

Status of Teacher Turnover in Selected Secondary Schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District, Uganda

Sofia Gaitte Sol, Josephat Tumwesigye, Immaculate Emurugat and Specioza Asimwe
Department of Education Management, Kampala International University, Uganda

Abstract

Teacher turnover could have a negative effect on students' academic achievement, and teaching workload. The aim of this paper was to investigate the status teacher turnover in selected secondary schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District, Uganda. The target population was 19 secondary school headteachers while 14 headteachers was used as the sample size. Data was collected using document analysis and interview guides. The instruments were tested to see if the questions were relevant, clear and unambiguous. Research experts who had content in the area under investigation were consulted and their comments used to improve the questions in the interview guide as a way of ensuring face validity. For quantitative data obtained, they were first edited for completeness, coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 20.1. The data was tabulated to generate descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was organized, interpreted, patterns in the data identified, data patterns related to research themes. Some important prepositions from the participants was quoted verbatim in the appropriate sections of the discussion. The data was finally used as a basis for informed and verifiable conclusions. The paper found out that teacher turnover was an issue in many schools. Majority of head teachers openly reported that some teachers quit teaching from their schools either for green pastures or to other professions. The study concluded that there was low teacher turnover of 4.7% that is approximately 11 teachers per year. The paper recommended that Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda should put in place a system that captures the statistics of teacher turnover and make right decision through replacements.

Keywords: Teachers; Turnover; Status; Secondary; Schools

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1.0 Introduction

Teacher turnover, which, may be described as the rate at which teachers leave the teaching profession or occupation requiring replacement per 100 teachers affects academic performance (Stromquist, 2018). On average, globally, the education sector at primary and secondary levels loses 15-50 percent of the teaching professionals leaving learners without teachers or in the hands of untrained teachers (Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014). Most of the teachers leave the profession within five years of entry in the primary and secondary education levels.

To stop the nation's ongoing teacher shortages, it is essential to address teacher turnover. As teacher turnover has enormous social and economic consequences to student learning and the national budget, it is also crucial for schools to function effectively (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Furthermore, keeping excellent teachers on staff is essential to raising achievement in many secondary schools (Fuller, Waite & Torres, 2016). Voluntary and involuntary turnover are the two types of turnover (Albattat & Som, 2013). When an employee chooses to leave the company of their own free will, this is referred to as voluntary turnover. Contrarily, involuntary turnover occurs when a worker leaves on the employer's initiative (Lam, Baum & Pine, 2003). Voluntary or involuntary staff turnover has a significant influence on any firm.

To Adnot *et al.*, (2016), though teacher turnover in practice appears to have a negative effect on students' performance, teacher turnover can as well have large positive effects under a policy regime in which low-performing teachers are accurately identified and replaced with more effective teachers. Replacement of poor performers with better performers can yield benefits such as higher pass rates, low class repetitions, and regular student attendance. The perspectives of Adnot *et al.*, (2016) point to an existence of mixed effects of teacher turnover, though more evidence points to the negative effects. This study conceptually directed by the arguments of Dolton and Newson (2003) about the link between teacher turn over and students' academic performance.

Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District like other parts of Uganda has benefited from government's salary enhancement interventions for teachers in the secondary schools and provision of scholastic materials for better learning environment and academic performance. In addition, private schools have been encouraged to ensure teachers are remunerated appropriately and the learning environment supports better academic performance. High teacher attrition rate has been mentioned by Ávalos and Valenzuela, (2016) as a possible cause of poor academic performance. The current study investigated the status of teacher turnover in secondary schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District, Uganda

2.0 Literature Review

Teacher turnover is part of the rubric on worker or staff turnover in the general domain of management but narrowed down to the teaching profession. According to Fuller, Waite, and Torres (2016), teacher turnover may be defined as the rate at which personnel whose primary function is classroom teaching leave or separate from the school, or switch from classroom teaching to another position from one school year to another, expressed as a percentage. This may be measured by dividing the classroom teachers reported in the current year against those reported in the previous year. Bulawat, (2020) takes the above definition further and argues that leavers should be replaced. Therefore, to be complete, the measure of teacher turnover must recognize the fact that the teachers who leave must be replaced by other teachers in order to close the gaps that the departure creates.

Scholars and practitioners argue that staff turnover should be conceptualised in terms of the rate at which the staff leave an organisation requiring replacement. Mason and Matas (2015), Adnot *et al.* (2016) claim that teacher turnover should be seen in terms of its effects on staff capacity. To maintain the staff capacity, those who leave should be replaced. In assessing the teacher turnover, concern should be the percentage of teachers' staff leaving whether on voluntary basis or at the instigation of the school administration but require replacement as a percentage of teachers in the school. These studies provide good theoretical arguments about measuring teacher turnover. However, they do not provide a contextual understanding of teacher turnover in Kakumiro.

Nketsia, Side, Opoku and Gameda (2022) seem to suggest that the focus of measuring teacher turnover should not be on all the professional teachers in a school but those who have classroom responsibilities. The composition of the teachers at the school is important in understanding and measuring teacher turnover. In instances where there is more staff capacity in the school than is currently utilised, teachers may leave without the need for replacement. As echoed by Adnot *et al.*, (2016), teacher turnover will not exist when teachers who leave do not need replacement. In measuring teacher turnover, exclusion should be made of those that will not be replaced.

There is a widespread teacher turnover across the U.S. Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff, (2013) report that 30 percent of new teachers leave the profession within five years and that this rate increases to 50 percent in high-poverty and low-performing schools. Allensworth et al (2009) revealed an alarming teacher turnover trend in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), where a typical school, in which the majority of the students are low-income and predominantly African American and Latino, experiences a turnover in half of its teachers every three years. In contrast, other data suggest that teacher turnover rates have decreased to 17 percent nationwide and to 18.6 percent in high-poverty schools (Gray & Taie, 2015). However, compared to the national labor turnover rate of 3.5 percent (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), the teacher turnover rate is considerably higher.

Ingersoll (2001) argues that high turnover in schools is not only a concern because of its link to academic achievement, but because it may be an indicator of underlying problems within the school organization such as work conditions, administrative support, and the degree of conflict within the school. Recognizing that turnover may have varying degrees of positive or negative effect depending upon who leaves and the reasons for leaving, Tehseen, and Hadi, (2015) nevertheless acknowledge that high rates of teacher turnover are problematic for school operations because they undermine continuity in instruction, which in turn affects student achievement. Ronfeldt *et al.*, (2013) examination of teaching conditions in California indicates that the impact of turnover reaches beyond the teachers that leave, their replacements, and their students. They argue that all members of a school community are vulnerable to the disruptive organizational influence of turnover, as it harms the stability of the educational environment. For both students whose teachers have left, and for students whose teachers have remained, overall depression of staff morale caused by chronic turnover can be enough to depress student academic performance. However, these studies dwelt more on factors contributing towards teachers' turnover, hence handled very little on how it affects students' academic performance.

One of the strongest predictors of teacher turnover is the organizational conditions related to the administrator's leadership and support (Ingersoll, 2001). Effective administrative leadership has long been recognized as is a crucial factor in making any type of organization successful. Administrators manage staff, schedules, and resources. Administrative leaders provide direction, encouragement and inspiration to achieve success. Influencing people to willingly perform their tasks in an efficient and professional way is an art and a skill. When good leadership is in place, it can be felt throughout an entire organization. Good leaders do not force a school culture. Instead they promote its development. Good leaders keep lines of communication open and effective. When teachers feel that they are an important part of the organization, they attach their personal success to the success of the entire school community. And, as Anderson (2008) concludes, there is a positive relation between a school environment that fosters communication, respect, and trust and student achievement. The surveyed authors have handled causes teacher turnover, in addition as Long (2007) and others have observed that research regarding teacher turnover is insufficient and inconsistent. More specifically, Chetty et al. (2014) and Rivkin et al. (2005) have observed that the research on the relationship between teacher turnover, teacher quality, and student achievement is confusing and conflicting in part because of inadequate data and imprecise formulation of underlying issues.

Nguyen, Pham, Crouch and Springer, (2020) also point to inadequate data as a source of insufficient research to disentangling the effects of the multiple factors that come into play in the study of teacher turnover. Sorensen, and Ladd, (2020) specifically calls for more research into determining causal links between teacher turnover and deficits with organizational functioning and student achievement. Gilmour and Wehby (2020) suggests how to determine links between teacher factors such as turnover and student achievement; namely by obtaining matched student-teacher data in which student achievement and teachers are observed over a period of several years. Rockoff does acknowledge that this type of data is not easily available to researchers. With regard to studies of teacher well-being and performance, factors that have been associated with turnover, Kamrath and Bradford, (2020) admit that influences on teacher well-being and performance such as working environment, administration support, and workload have been examined, but causal relationships between such influences and teacher variables have not been established. Therefore, this study aimed at ascertaining the casual relationships. Therefore, teacher turnover remains a critical issue facing school districts across the world due to the complexity of separating and isolating the many factors besides teacher turnover that might have influence on student achievement. The need for additional data regarding teacher turnover and its impact on students makes this researcher's case study highly relevant and worthy of study.

3.0 Research Methodology

This study adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches in a cross-sectional research design. The researcher used the quantitative research approach to be able to collect existing statistical data on teacher turnover from the selected schools (Singh, 2007). In addition, the approach enabled the researcher to manipulate the data to describe and correlate the variables in the observed phenomenon of teacher turnover and students' academic performance. The cross-sectional design aided the researcher to collect data about different cross sections of the population at one point in term. Cross-sectional studies are easier to conduct where there is limited time such as in this case. This was done to ensure that all schools in the study area were taken into consideration.

The target population comprised of 19 secondary schools both government and private owned. These schools were spread across Kakumiro District. The primary target population was the secondary schools that had been in existence for over 10 years and whose students had sat UCE exams for at least 10 years. The secondary target population was the head teachers of the selected secondary schools. The unit of observation were schools whereby the head teachers were targeted to provide relevant information for analysis. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination Table, 1970, 14 schools were selected for the research and this gave a sample size of 14 key informants (head teachers).

Purposive sampling was used to select secondary schools which had sat f UCE exams for at least 10 years. Thereafter simple random sampling was used to select individual schools to participate in the study. The simple random sampling technique was preferred because it enabled the researcher obtain reliable and un-biased data. It also gave equal chance to all sampling units in the sample frame to participate in research process. In each of the selected schools, the head teacher was purposively sampled to take part in the study.

Document reviews were used to obtain data on staff turnover in terms of number of teachers who had left their schools and replacements that were made. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the secondary school head teachers to obtain the opinions about the status of teacher turnover. Document checklist and the interview guide were reviewed before data collection to ensure validity of the instrument. The instruments were tested to see if the questions were relevant, clear and unambiguous as outlined by Mikkonen *et al.*, (2010). Research experts who had content in the area under investigation were consulted and their comments used to improve the questions in the interview guide as a way of ensuring face validity. Permission to conduct the research was first sought from district administrators. In addition, informed consent was sought from the key informant who were also the schools' head teachers after introduction. Document review on teacher turnover was conducted in each of the schools visited followed by head teachers' interviews on the subject matter.

For quantitative data obtained, they were first edited for completeness, coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 20.1. The data was tabulated to generate descriptive statistics. Spearman's Rank Correlation was performed at $p=0.05$ level of significance. Qualitative data was organized, interpreted, patterns in the data identified, data patterns related to research themes. Some important prepositions from the participants was quoted verbatim in the appropriate sections of the discussion. The data was finally used as a basis for informed and verifiable conclusions.

4.0 Results

The aim of this paper was to examine the status of teacher turnover in selected secondary schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District. Thus, document analysis was performed in the 14 selected secondary schools. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Turnover in Bugangaizi County West during 2014-2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Approved Teachers	251	228	207	225	224
Left	10 (4%)	6 (2.6%)	10 (4.8%)	17(7.6%)	10 (4.5%)
Replaced	6 (60%)	6(100%)	3 (30%)	3 (17.6%)	7(70%)

The study results as shown in Table 1 indicate that 7.6% was low level of teacher turnover in 2017 among the surveyed secondary schools. In addition, in 2016 the teacher turnover rate was 4.8%, in which 10 teachers left among the twelve secondary schools. Moreover, in 2018 the turnover level was at 4.5% with 10 teachers quitting and 4% in 2014 with 10 teachers leaving. The least was 2.6% who left in 2015. The findings therefore show that teacher turnover was low among the five years although only in 2015 that the turnover was low with 2.6%. Taken all together statistics indicate that teacher turnover was a reality in secondary schools in Bugangaizi County. Partially because 2.6% of the teachers left in 2016 among the twelve secondary schools surveyed, which indicate a low percentage as compared to other years where it stood at 4%. The study showed that although schools indicated the approved number of teachers to teach in those schools, many of them had less than what is expected. For instance, it was noted that of the 32 approved teachers in a given school, only 23 were available handling a workload of 32 teacher. Therefore, the school operated under less staff, which therefore shows that the minimal teacher turnover affects the running of the school.

Based on those who left, the study further inquired of teacher replacement. In order to achieve the right statistics, the total number of teacher turnover was taken and then the number of replacement of teachers made for that year. The findings show that only in 2015 when the teacher turnover was at 2.6% did the schools manage to make teacher replacement of 100% as compared to other years. The second highest replacement was in 2018 where the turnover was at 4.5 and the schools made 70% replacement which indicates that schools put in place $\frac{3}{4}$ of the teachers who left. In 2017 the replacement was extremely low since it was at 17.6%, which was less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total turnover. The statistics further reveals that in 2016 the schools made $\frac{1}{4}$ percent replacement of the teachers who left, while in 2014 schools made just above $\frac{1}{2}$ replacements. Based on the statistics, teacher turnover continues to be a problem in schools since once many of them quit there are few replacements made which burdens the remaining staff to match the numbers that left. Therefore, teacher turnover over remains a problem in secondary schools as schools where teacher quit rarely fill the remaining vacancies in time. This can be the case with government schools where the Ministry of education takes time to recruit teachers into the service, however, it also happens with private schools where they want to minimize the costs.

Further, interviews were conducted and it appeared that teacher turnover was an issue in many schools. Majority of head teachers openly reported that some teachers quit teaching from their schools either for green pastures or to other professions. *As teachers quit it becomes a problem to recruit since in government schools the ministry of Education and Sports is responsible for such activities, therefore, it takes time to fill the vacancies left open.* Among the private head teachers, they noted that some owners want to minimize costs which makes them fail to fill all the vacancies left by teachers who have left. In addition, it was found out that some schools *fail to raise money to cater for hiring experienced teachers which make the schools to use what they have before they can employ new teachers.* In addition, when asked about the rate of teacher attrition, it was noted that teachers generally leave at any given time due to various reasons. Also, location of the schools was a problem to get teachers who are willing to stay in rural areas or part-time and move to other areas, due to transport and accommodations problems. The head teachers agreed that departure of teachers leads to slow syllabus coverage.

In a nutshell, based on the research findings, it is noticeable that teacher turnover is practical in secondary schools although the percent is low. However, the low turnover in schools create a problem to replace all the teachers who have left in time due to different issues. *Since the low teacher turnover is not managed properly as there are unmatched replacement in which the replacements were less than the turnover.*

In line with the findings of the study Okumbe (2011) notes that, teacher turnover in schools affects the ability of schools to provide a consistent service. Similarly, Adnot, Dee, Kats and Wyckoff (2016) argue that the assumed theory of action is that teacher turnover changes the average effectiveness of teachers in the schools. However, the current study did not ascertain issues with effectiveness suffered when experienced teachers are replaced by less experienced teachers. Also, this study findings parallels with other recent educational researchers from other countries around the globe. Comparatively, Stromquist (2018) argue that teacher turnover, which, may be described as the rate at which teachers leave the teaching profession or occupation requiring replacement per 100 teachers affects academic performance. On average, globally, the education sector at primary and secondary levels loses 15-50 percent of the teaching professionals leaving learners without teachers or in the hands of untrained teachers (Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014). Most of the teachers leave the profession within five years of entry in the primary and secondary education levels.

Better still, the study finding parallels with other more recent related research findings whereby, in their studies, Mason and Matas (2015), Adnot et al. (2016) claim that teacher turnover should be seen in terms of its effects on staff capacity. To maintain the staff capacity, those who leave should be replaced. Similarly, as

observed in this present study, it is unarguable that there is teacher turnover in secondary schools. In assessing the teacher turnover however, concern was put on the percentage of teachers' staff leaving whether on voluntary basis or at the instigation of the school administration but require replacement as a percentage of teachers in the school.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that there was low teacher turnover of 4.7% that is approximately 11 teachers per year. This seems to be a low percent that is not worrying most, however, it had consequences of students' academic performance.

5.2 Recommendations

The paper recommended that Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda should put in place a system that captures the statistics of teacher turnover and make right decision through replacements. The study also recommends that Managing Directors of private secondary schools vest full power and authority in the head teachers whom they have employed so that they are able to replace teachers who leave. In addition, they should ensure that there are enough teachers who are recommended by the government in a given secondary schools. In addition, the stakeholders should work hand in hand to address the issues of teacher turnover.

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