phenomenon (Rowan, 2002). Research has shown that approximately one-quarter of all beginning teachers leave teaching within four years (Benner 2000). According to Macdonald (1999) qualitative research indicates that more general factors, including government policies, portrayal of teachers in the mass media, and community attitudes, also influence teachers' general esteem and status in society, which features largely in their professional commitment and morale thus affecting students' performance. Turnover translates into shortages in educator supply, poor learner performance due to disruption of planning programmes and continuity (Ingersoll, 2001b). This poses a challenge to the education system to manage turnover and retain teachers.

It is also critical to the future of quality education delivery, especially in the light of changes in the system generally and the demands placed on it to deliver education in line with the country's socio-economic expectations. There is a growing consensus among educators that the single most important factor in determining student performance is the quality and the turnover of his or her teachers. Therefore, if the national goal of providing an equitable education to children across the nation is to be met, it is critical that efforts be concentrated on developing and retaining high-quality teachers in every school. However this is not the case in Kenya. In Eldoret West sub-county, UasinGishu County the teacher turnover rate is between 10% and 12% from 2008 to 2010 as shown in Table 1.1. The high teacher turnover rates in 2008 depicts poor academic performance as shown from the data collected from the District Education Officer, this applies to the year 2009 and 2010.

Although problems of teacher staffing and turnover have become among the most important policy issues facing schools and the subject of much research, few studies examined the effects of teacher turnover on students academic performance. This research therefore seeks to investigate the effects of teacher turnover on secondary school students' academic performance in Eldoret West District, UasinGishu County.

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to achieve the following objectives:
To investigate the factors contributing to teacher turnover

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Research design is a conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It informs the arrangement of the conditions for the collections and analysis of the data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose (Kothari, 2003). Orodho (2008) notes that descriptive survey research is intended to produce statistical information about aspects of education that interests policy makers and educators. The study was a descriptive survey.

Location of the Study

The study was conducted in Eldoret west district, Uasin -Gishu County. Eldoret west district borders Eldoret East district from the west, Wareng district to the south and Eldoret South district to the east. The research targeted public secondary schools. The location of study was chosen because the district had between 10% to 15% teacher turnover rate from the year between 2008 and 2010 compared to Eldoret South district whose teacher turnover rate was between 8.5% to 9.7%.

Data Collection tools

Target Population

House, 2008 defines target population as a set of the entire individual which has got a given characteristics. According to Goshi(1982), target population is the sum total of the group in which the researcher has an interest. The study target population head teachers, teachers, and education officers in Uasin-Gishu County.

These participants were involved because they were directly or indirectly affected by teacher turnover.

Sample Size and Sampling Frame

Sample is a small part of a large population which is thought to be representative of the larger population (Orodho, 2009). Sampling is the process of selecting a sub-set of cases in order to draw conclusions about the entire set (Orodho,2008). In other cases, the larger the sample, the more the study findings are representative of the target population. Simple random sampling was used to select 50 schools in UasinGishu County. This sampling technique was used because it is easier and less costly.

Sampling Procedure

The researcher selected 15 secondary schools out of the 50 secondary schools randomly from which she conducted the research. This is 30% of the target population as prescribed by Mugenda&Mugenda (2003). Purposive sampling was used to select 15 secondary schools in the County and stratified random sampling was used to select 100 respondents to constitute a sampling unit and a unit of analysis respectively.

Data Collection

Data is anything given or admitted as a fact on which a research inference was based. It is anything actual, or assumed, used as a basis for reckoning. The most common tools for collecting data in research are observation, interview, document analysis and questionnaire techniques. Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. The data collection component of research is common to all fields of study including physical and social sciences, humanities, business, etc. While methods vary by discipline, the emphasis on ensuring accurate and honest collection remains the same. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview schedules and documentary analysis. The first phase of the study was the preliminary where the objectives were defined, and the target population determined. This phase included the identification of the research assistants, training, the preparation of research instruments, schedule of piloting and consultations.

The questionnaires were prepared and piloted in the selected schools in Eldoret West, UasinGishuCounty for purpose of checking the validity and reliability of the instrument. The second phase involved the administration of questionnaires to all the selected participants after which the data collected was analyzed. The third phase involved the arrangement and scheduling for interview sessions with the education officers, the head teachers and the teachers of the schools identified as having been affected adversely. The interviews were both structured and unstructured and aimed at getting more in depth information with regard to teacher turnover in Kenya. The analysis of the data was computed after completing phase three.

Data Analysis

According to Peter, (1994) data is analyzed in stages; in this study, the first stage involved editing of questionnaire and interview schedules to ensure accuracy, completeness and uniformity. Those with major response errors were discarded and the remaining were given numbers. This was followed by coding, which involved categorizing and determining the major categories under which data falls. The categories were minimized to facilitate analysis. The researcher used the discourse analytic method whereby the participants' interpretations were much more context-dependent; interview data was used to reveal regular interpretative practices through which participants constructed versions of actions, cognitive processes, and other phenomena. This method did not take the individual as the principal unit of analysis, but strived to recognize cultural regularities in participants' accounts in order to examine the phenomena studied at a macro sociological level. The data was coded and analyzed using the SPSS computer programme. Descriptive statistics included the use of frequencies and percentages to give summary of the data that was collected. Inferential statistics that was used included the non-parametric techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Perception on the Effect of Teacher Turnover

Table 2 below shows the distribution of the respondents' perception on the effect of teacher turnover. Table 2 above reveals that a large number of the respondents disagreed 60 (63.68%) disagreed that they lose morale of teaching if they remain in a school for a long time, a small percentage 29 (30.8%) of the respondents agreed that they lose morale of teaching if they remain in a school for a long time while 5 (5.3%) of the respondents were undecided.

This is supported by the teachers, head teachers and D.E.O's interviewed, who concurred that teacher-student attachment grows stronger with time. The majority of teachers 71 (75.5 %) disagreed with the view that they do not care to maintain good order in their classroom with or without the fear of transfer, some respondents 20 (21.2%) agreed while only 3 (3.19%) were undecided. It can also be observed from Table 4.5 that the majority of respondents 67 (71.3%) disagreed that a teacher who remains in a school for a long time is the only one who can effectively sustain discipline in the class. Only 23 (24.5%) and 4 (4.3%) of the respondents agreed and were undecided, respectively. This is probably because the length of time one takes in a school does not determine a teacher's effectiveness in containing discipline in classroom. From Table 4.5, it can also be observed that 70 (74.5%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement that teachers transferred to teach in schools next to their homes perform better than those who teach away from their homes, 19 (20.2%) of the respondents were in agreement while a very small percentage 5 (5.3%) were undecided.

Factors Contributing to Teacher Turnover in Eldoret West Sub-County, UasinGishu County. The study found out that reveals that majority 84(89.4 %) of the respondents were in agreement that low pay made teachers quit the profession while the minority 5(5.3 %) disagreed. The high percentage of respondents who agreed that teachers quit the profession due to low pay shows how respondents attach economic rewards to jobs they perform. Probably other factors like conditions of service do not count much. It is also possible that many teachers remain in teaching profession because they have not found a more economically rewarding job. It was also observed that 60 (63.8%) of the respondents agreed that teachers leave due to inadequate induction and mentoring programs. While 31 (33%) disagreed with it and 3 (10.6%) were undecided.

Table 1.1: The Rate of Teacher Turnover in Eldoret West sub-county, UasinGishu County (2008-2010)

YEAR	2008	2009	2010
Teacher Turnover	17	15	16
Turnover Rate	11.3%	10%	10.7%
Academic Performance-General mean score	50.11	51.0	50.1

Source: DEO UasinGishuCounty, 2011

Table 2. Respondents' Perception on the Effect of Teacher Turnover

Effects of teacher turnover on teacher-pupil personal attachment	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		N
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	
There is improvement in academic performance when teachers are transferred regularly	10	10.6%	5	5.3%	79	84%	94
Emotional attachment between pupils and teachers promotes effective classroom instruction	53	56.4%	7	7.4%	24	25.5%	94
I work effectively in a school until I voluntary request for transfer	82	87.2%	1	1%	9	9.6%	94
Teacher-pupil personal attachment boosts classroom participation	69	73.4%	5	5.3%	20	21.3%	94

These programs are probably viewed as one of reasons behind promotions. From the study it was found that 40 (42.5%) of the respondents agree that the departure of teachers is caused by natural attrition, while 20 (21.2%) are undecided about this and 34 (36.1%) disagree. This varies according to the way this calamity befalls certain schools. The majority of the respondents 81 (86.1 %) agreed that teachers transfer in order to be close to their families, a few 10 (10.6 %) disagreed and the rest 3 (3.2%) were undecided. Due to demand and need for parental care most teachers would like to be close to their families in order to enable them assist their spouses in meeting family obligations.

The study also revealed that 10 (10.6%) of the respondents agree that teacher shortage is a result of retirements by teachers, while 78 (83%) disagree with this statement and 6 (6.4%) are undecided. This is because retirements are random and may not affect one school only hence it may not be a significant reason for teacher turnover. We also find, however, that teacher turnover is relatively high among older teachers reflecting the fact that they retire considerably earlier than other professionals. The researcher hypothesize that this is due in part to the relatively high ratio of pensions-to-salaries in teaching, which therefore makes pension participation a more significant factor in labor market decisions. Other factors affecting turnover are also considered. The researcher's findings differ from the often-cited evidence presented by Ingersoll (2001). He finds that teacher turnover is higher than other professions and that the number of retirees is smaller than the number of teachers leaving the profession for other reasons ("leavers"), from which he concludes that the focus should be on reducing non-retirement turnover. This contradicts previous concerns that the retirement of the Baby Boom teachers would create enormous shortages in the coming years. While the absolute number of retirees and leavers found by Ingersoll appear accurate, our results suggest that teacher turnover compares more favorably, and that teacher retirements play a much larger role, than his comparisons would suggest. It was also noted that approximately half 57 (60.6 %) of the teachers indicated that school management committees rarely influenced their transfers, 35 (37.2 %) of the respondents indicated that the committees often had influence on transfers while 2 (2%) % were undecided. The percentage of teachers who were on agreement with this view (43.4 %) are supported by Williams (1979) who stated that it was extremely important from the point of view of the stability of school staffing and the essence of performance that school committee may have to be involved.

Conclusion

The study sought to find the effect teacher turnover has on secondary schools students academic performance, the study found out that majority of teachers in Uasin Gishu County could not work effectively in classroom instruction when they are transferred from the schools without prior consultation. It was also concluded that transfer of teachers disrupts learning in that there was negative effect of school teacher-transfer on classroom instruction. It was also noted that Teacher transfer reduces teachers' morale of teaching in the classroom. The study also found out that due to the fact that transfers of teachers trigger students transfer, students' learning is disrupted by a changing pattern of instructional methods when a student is taught by a newly transferred teacher.

Recommendation

From the findings, this study recommends that Teacher transfer should be done only when the circumstances are unavoidable preferably at the end of the year because it disrupts learning.

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