

## Challenges of Retaining Teachers in Private Secondary Schools in Wakiso District, Uganda

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### Abstract

Retention of teachers in schools is key in the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The current paper investigated the challenges of retaining teachers in private secondary schools in Wakiso District, Uganda. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey method of the descriptive design and mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The target population was 1824 respondents comprising of all the teachers and head teachers from rural and urban schools in Wakiso district. A sample size of 317 respondents consisting of 267 teachers, and 50 Headteachers was used in the study. The study revealed that upcoming private schools had a higher rate of teachers who were leaving the school than the well-established private schools which could be because of the less stressful experiences they undergo compared to their colleagues in upcoming private schools. It also emerged that various reasons made teachers not to remain in their schools. It was concluded that the findings accruing from this study intends to provide new deposit of knowledge on challenges affecting retention of teachers in private secondary schools. The study might also stimulate interest to other researchers to do further research on the field of employee retention and turnover in both educational and non-educational sectors. The study intends to benefit the school proprietors and administrators to make informed decisions on matters regarding retention of teachers. The study recommended that proprietors of private secondary schools should find appropriate measures that can be used to address challenges of retaining their teachers like increasing teachers 'salaries by considering their workload, motivating teachers by using fringe benefits to motivate, be committed and improving the working environment.

**Key words:** Challenges, Teachers, Retention, Private schools

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### 1.0 Introduction

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the African education system needs to be strengthened more than before (SDG 4). Because it connects basic education, higher education, and the labor market, the World Bank report from 2005 regards secondary education as one of the foundations of the transformation process. The report does see secondary education as a priceless resource that may promote economic development. However, it is widely accepted that a key constraint into achieving the SDG is the absence of motivated teachers leading to low retention. In numerous studies Xaba (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asiimwe Gaité and Emurugat (2022) it has been shown that African instructors lack motivation. Understanding the primary motivators of teachers is essential to recruiting and keeping them, regardless of whether they receive monetary or non-monetary incentives.

According to various writers, the issue of teacher retention is a global one. According to Herbert and Ramsay (2004), there have been multiple reports of high teacher turnover in a number of affluent nations, including the United States, Sweden, Germany, and New (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asiimwe Gaité and Emurugat (2022). According to Ingersoll (2001), roughly half of teachers in the USA leave the profession within their first five years of teaching, leading to widespread reports of teacher shortages in several states (Falk, 2012). This supports the claim made by Dill and Stafford (2008) that teachers quit their jobs after their first year in the classroom.

The number of teachers available to many schools and the quality of instruction are both reduced by high turnover. Also, it has an impact on the quality of education provided, which runs counter to the necessity of education for achieving social and economic progress (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asiimwe Gaité and Emurugat (2022). The rate at which teachers are

leaving the teaching profession in Uganda is high (MoES 2004; (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asimwe Gaitte and Emurugat (2022). In particular there is a higher staff turnover in private secondary schools in Wakiso District. One wonders whether this high turnover rate among teachers is due to lack of appropriate stress management strategies in the work lives of the private secondary school teachers. The current paper investigated the challenges of retaining teachers in private secondary schools in Wakiso District, Uganda.

## 2.0 Literature review

According to MacMillan (2002), the word retention has various meanings. Retention is the act of keeping or storing something; it is the ability to remember ideas; it is the ability to keep workers or customers from leaving a company or students from leaving school. Maccabi (2003) (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asimwe Gaitte and Emurugat (2022) defines retention generally as the duration an employee remains in the organizations workforce. Maicibi's definition only measures the retention capacity of that organization on that particular employee, and yet to effectively measure retention rate, the focus should be on the workforce as a whole because the impact of an individual's presence or absence in an organization may not be sufficiently felt ((Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asimwe Gaitte and Emurugat (2022) In whatever circumstances, the word "retention" has something to do with prevention of loss of something. In this research, teacher retention will be concerned with preventing loss of teachers from the school. Once a school attracts competent teachers, it should be able to prevent them from leaving, thus implying there is retention of teachers.

World Bank (2007) explains that though the most common reason for teachers staying in the profession is personal commitment and gratification; teachers enjoy their relationships with students and take pride in contributions they make to students' learning and society. From this view it could be possible that if teacher's personal commitment could be increased by managing their stress they could be retained in their schools (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asimwe Gaitte and Emurugat (2022). However, the researcher is of the view that personal commitment and gratification can only be achieved by having a stress-free life which may call for the use of organisational stress management strategies in private schools. However according to World Bank (2007), increasing retention in the private sector, is a greater concern in all African countries. It states that nearly 40 percent of the teachers feel that they would take a position in a private school because in some countries private schools provide an attractive alternative source of employment.

The Ministry of Education and Sports (2006) (Macdonald, 1999). However, Olwoch (2011) (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asimwe Gaitte and Emurugat (2022) reported that two high-impact strategies, for retaining teachers may be to increase job security by ensuring stability in remuneration and having civil service appointments. Teachers and principals suggested that teachers who were contracted or who were not paid on a regular basis seemed less satisfied with the teaching profession. A second strategy may be to improve the school environment in which they work. One common suggestion for improving secondary education is to provide an adequate number of textbooks and materials, classrooms, and laboratory equipment. By providing these resources, teachers feel better able to teach. On the other hand, Hedges (2002), (Macdonald, 1999). However, Olwoch (2011) (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asimwe Gaitte and Emurugat (2022), explain that a variety of strategies to increase retention has been devised. In Ghana, teachers are required to have a bond signed. If they leave teaching before their initial three-year posting is completed, they are barred from further employment in the state sector and the guarantor must repay the bonded amount. In practice, however, the value of the bond has been reduced by inflation, and the system is no longer enforced. As much as bond signing can be used the researcher feels that barring teachers from serving in the state sector will not be effective because such teachers can opt to join the private sector.

Macdonald (1999) disagrees with Hedges (2002), (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asimwe Gaitte and Emurugat (2022) by arguing that as much as increasing teacher salaries may appear to be the obvious response to lack of retention problems there is little evidence that increased salary alone has a high long-term impact on retention. The researcher is of the view that improving teachers' physical, social, and professional experience of work increases their commitment, reduces attrition, and is often cheaper than trying to tackle salary or the costs of teacher dissatisfaction, loss, and retraining.

World Bank report (2007), agrees with Macdonald (1999), by stating that though increasing salaries or benefits may affect the motivation and commitment of teachers in the short-term basis, it may not be a major factor in retaining teachers already in the profession, especially if there is a lack of alternative career options. However, as much as increasing teachers' salaries may be an important long-term strategy to influence the teachers in the profession, teachers are caught in several dilemmas (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asiiimwe, Gaité and Emurugat (2022). While policy makers believe that increasing teachers' salaries and upgrading teachers' skills is not necessary, the researcher is of the view that it is possible that the teachers in the long run could be stressed and if their problems are not addressed they end up failing to retain these teachers in the profession.

On the contrary Caillods (2007), Gaité, Tumwesigye, Asiiimwe and Emurugat (2022), emphasizes that retention of teachers is affected by economic factors, as teachers make rational economic decisions about their careers and seek better paid work where they are given. However, there is also considerable evidence that teachers feel their work is becoming increasingly stressful and that their status is falling (Macdonald, 1999). However, Olwoch (2011) (Nguni 2005); Bennel & Akyeampong (2007); Ekabu (2013); Ndung'u 2(013); Tumwesigye, Asiiimwe Gaité and Emurugat (2022) is of the view that when organizations don't retain their workers the productivity of an organization is reduced because of the "negative morale" created among the remaining staff. At the same time labor turnover is sometimes good because it enables organizations to rid itself of dead wood and recruit new people with fresh ideas and a better way of doing things.

The researcher was of the view that benefits that might compensate or reward teachers while improving retention at some expense include: improving school buildings and teachers' accommodation, increasing teacher responsibility for educational decisions, reducing class sizes; increasing parental and community support, promoting collegial relationships among teachers and administrators, providing teacher support and recognition and providing teacher counseling and medical care. In addition to this head teachers should be given regular workshops in order for them to know how to manage stress among teachers.

### 3.0 Methodology

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey method of the descriptive design. Descriptive design enabled the researcher to collect information from a cross-section of a given population. The cross-sectional survey design was used as it is the most commonly used research method in social research and results from such a survey method are easily extrapolated to the entire population. Besides, this method was time saving and less costly for the researcher because the study population was big and the researcher was meeting all the costs. This design enabled the researcher to examine the current situation with respect to stress management strategies and retention of teachers focusing on teachers' perception towards stress management strategies and types of stress management strategies used in private school. Furthermore, the cross-sectional survey method was used to enable the researcher to collect data from the different categories of the sample population, which was representative of the total population of the teachers.

The target population of this study was all the teachers and head teachers from rural and urban schools to ensure experiences of the broad population were included. Those beyond 20 km of an urban area were considered as rural private secondary schools in Wakiso –District. Wakiso district has a total of 1,824 teachers (Ministry of education and Sports -2004). The teachers and head teachers were targeted for the study because they are concerned with the teaching of students in private secondary schools and thus they are able to indicate the effect of stress management strategies on retention in their schools. The sample size of 317 consisted of 267 teachers, and 50 Headteachers who were selected randomly from private secondary schools in Wakiso district.

The determination of sample size was based on guidelines given by Morgan and Kriecjie (1970). Morgan and Krejcie determination of sample size was ideal for this study because it was representative of the total population to be studied. According to Morgan and Krejcie table, there are given sample sizes(s) for the given population sizes (N). Basing on the Morgan and Krejcie table, the sample size studied which is 304 respondents was representative enough.

Sample selection of the respondents was by Probability and Non probability sampling techniques. The samples were got by the use of purposive sampling to select the head teachers from each of the 20 private secondary schools. This method was used because the researcher's judgment was useful to ascertain that the sample of the head teachers was representative of the target population. In selecting the sample from each school, simple

random sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents especially teachers and Head teachers in order to collect focused information which was useful.

Questionnaires and interview guide were employed to collect data for this study. Questionnaires were appropriate because some of the data that was collected was quantitative in nature and based on individual perceptions, which could not be observed but could be better tapped through self-reports. Similarly, questionnaires were used because they have the ability to solicit information from several respondents within a short time. Interview guides were used to get information from head teachers who acted as key informants about their views concerning teachers' retention in private secondary schools. This method was preferred because of its flexibility and ability to provide new ideas on the subject.

In ensuring content validity of the research instrument, the items in the questionnaire were constructed in relation to the literature review of this study. In ensuring content validity, suggestions from educational research experts was sought to establish whether the questionnaire would truly measure what it aimed to measure. In order to achieve this, the researcher consulted research experts several times to ensure that the questionnaire that was used was valid. Suggestions from the experts were integrated in designing the final questionnaire that was used for the data collection.

In ensuring reliability of the instrument, a Test-retest method for reliability was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire on teachers' retention, using the Pearson product moment correlation statistics. The test retest method for reliability was used to enable correlation of scores from the two instruments by obtaining a coefficient of stability which had a minimum of 0.6. In both tests, the results were the same, a confirmation that they were reliable.

Data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data was descriptively analyzed by examining the content of the data through identifying the distinctive categories that emerged from the data. Qualitative data analysis was used to help the researcher to analyze data which was in words. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequencies and percentages. Quantitative data analysis enabled the researcher to analyze data which were in numbers in order to have meaningful conclusions.

#### 4.0 Results

In order to obtain this data a research question was formulated as; how are teachers retained in private secondary schools in Wakiso district? Data obtained were merged as follows: SA+A = Agree, SD+D = Disagree and NS = Not Sure. The responses of teachers on the Challenges of retaining teachers are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Challenges of retaining teachers in Private Secondary Schools in Wakiso District**

Statement	Agree		Not Sure		Disagree	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
My school values retaining its teachers more than other schools	217	71.5	26	8.5	61	20
I am willing to remain in this school even when offered another job elsewhere	134	44	73	24.0	97	32
My school offers the most attractive fringe benefits than other schools	110	36.3	48	15.7	146	48
Many teachers have taught in this school for less than five years	170	55.9	54	17.8	80	26.3
The number of teachers joining my school is very high	157	51.6	31	10.2	116	38.2
The number of teachers leaving my school is very high	108	35.6	35	11.5	161	52.9
I am satisfied with my job and that's why I have remained in this school.	165	54.3	27	8.9	112	36.8
The salary I earn is enough for me to remain working in this school	79	26	47	15.5	178	58.5
The workload I have encourages me to remain working for this school	171	56.3	24	7.9	109	35.8
My school has a regular evaluation of teacher retention policy	159	52.3	49	16.1	96	31.6

From Table 1, majority of the respondents 217 (71.5%) agreed that their schools valued retaining their teachers in contrast to 61(20%) of teachers who disagreed an indication that despite the fact that most schools value retaining their teachers, the teachers could still be leaving their schools due to other factors. On the statement that I am willing to remain in this school even when offered another job elsewhere, majority of the

teachers 134 (44%) Agreed while 73 (24%) of the teachers Were Not sure of this statement this implies that as much as most teachers agreed that they could not leave their schools the reason could be because they had not got an opportunity to be offered a job somewhere else. Therefore, it was concluded that the teachers can leave at whatever time an opportunity comes up. Most teachers 148 (48%) disagreed with the statement that said my school offers the most attractive fringe benefits than other schools as compared to 48 (15.7) who were not sure of the statement. This implied that teachers are not paid well in their schools and therefore they can leave when an opportunity arises in a job that pays them well.

Additionally, 52% (158) of the teachers agreed that they were committed to work in their schools compared to 2.0% who disagreed. This implies that the majority of teachers who are committed to working in their schools could be doing that because they want to gain experience to get better jobs in the near future. Concerning the number of teachers joining the school being very high, 157 (51.6%) of teachers agreed while 10.2% (31) of the teachers were not sure. This implied that there is a high turnover of teachers joining and leaving the school. 54.3% (165) of teachers agreed that they were satisfied with their jobs and that is why they have remained in their school while 8.9% (27) were not sure of their position. This implied that those teachers who are satisfied with their jobs have not got other better jobs but in case they get other jobs they will definitely leave their schools.

As regards to salary that teachers earn being enough for them to work in their schools 58.5% (178) disagreed while 15.5% (47) of the teachers were not sure. This means that majority of the private secondary schools do not pay their teacher well as compared to other organizations thus making them not to remain in their schools. Concerning schools having a regular evaluation of teacher retention policy, 52.3% (159) of teachers agreed while 16.1% (49) of the teachers were not sure of the statement. This reveals that however much schools have a regular evaluation of teachers' policy the teachers will still leave for other jobs when the opportunities arise.

Interviews were conducted with the head teachers about the challenges of retaining teachers in private secondary schools in Wakiso district. Headteachers were asked: Do teachers remain serving in the school for long? Give reasons? How many teachers leave the school yearly? How many teachers join the school yearly? Majority of Headteachers revealed that many teachers in their private secondary schools kept on leaving the school. One respondent said, "Many teachers leave this school for many reasons but most of them are normally terminated".

This implied that many teachers were not serving for a long time in their private schools. Many head teachers also agreed that teachers in their private secondary schools stayed for a short period in their schools.

One headmaster commented that

".....teachers used to stay for a shorter period when we had just started this school but nowadays some teachers stay for long".

This data revealed that upcoming private schools had a higher rate of teachers who were leaving the school than the well-established private schools which could be because of the less stressful experiences they undergo compared to their colleagues in upcoming private schools. Data got indicated that various reasons made teachers not to remain in their schools. Among the reasons given by the head teachers for their teachers not staying in their schools was joining government schools, getting other better jobs in private organizations referred to as "greener pastures", and termination of teachers' services. Many head teachers in well-established private secondary schools explained that among the reasons that have made their teachers to remain serving in their schools are: teachers subscribing to a teacher's development fund, motivating teachers by giving tea and food, and giving teachers small incentives for marking exams and working as a team in all circumstances.

Data got from the findings indicated that various reasons made teachers not to remain in their schools. Some of the reasons given by the head teachers for their teachers not staying in their schools was joining government schools, getting other better jobs in private organizations referred to as greener pastures and termination of teachers' services. Among the reasons given by head teachers in the interview for teachers leaving their schools, termination of teacher's services was prominent. Many head teachers in well-established private secondary schools explained that among the reasons that have made their teachers to remain serving in their schools are: teachers subscribing to teachers' development fund, motivating teachers by giving tea and food, and giving teachers small incentives for marking exams. The findings concur with research done by Caillods (2007) which indicated that teacher retention is affected by economic factors, because teachers make rational economic decisions about their careers and seek.



## 5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper concluded that teachers are faced with many challenges like low salaries, lack of morale, job dissatisfaction, the teachers' big workload, lack of personal commitment, and poor working environment. Retention of teachers was found to be low because of the challenges that were being faced in the profession. It was therefore recommended that Proprietors of private secondary schools should find appropriate measures that can be used to address challenges of retaining their teachers like increasing teachers' salaries by considering their workload, motivating teachers by using fringe benefits to motivate them and make them committed and improving the working environment. Since Retention of teachers was found to be low because of the challenges that were being faced in the profession the researcher recommends that addressing these challenges would help in retaining teachers.

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