

Factors Influencing Teachers' Turnover from Government Secondary Schools in Makete District, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study investigated about factors influencing teachers' turnover from government secondary schools in Makete District, Tanzania. The study employed the descriptive design. The design was chosen because it is the best for fact finding studies. While the number of schools in Makete district was 120, only five schools were selected through simple random sampling. The target sample included 16 participants: five heads of schools, 10 teachers and one District Education Officer. The study used interviews as source of data. The researchers used a smart phone to record participants' responses during interview sessions and then, the responses were transcribed verbatim. The study analyzed the data according to themes. The study concludes that there are various factors that cause teachers' turnover from Secondary schools in Makete District. Such reasons include low salary, lack of teachers' houses, misunderstanding at work place, heavy workload, lack of support from school administration and delayed promotion. In order to curb these, challenges, the government needs to recruit more teachers to meet the requirement of teachers in government secondary schools, especially in rural areas. There is a need to build teachers' houses in order to accommodate them in quality houses. Finally, the government needs to provide special allowances for teachers working in remote areas like Makete.

Keywords: Teachers' turnover; government, secondary schools.

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Introduction

Employee turnover is a problem that faces organizations and schools (Kimaro, 2015). A study by Xaba (2003) reported that the teaching profession has gone through rigorous deliberations and analysis about teachers' turnover than any

other profession. Teacher retention is a global concern, which affects education and therefore it needs a serious attention. Minda (2016) reveals that trends around the world show that many countries have experienced teachers' turnover. The current situation shows that the turnover rate has continued increasing in developing countries.

Globally, evidence shows that due to high turnover, schools serve large populations of low-performing, who are in greater need of consistent and supportive school experience (Boyd et al., 2011). Learners are exposed to inconsistent staffing, resulting to students being taught by an increasing number of inexperienced teachers (Boniface, 2019).

Shortage of teachers is a national crisis in various countries. In the United States, about 8% of the teachers leave the profession for another job or retiring for a variety of reasons every year (Shuls, et al. (2020). In the United Kingdom 9.2% of teachers in 2010/11 left and the number increased to 9.9% in 2016/17. Statistics further show that 22% of those who joined the teaching profession in 2015 left by November 2016 (Foster, 2019). The low teacher retention affects education negatively as it undermines the quality of teaching workforce, because schools are left with few teachers and some of them are not experienced in teaching (Fulbeck, 2011).

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Across Europe, Hong Kong and Australia, an average 40% to 50% of novice and beginning teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching (Gallant & Ripley, 2014). Furthermore, Sulit (2020) reported that in Arizona, teacher retention remains a dominant concern. Arizona is losing more teachers from the profession each year than those annually graduating with bachelor of education degrees from its three major universities.

Peoples' Congress in China passed a Compulsory Education Law in 2006, which instructed government authorities to ensure favorable wages, living standards and social security benefits of teachers to attract teachers' retention. Despite these progressive policy responses, staffing schools with qualified teachers has remained challenging in many parts of China. Yiu and Adams (2013) as cited in Liu (2020) ascertained that teacher attrition has attracted increasing concern within China in order to solve the problem of teachers' turnover.

Kamundi (2021a) discloses that in 2007, Ghana had a shortage of 40,000 teachers. Out of this gap, 24,000 vacancies were filled with the untrained teachers. The study further, identified other African countries with the challenge of low teacher retention as Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, Central Africa as well as South Africa, where the South African Minister of Education urged high school students to choose the teaching profession.

Acom (2010) stated that Ugandan schools suffer teachers' shortage due to "teacher rural-urban migration" whose average attrition stood at 4%. In Tanzania, Boniface (2019) reported that teachers' retention is a critical problem, mostly affecting rural areas. Evidence shows teachers allocated to rural schools report in low numbers and even those who are already there seek transfer to urban areas (URT, 2008).

In the context of Tanzania, in 2008, almost 40% of new teacher graduates did not even enter the teaching workforce URT (2008). The total number of teachers decreased by 1.7% in 2019. Such decrease can be attributed by various factors, including dismissal, retirement, death and attrition in favor of other profession (URT, 2019). This study was conducted in Makete District, Tanzania. The area was purposely selected because empirical review indicated that few studies have been conducted on how heads of secondary schools could offset teachers' turnover. Moreover, URT (2019) revealed that Njombe Region was among the areas with the lowest Teacher Pupil Ratio (PTR). Furthermore, considering the government's ambition to eradicate poverty through quality education, uncovering the reasons causing teacher turnover would help to prepare better in dealing with and achieve the strategic Development Goals on poverty and education.

Methodology

Design

The study employed the descriptive design. The design was chosen because it is the best for fact finding studies.

Population and Sampling

While the number of schools in Makete district was 120, only five schools were selected through simple random sampling. The target sample included 16 participants: five heads of schools, 10 teachers and one District Education Officer. The study used interviews as source of data.

Validity and Reliability

The interview guide was presented to four experts from the Faculty of Education and science, University of Iringa. The experts examined it and advised on what to improve.

Treatment of data

The researchers used a smart phone to record participants' responses during interview sessions and then, the responses were transcribed verbatim. The study analyzed the data according to themes.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were addressed through obtaining written consents of teachers, heads of schools and the district officers. Permission to record interview was requested from respondents and was granted. Anonymity and confidentiality were granted.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents results and discussions of findings of the study. The findings are guided by specific research questions as follows:

Research Questions: What are the causes for teacher turnover in Secondary Schools in Makete District?

Unfavorable Weather Condition

Findings indicated that weather condition of Makete District is not favorable for majority of teachers due to severe cold. One of the interviewees reported: "The weather condition is intolerable; the area is too cold, which brings about health problems especially to those with the history of asthma and those who went through surgery processes" (Teacher, School C).

A Senior Educational Officer added:

The cold weather is critical to those teachers coming from hot regions like Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Morogoro. They never experienced cold weather. Therefore, it is difficult for them to cope with the situation. Due to this reason, some of them seek transfer to other areas or leave the profession (Interviewed SDEO, 2022).

The findings agree with Ozoglu (2015) and Peng (2015) who reported that severe weather condition was an important factor that influenced teachers' decision to leave. The report went further by revealing that winter lasts longer and was colder than most other regions. This is in line with Makete District Council Strategic Plan 2016/2017-2020/2021, which stated that in Makete annual

temperature ranges from 4 to 20 degrees Celsius, with average rainfall at 1300mm.

Family Issues

The study revealed that family issues accounted for teachers' turnover too. Marriage and attending sick parents or relatives who were living in other regions were some of major family issues for which majority of teachers required transfer. During the interview, one teacher reported,

We had our fellow teacher who had to attend her sick parents in another region. She used to travel several times to see her parents, finally she decided to seek transfer to where her parents lived, and unfortunately she didn't succeed. She decided then to leave the teaching profession so as to attend her sick parents (Teacher, School D).

Another teacher had this to say:

A female teacher in our school had to seek transfer to save her marriage. Her husband who lived in another region told her to choose either her marriage or job; she tried to seek transfer to where her husband was, but it was impossible to get transfer; the only option she had was to quit the teaching profession to join her family and save her marriage (Teacher, School A).

The findings correspond with Sulit (2020) who reported that personal reasons and marriage negatively impact teachers' retention as married teachers leave more than those who are not married.

Limited Alternative Economic Activities and Long Distance to School

The study found that another reason for teachers' turnover was limited opportunities for alternative economic activities since schools are located very far from where teachers live; they could not establish other economic projects to supplement their salaries, given that what they earn is inadequate, the only activity they can engage in is agriculture, with the production of potatoes. Through the interview, one teacher had this to say, "Schools are far from the village and transport cost is high; it is difficult to establish tuition centers or teach part-time in private schools after school hours as additional sources of income as our fellow

teachers in urban areas do" (Teacher, School E, 13th May, 2022). Another teacher added,

The only activity we can engage in is agriculture; potatoes are produced in this district to a large extent, but the harvest time is during rainy season; with the rough roads, it becomes difficult to transport potatoes from the farm to the market as most of the roads become unpassable during that season (Teacher, School B, 12th May, 2022).

The findings are similar to Nyamubi (2017) who revealed that a lot of teachers searched for alternative teaching opportunities or changed jobs to increase their income because salaries were insufficient to support their families to live decent life.

Delayed Promotion

The study showed that delayed promotion was among the reasons for teachers' turnover. It was reported that teachers were not promoted on time. Majority of teachers had worked for many years but the salary scale had not changed. Through the interview, a head of school this to say,

Although the government has the same policy for promotion some teachers from remote districts like Makete are not promoted in time. You may find that a teacher in this District who got employment on the same time as a teacher in Iringa, let say, the one working in this district has not been promoted in time; his/her salary scale is quite different from the one in Iringa Municipal. Teachers are not given the rights they deserve at the right time. Furthermore, teachers may go for leave without being paid (Head of school 5, 13th May, 2022).

The findings correspond with Malisa (2015), who reported that teachers were lowly motivated due to late promotion. The study further suggested that for retention of teachers, there should be timely promotion. Furthermore, Mgunda (2015) maintained that the local government authorities possessed wrong and vague arguments that promoting many teachers at once, although they deserve, will make the government spent much money to pay salaries; this make teachers to serve one grade for unspecified time without promotion, resulting to teachers leaving the profession. In

addition, Kafyulilo (2013) suggested that the government should make teachers' claimed payment on time. Also there should be allocation of budget for teachers' timely promotion to minimize turnover.

Difficult Conditions Imposed in Getting Transfer

Moreover, the findings reveal that difficult conditions imposed when teachers seek transfer to other areas for different reasons, contributed to teachers' turnover. It was reported that teachers who seek transfer have to find teachers with the same teaching subjects from another school for replacement; such a condition is difficult to implement in most cases. Through interview, one respondent stated,

Among other reasons for teachers' turnover in this district is difficult condition in getting transfer, I had teachers who decided to leave the teaching profession because they failed to get teachers from other areas to replace them. The only decision they opted was to quit from teaching (Head of school 2, 12th May, 2022).

Another respondent had this to say:

In order to get permit for transfer you need to find a teacher with the same teaching subjects from another area to come here for replacement; such condition is difficult to meet because there is no teacher outside this district who is ready to come and work here (Teacher, School D, 13th May, 2022).

Limited Accommodation

The findings further revealed that limited accommodation was another reason for teachers' turnover, among the selected secondary schools; either there were few teachers' houses or there were no houses at all. Through the interview, one head of school reported,

There are 9 teachers' houses out of 15 in our school; they can't accommodate all of us here. There are houses to rent in the village, but sometimes those houses are of low status. They do not have a cemented floor. The schools are also located far from the town Centre. Therefore, teachers who live there have to incur high transport cost every day to school (Head of School 3, 12th May, 2022).

Another teacher said “there are no teachers’ houses in our school; we have to pay house rent with little salary we earn; this demotivates us to a large extent.” (Teacher, School D, 13th May, 2022).

The study findings are in line with Malisa (2015) who reported that teachers were lowly motivated due to poor provision of accommodation. Similarly, Jeston (2013) reported that lack of appropriate accommodation sometimes causes absenteeism and lateness. It was further reported that lack of accommodation makes teachers not comfortable due to long walking distance and insecurity; the situation become worse during rainy season, hence leads to teachers’ turnover.

Low Salary

Furthermore, low salary was among the reasons for teachers’ turnover despite their role to rise children and impart knowledge to students. Still teachers are lowly paid compared to other professions. Teachers in Urban areas have other sources of income to supplement their income compared to Makete District. One of the teachers reported,

The low salary paid demotivates us to a large extent; this has caused some teachers to quit for other professions which pays better. It doesn’t mean that the majority of teachers who have continued with the teaching profession are satisfied with amount of salary, it is because they don’t have alternatives. The costs for everything has risen but the salary has remained the same since then. I think the government has to work on the issue of teachers’ salaries (Teacher, School B, 12th May, 2022).

The findings concur with Nyamubi (2017) who indicated that teachers working in government schools are not paid the same level as other Tanzanian civil servants despite similarities in academic qualifications. Moreover, Locklear (2010) reported that teachers decided to leave the career due to low pay or the amount of time required for the paper work involved. In addition, the Tanzania government Secular on salaries scales of 2013/14 shows that the teaching profession has low salary scale compared to some other profession (Malisa, 2015).

Misunderstanding at Work Place

Apart from above reasons, misunderstanding at work place which can occur between staff members

or between staff members and the school administration contributed to teachers’ turnover. Through interview, a researcher quoted one of the teachers saying, “A certain teacher left the profession due to misunderstanding with the HoS, who used to report her negatively to the SDEO without communicating with her to know the challenges she faced; she felt embarrassed and decided to quit” (Teacher, School A, 11th May, 2022). Another respondent had this to say:

Misunderstanding occurs due to unequal treatment from the school management; the school leadership creates classes among teachers. When there are chances for supervision and marking National examinations, only few get such chances repeatedly while others are left behind year after year; this discourages a lot and leads to conflict (Teacher, School C, 12th May, 2022).

The findings are in line with Boniface (2016) who observed that head of schools are the source of conflict in remote schools; they treat teachers unequally and split them along the lines of favored and unfavored groups. The favored ones attend regional/ National examination marking sessions with financial gains while unfavored group is normally left behind. In addition, Mgunda (2015) reported direct complaints received from teachers about heads of schools’ favoritism to some teachers; this discourages teacher retention at work place.

Workload

Moreover, the study found that heavy teaching load was among the reasons for teachers’ turnover. Respondents reported that some teachers must bear a heavy teaching load beyond the recommended one for every teacher. The interview conducted with the heads of schools captured one of them saying,

In my office I have received letters from teachers who seek transfer to other areas. I asked one of them the reason for such a decision and she told me that she is tired of the heavy teaching load due to limited number of teachers, and that is true. Can you imagine one teacher teaching physics subject from form one to form six, at the same time performing other duties? This is completely unfair (Head of school 4, 13th May, 2022).

Another head of school had this to say, "In my school I have one mathematics teacher to teach from form one to six; the work load is heavy; since I took mathematics, I take form three and five classes at least to reduce the workload for my teacher." (Head of School 1, 11th May, 2022).

Similarly, shortage of teachers adds workload to few available teachers; once new teachers are posted to these of schools, they do not stay (Kimaro, 2015). As a result, they decide to shift to other schools. Others decide to go for further studies and change the profession. Again, Faraji (2018) reported that teachers' morale for staying in their working station increases when working in the school with all teaching facilities and minimum teaching load.

Unsupportive School Administration

The study found that poor administrative support was among the reasons for teachers' turnover; in most cases, some heads of schools were not supportive; they did not feel teachers' problems. Furthermore, they do not take part in helping teachers whenever teachers face challenges, being personal or professional. Through the interview, one discussant said,

The head of school is the one to help teachers in getting promotion, but you may find teachers who are eligible for promotion yet the head of school do not put effort to make follow-up for teachers' timely promotion, by ensuring appraisal forms are filled in time by all teachers this will avoid discouragement. (Teacher, School A, 11th May, 2022).

Another respondent added,

When teachers face challenges at work place, they have expectation for the heads of schools to help them, but you may face personal or professional challenges and you don't even receive a call from your head of school to know your progress! This is discouraging (Teacher, School E, 13th May, 2022).

The findings are in line with Kamundi (2021b) who reported that school administration contributed to teachers' departure from schools as more teachers were leaving the schools than those being employed. However, teachers intended to remain in the school as long as the administration was cooperative, understanding, recognizing teachers' efforts and treating them with dignity.

Need for Professional Development

In addition, the need for professional development was a reason for teachers' turnover. It was reported that sometimes teachers needed to upgrade their profession. However, there were obstacles to attain this ambition. Through the interview, one of the teachers had this to say,

There are limited opportunities for further studies in our region due to remoteness of the area compared to other districts; this makes difficult for career progression. Getting permission to join the university in other regions is difficult because the number of teachers is inadequate (Teacher, School B, 12th May, 2022).

Similarly, Malisa (2015) ascertained that teachers were not provided with enough opportunities for career development. Some teachers decided to quit from the teaching profession because they were denied permission for further studies in higher learning institutions. UNESCO (2015) further revealed that in-service training, which is linked to career progression can be a big challenge for teachers in rural areas, who live far from training centers or do not have access to those resources.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that there are various causes for teachers' turnover from Secondary schools. Such reasons include low salary, lack of teachers' houses, misunderstanding at work place, heavy workload, lack of support from school administration and delayed promotion. Therefore, in order to solve these, challenges it is recommended the government recruits more teachers to meet the requirement of teachers in government secondary schools, especially in rural areas. Secondly, there is a need to build teachers' houses in order to accommodate them in quality houses. Thirdly, the government needs to provide special allowances for teachers working in remote areas like Makete. Finally, there is a need to improve the relationship between school leaders and teacher.

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