



SCHOOL RELATED FACTORS CAUSING TEACHER ATTRITION IN PREPRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Teacher attrition is an issue that is affecting many schools globally and a matter of great concern in schools in Kenya. It is due to this context that the study was conducted to explore the school related factors influencing teacher attrition in preprimary schools in Kengeleni zone in Mombasa County. Descriptive survey design was used to guide the study. The target population was pre-primary school teachers in the zone. Stratified random sampling was used to select sample for the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data which was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods and results presented using tables and figures. Results had shown that teacher attrition existed in preprimary schools in the zone and it was caused by many school related factors, including poor school management, inadequate school facilities and administrative support.

Keywords: school factors; teacher attrition; preprimary schools

1. Introduction

Globally teacher attrition is a big issue that has attracted the attention of many education stake holders. This problem is not only found in undeveloped countries but also in developed countries and needs to be tackled urgently in order to retain qualified teachers in the profession (Hernandez, 2007). This is also because quality teachers are the most critical factor influencing pupils' academic performance (Cochran, Smith

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(2006); Darling - Hammond, (2006); Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, (2005)). This means that when teachers are not happy many of them choose to leave the profession very early in their career and hence affecting pupils' academic achievement.

Literature reviewed has shown that the first three years of initial training are critical to teachers because it's during that period they decide whether to stay in the profession or leave (Jones, 2003). When teachers do not receive sufficient support in their first years of their career, they leave the teaching profession in favour of other careers (Barlin, Moir, and Gless & Miles 2009). High teacher attrition rate has a negative impact on the development of a school as it disrupts the stability of teaching. Lawrence (1999), states that teaching has been characterized as an occupation with a very high turnover rate. Research has shown that in Ghana, there is very high teacher attrition rate and although teaching institutions in the country produce many teachers every year, there was still shortage of teachers because they are not retained in the profession (Cobbold, 2007). The problem of teachers leaving the teaching career seems to be increasing every year and this suggests that although a lot of money is used in training and recruitment, there is little attention on their retention (GNAT, 2009; Bame, 1991; Vroom, 1998). Relevant education stakeholders have therefore a lot to do to ensure that teachers are retained in the profession.

Lockwood (2007), states that the primary reason for teachers leaving their positions are salary, and working conditions. Schools that have poor working conditions are a recipe for high teacher attrition rate (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Hanushek et al. (2005), reported that some teachers consider job dissatisfaction to be the most important factors affecting teacher turnover. Salaries are very important in teacher turnover but working conditions are seen as extremely important (Boyd et. al, 2007). In addition, Ingersoll (1995), points out that school policies, degree of students misbehavior, and control of classroom decisions are found to be connected to turnover. This means that there should be a well-established policy in relation to conditions at work place and the pay for pre-school teachers.

Poor working conditions and organizational factors are attributed to high attrition rates of new teachers (Baker & Smith 1997). The government and other employers have to consider these factors when employing teachers to be able to retain them. Ingersoll (2003), states that there are three groups of people known as Movers, Stayers and Leavers. Stayers are teachers who decide to remain in the profession; movers remain in the profession but switch to another work site; while leavers are people who leave their profession altogether.

Maddox (1997), reports that it is the most qualified teachers who leave the profession which indicate to other teachers that there are better opportunities out there

and hence encouraging others to leave. There was therefore need to explore the school related factors influencing teacher attrition in preprimary schools in Kengeleni zone in Mombasa County.

2. Problem Statement

Literature reviewed has shown that even though teacher attrition has been recognized as a worldwide problem, a lot of effort has been directed to the training of new teachers and with very little effort in retaining the teachers in the profession (Cochran-Smith, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Studies reviewed have shown that many new teachers in the profession abandon the profession very early when they feel unhappy, discouraged and demotivated.

In Kenya, the issue of teacher attrition is serious. However, most of the studies done in Kenya on teacher attrition had focused on teacher turnover in secondary schools (Murage, 2012). However, there are fewer studies which have been done on teacher attrition in pre-primary schools and particularly in Mombasa. It is on this basis that the researcher did this study to find out the determinants of teacher attrition in pre-primary schools in Kengeleni zone, in Mombasa County.

3. Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

- i. To establish the level of teachers' attrition in pre-primary schools in Kengeleni zone, Kisauni sub-county.
- ii. To find out the school factors influencing teacher attrition in Kengeleni zone, the sub-county.

4. Research Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used to guide the study. The target population was preschool teachers teaching in public and private pre-primary schools in the zone. Stratified random sampling was used to select sample for the study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to collect data which was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods and results presented using tables, figures and text.

5. Results and Discussions

They have been discussed in the following subsections:

5.1 Level of Teachers' Attrition in Pre-primary Schools

In the first objective of the study, the researchers were to establish the level of teachers' attrition in pre-primary schools in the zone. To realize the objective, the researchers sought to know from the teachers whether if given opportunity, they will leave the teaching profession. Table 1 presents the results.

Table 1: Level of Teacher Attrition

If given an opportunity would you leave teaching	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	52	91
No	5	9
Total	57	100

As it can be seen in Table 1, 91% of the respondents were willing to leave the teaching profession for something else if given opportunity. It is also clear from the results that only a very small number of the teachers (9%) were satisfied with the teaching career. This implies that most of the preschool teachers in the zone were in teaching because they did not have any other option raises the question on the quality of teaching.

The findings from this study were consistent with those of a study done by Daley, Guarino and Santibanez (2006) who found out that attrition rate was very high. The results are similar to that reported by Hanushek (2004) who found that in USA 16% to 20% of the teachers choose to leave their schools that year. Daley, Guarino and Santibanez (2006), found out that attrition rate was very high especially in young teachers.

5.2 School Factors Influencing Teacher Attrition

The study was also to explore the school factors causing teacher attrition in the zone. The factors investigated included: Availability of teaching and learning materials; working conditions; availability of school facilities; school management style and administrative support. The results have been presented in the following subsections.

5.2.1 Availability of Teaching-Learning Materials

Teachers were requested to state whether the schools they were working had enough teaching and learning materials. Table 3 represents the results.

Table 3: Teaching and Learning Materials

Existence of enough teaching and learning materials	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	10	18
No	47	82
Total	57	100

As it can be seen in Table 3, 82% of the teachers had said that there were no enough teaching-learning materials in their schools, while 18% said that the materials were enough. The results imply that most schools in the zone did not have enough learning and teaching materials. Lack of teaching and learning materials make teachers' work difficult hence making it hard to deliver as expected. When teachers lack adequate materials for teaching-learning, it makes their work difficult and hence leading to teacher attrition.

5.2.2 Pupil -Teacher Ratio

On the number of pupils that were in the preschool section, information was sought to know if they were less than or equal to forty, between forty one and sixty, between sixty one and eighty or above eighty one. In addition, the respondents were requested to provide information on the total number of teachers in preschool section. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4: Pupil-Teacher Ratio

Factors	Description	F	P
Number of pupils in preschool section	<40	0	0
	41-60	3	30
	61-80	2	20
	>81	5	50
Number of teachers managing preschool per class	1	3	30
	2	4	40
	3	3	30

Key: F = Frequency, P = Percentage

As it can be seen in Table 4, 50% of the pre-primary schools had pupil population of more than eighty one, with those between 41 and 60 being 30% and those between 60 and 80 being 20%. It is also clear that schools with less than 40 were nonexistent. On the other hand, 40% of the preprimary school sections of the primary schools were being handled by two teachers, whereas 30% of the preschool sections were either being handled by one teacher or three teachers. The results imply that teachers were handling more learners in class than prescribed number of 30 per teacher. When teachers have

many pupils in class their delivery is compromised hence get discouraged and leave the profession.

5.2.3 Availability of Physical Facilities

Information on the adequacy of physical facilities at the schools was sought from the teachers and Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5: Physical facilities

Existence of adequate physical facilities in the school	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	35
No	37	65
Total	57	100

As shown in Table 5, schools with enough physical facilities were 35% whereas those with no enough facilities were 65%. The results imply that majority of the schools did not have adequate physical facilities which make teachers' lives in the schools very difficult. Lack of inadequate physical facilities also demotivates teachers and hence making them to leave the profession.

5.2.4 Working Conditions

The working conditions in the schools were also investigated to explore whether it contributed to teachers attrition in the zone. Teachers were required to indicate on a likert scale the working condition at their various work stations. The study had focused on teaching workload, management style, administrative support, school facilities, and discipline. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6: Working Conditions

Description	Highly Satisfied		Satisfied		Undecided/ Neutral		Dissatisfied		Highly Dissatisfied	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Factors	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Teaching Workload	2	4	10	18	12	21	13	23	20	35
Management style	3	5	6	11	18	32	25	44	5	9
Administrative support	5	9	10	18	13	23	20	35	9	16

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School facilities	4	7	7	12	10	18	16	28	20	35
Students Performance	5	9	12	21	18	32	13	23	9	16
Students discipline	4	7	13	23	13	23	17	30	10	18

As shown in Table 6, 35% of the respondents were highly dissatisfied with teaching workload. On management style, 32% of the respondents were neutral with 40% saying that they were dissatisfied. It was observed that 35% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the way schools were managed. In addition, 35% of the respondents were highly dissatisfied with the school facilities. However, 32% of the respondents were undecided on their response to performance of students with 30% being dissatisfied on their students' discipline. The results show that many teachers were dissatisfied with the management styles used by head teachers, administrative support and school facilities and hence leading to teacher attrition.

The finding of this research are consistent with those obtained by Ingersoll (1995), and Boyd et al. (2005), which showed that work place conditions like school policies, degree of students misbehavior, and control of classroom decisions influenced high turnover among teachers. The results also agrees with those reported by Lockwood, (2007), who found that workplace environment was an important environment contributing to teacher attrition and those schools with poor working relationships had a higher attrition rate (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Baker and Smith, 1997). Further, studies by Jones (2001), and Brien (2002), revealed that reluctance of school management to recognize teachers in decision making underscored the significance of teachers' social identity and status in the community. A study by Imezaki (2005) had also revealed that factors such as neglected substandard buildings, and scarce resources like furniture and very poor supplies contributed heavily to high attrition rates.

6. Conclusion

Teacher attrition in preprimary schools was found to be very high and should be a concern to all key stake holders, including the government, school administration and the board of management. Although the level of attrition varies from one institution to another, it was prudent to establish the causes of teacher attrition in the schools. This will go a long way to address teaching consistency as well as improve the quality of education and hence laying a very strong foundation.

School factors were found out to be highly associated with teacher attrition in pre-primary schools. It can therefore be said that these factors need to be looked at critically so as to either reduce them or eliminate them altogether. The factors include: High pupil-teacher ratio; inadequate physical facilities, lack of enough teachers, and inadequate teaching-learning materials.

7. Recommendations

To reduce or eliminate teachers' attrition, the researchers make the following recommendations for the key stakeholders so as to address it before it becomes too late:

7.1 Recommendations for Board of Management

Salary was found to be one of the factors leading to teacher attrition as it was found to be low. The Board of Management of every school should note that teacher attrition is not an isolated case, as is common in the world over. The issue of salary has to be given first priority to ensure curbing of teacher attrition in the zone. When a teacher is poorly paid, he/she cannot be productive as expected. The teacher will be focusing on other ways of supplementing the low salary hence work is compromised. Therefore, the various boards must have working systems that will assist in addressing this problem at their institutions. To do this, they have to identify and address the school factors as well as teacher factors that may be of great concern to them.

7.2 Recommendations for Policy Makers in the Ministry of Education Science and Technology

Teacher attrition was found to be high due to teacher factors like lack of benefits, heavy workload, low salary and ineffective school management styles, inadequate facilities in schools, and indiscipline. This should be of great concern to policy makers' in the Ministry of Education Science and Technology. A review of preschool policy guidelines, registration, coordination, and quality assurance and standards should be made with a view of curbing teacher attrition.

7.3 Recommendations for County Governments and Sponsors

While conducting the research, it was found out that majority of the schools were privately owned, and a significant number of them being faith based. It is therefore worthy to note that these various faiths which act as the school sponsors need to be supported in whatever capacity so as to accomplish the tasks of passing knowledge to the children. The county governments should ensure that they have proper guidelines

on mode of employment and salary paid to teachers should be harmonized. The county should also ensure improved working conditions for teachers in the institutions. Teachers should be given an opportunity to go for further studies and have regular seminars.

7.4 Recommendations for Parents

Parents are the key stakeholders of the preprimary schools. There is need therefore, for parents to realise that teacher attrition is common to pre-primary schools and if not contained, lead to their children being affected by high teacher turnovers. The parents need to be educated on the causes of teacher attrition and how it affects the learning of their children. This can be achieved during parents' days, or annual general meetings or when the parents make impromptu visits to the schools to enquire on their children's progress.

8. Recommendations for Future Research

Very few studies of this nature have been carried out, especially in Kenya. Although the study focused on the determinants of teacher attrition in preschool teachers in Kengeleni Zone, the researcher recommends a similar study in other parts of the country to see if the results obtained will be similar. Furthermore, since the focus of Early Childhood Education is on children between zero and nine years, it would also be prudent if a vertical study is done to include teachers handling pupils in lower primary schools in Kenya.

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