

Factors Influencing Teacher Attrition in Public Secondary Schools In Mbooni-East Sub-County, Kenya.

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Abstract

This research was done to establish factors influencing teacher attrition in public secondary schools in Mbooni East Sub-County. 202 respondents including, one Sub-County Director of Education, one Sub-County Human Resources Officer, 29 principals and 171 teachers participated in the questionnaire survey. Besides, an interview schedule was administered to the Human Resources Officer and the Sub County Director of Education. Analysis of documents especially teacher returns provided valuable information. The findings revealed that perpetual teacher attrition was due to poor salaries, poor working environment, indiscipline among the teachers, retirement, availability of greener pastures in other ministries and private sector, transfer policies and HIV and AIDS effects among others. The study established that attrition was caused by push and pull factors and it posed financial burden to schools. The study established that attrition was on upward trend leading to teacher shortage, disrupted learning and eventually affected performance. More male teachers quit teaching.

Key words: Teacher Attrition, Teacher Turn Over, Loss, Individual Factors, Institutional Factors.

1. Introduction

All over the world, teachers quit service due to various reasons. Teacher turn over changes year to year and attrition is a component of teacher turn-over.(Boe, Boobit & Cook 1993) Annual attrition rates world wide range from 2-14%. United States of America has attrition rate of 8.4% mainly in public school, Canada 2.4%, Australia 5%, New Zealand 9.9%, Europe between 4-9%, Asia 2-4%, Sub Saharan Africa 3-10%. Lesotho, Gambia, Tanzania and Kenya have annual attrition rates of 7% (George 2010 & Educational International 2007)

Though attrition varies from continent to continent, country to another, the major pull and push factors range from individual to institutional factors. Individual factors include: retirement, effects of HIV and AIDS, indiscipline among the teachers, family responsibilities, teaching experience and their aspired careers before joining teaching. Institutional factors ranged from poor working conditions, poor remuneration, transfer policies, discipline policies,, availability of job opportunities in other ministries and poor supervision among others.(George 2010, Ruto 2010 & Republic of Kenya 2010)

Teacher influx to other jobs, ministries and other countries has reduced the quantity of teachers available potentially exacerbating localized teacher shortage.(Ingersoll 2001) It also led to excess workload and the perennial incomplete syllabi which in turn affected performance and reduced student retention as they also quit to join private school or well staffed ones or even drop out of school.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Introduction

A plethora of reasons have been advanced for teacher attrition worldwide with different teachers leaving the profession for various reasons viz individual and institutional factors.

2.2 Concept of Teacher attrition

Concerns about educator turnover and attrition are reported widely as a global phenomenon (Santiago, 2010). George (2010) reported that Education for All goals targeted to be achieved by 2015 are at stake since 1.9 million additional teachers are required with another one million

required to replace annual teacher attrition. Attrition in this study referred to all permanent loss of teachers from the teaching profession. Koontz and Wehnrich (1990) argued that stable organizations are characterized by low employee turnover and their abilities to keep their customers. This can only be attained if the organizational roles and the entire process of leadership are based on management practices that enrich the job on what satisfies the employee and motivates them to stay failure to which they quit.

High rate of teacher turnover impacts negatively on the school improvement efforts for it disrupts the stability and continuity of teaching. It also poses a challenge to the entire education system to manage turnover and retain teachers. Besides, teacher attrition imposes cost on education systems in substitution, recruitment and appointment of new teaches which is also characterized by long delays before replacements are made. This eventually affects the quality of education the learners get and affects student who may choose to seek transfers to well-staffed schools or join private schools (George, 2010)

Teacher attrition is influenced by a plethora of factors which can be classified as demographic factors, personal factors, pull and push factors which point on alternative employment and dissatisfaction with teaching respectively. Reasons for departure for different teachers vary and so are attrition rates for different parts of the world but annual attrition worldwide range from 2 percent to 14 percent annually (George, 2010 & Santiago, 2010).

2.3 Personal/teacher factors and teacher attrition

Individual teacher factors stem from within individual teacher's choices on whether to remain or quit. Teacher turn-over therefore is influenced by individual factors just like any other job. The teachers themselves can choose to remain or quit teaching depending on a number of factors ranging from their age, discipline, level of education, HIV and AIDS among others. This study addressed age, level of education and discipline of the teachers and how they influenced teachers to move from their respective working stations.

Teachers' age

Santiago (2001) cites the graying population of teachers and the possible or subsequent retirement thereof as one of the major factors influencing teacher attrition. Such sediments are also shared by Imazeki (2004) who points out that a third of the attrition of the teachers is due to retirement. From the sediments above, age of the teacher is seen to be a contributing factor especially for old teachers who retire or seek voluntary retirement eventually leaving teaching hence attrition. This leads to loss of experienced teachers and to replace the same is an uphill task.

On contrary, Ingersoll (2002) points out that, young teachers are likely to quit teaching to work in private sector where salary paid is higher than in teaching. He also points out that old and highly experienced teachers quit to join the private sector or to start personal businesses. This leads to a U-shaped curve in representing teacher attrition on a graph. This study sought to establish how age as a factor influenced teachers desire to remain or quit teaching in the district.

Teachers' level of education

Individual teacher's level of education is a determining factor whether to remain or quit teaching (Herman, Hampton & Croasmun, 2004). A study by Marso and Pigge (1995) reports that, teachers who complete master's degree continued to stay longer than others partially while others quit to teach colleges and universities. Teachers who have attained masters' degrees feel more motivated by their achievement and therefore feel comfortable to work since they have become more

knowledgeable and presumably more competent though not all of them. On the other hand, it is also believed that teachers who have attained higher level of education have added more value to their credentials and their worth as human capital goes up and this accounts for the big number of teachers who quit teaching to take up better paying jobs that are available for those who have acquired more education or further training. This attraction makes teachers quit teaching to join private sector or undertake non-teaching duties where rates of returns are higher than in teaching thus attrition.

Mulkeen (2010) and Bob, Bobbitt and Cook (1993) report that in general, attrition rates are higher for teachers with the greatest academic qualifications presumably reflecting the greater labor market opportunities open to them. Majority of them leave either through career switch, join the private sector, voluntary resignation or seek departmental transfers.

Availability of other job opportunities

Hedges (2002) and Mareku (2002) point out that teachers use teaching as a stepping stone while others find it unattractive hence quit. People who aspired to be something else and failed either to qualify for its training at initial stage of higher education sometimes find their way to their dream career but use education as a stepping stone. This is because education cut across most disciplines and it is easy to switch from teaching to other jobs that are available for people with similar qualifications as teacher for example trainers, lecturers, resource mobilizers, human resource officers among others. There is also availability of jobs in other countries and since the teachers will be paid handsomely as expatriates, they may go for such jobs thus quit teaching in their homeland. This gives a hint why teachers quit and therefore the researcher wished to determine whether the same applied in Mbooni East District.

UNESCO (2000) reports that some individuals lacked a chance in their aspired career and were compelled to join teaching as a stepping stone or as a career of the last resort. Some teachers therefore quit the profession immediately other alternative jobs are available with some joining the private sector therefore teaching is seen as an occupation to pass through and not a career in itself.

HIV and AIDS pandemic

George (2010) notes that majority of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa quit teaching due to HIV and AIDS related complications ranging from death, chronic illness and absenteeism, seeking retirement earlier than norm on medical grounds among others. TSC (2010) points out that, out of the 10,000 of teachers who permanently left the profession in 2010, 6500 are cases of deaths, illness, resignations and early retirements on medical grounds due to HIV and AIDS related complications. This accounts for 65 percent of annual teacher attrition nationally.

Teachers' discipline

Ruto (2010) and TSC (2010) noted that about 500 teachers were fired as a punitive measure for being involved in gross misconduct for example sexual abuse of school going age children in 2010. There were other cases of indiscipline leading to interdictions, suspensions, summary dismissal among other punitive measures. These measures were taken after the teachers violated the Teachers Code of conduct which outlines the guidelines for teacher conduct while working at the station and how to relate with the other teachers and the students.

2.4 Institutional factors and teacher attrition

There are factor within teaching profession that are beyond the control of the teacher and fall within the institution of teaching fraternity. Such factor include working environment, policies on discipline, policies on teacher transfer, amount of workload each teacher is assigned, teacher management and supervision among many others.

Teachers' workload

Teachers are assigned a particular number of lessons per week and this is determined by their employer although it is delegated to the school heads on the ground. Teachers Service Commission recommends an Average Teaching Load of 27 lessons per week for one teacher, holding all other factors constant. This however varies depending on number of streams a school has and the available number of teachers.

Voluntary Services Overseas (2007) and UNESCO (2005) point out that the rapid expansion of enrolment rates in Kenya due to the Free Primary Education introduced in 2003 then the Subsidized Secondary Education introduced in 2005 have led to increased population which in turn leads to larger classes. In such cases the teacher's workload and responsibilities goes up. Increased workloads mean that a teacher taught more than 27 lessons per week and they were doing other roles like being a games master/mistress, class teacher, house masters/mistress among other responsibilities other than just teaching.

Increased workloads make it difficult for the teachers to cope and eventually this fuels teacher's desire to leave for greener pastures or movement to private sector or career switch in a bid to look for better paying jobs that are not cumbersome and rates of returns are higher than in teaching.

Working conditions

Haddad (2010) cites Moleni and Ndalama (2004) who report that teacher attrition is encouraged by poor working conditions within teaching characterized by poor/lack of proper housing, lack of amenities like hospitals and long walking distances to and from school are major push factors for teacher attrition and this is worse in the rural schools. A poor living condition creates a poor working environment that lowers the morale of the teachers and eventually they find way out of the profession. Akiyeampong and Bennel (2007) report that, poor working conditions in rural schools contribute to the vicious cycle and high turnover rates especially among secondary school teachers.

Head teachers' mode of supervision

George (2010) cites Lumandi (2008) who argues that employees feel motivated to continue working for an organization where there is collegiality, supportive supervision, administrative support and encouragement. Shen (1997) and Quartz (2008) point out that inadequate teacher involvement in decision making, poor social support of teachers, lack of respect, victimization and harassment and lack of respect from the education officers have been some of the reasons why attrition occurs with teachers giving up teaching in favor of non-teaching jobs. A VSO survey in 2007 reported that teachers spoke of lack of consultation, lack of regular information on any developments and were not fairly treated and many teachers in Gambia quit teaching.

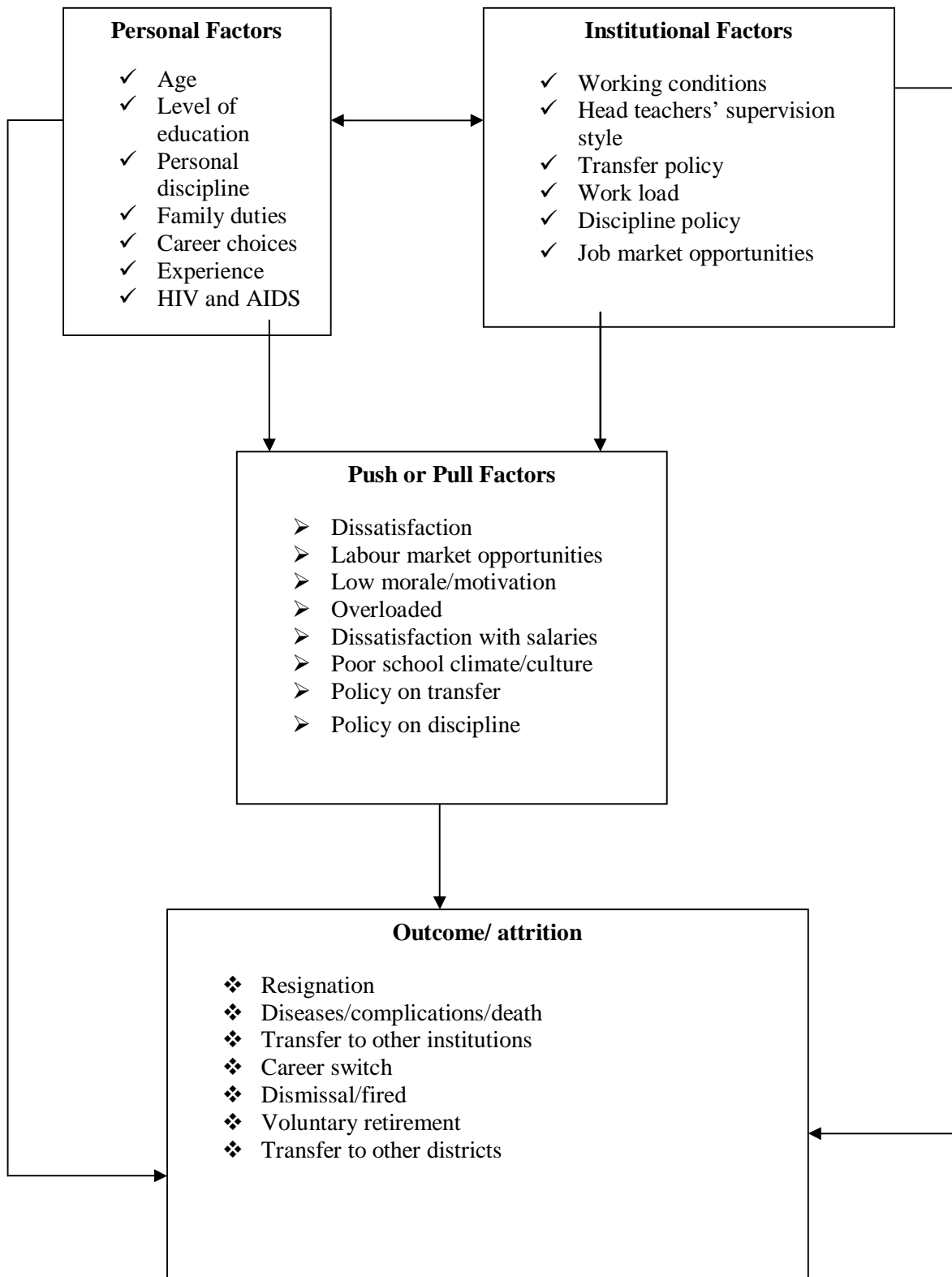
Teacher management

Akiyeampong 2007 cites poor teacher management practices as one of the major causes of teacher attrition. When teachers are not given the right guidance, positive appraisal, personal problems

understood within the school set up or they are frustrated or stressed by unfavorable supervision practices they eventually lose morale and low job satisfaction which fuel their desire to quit or look for alternative employment.

The relative and the progressive pay of teachers have been cited as a major pull factor making teachers quit in the USA schools (Theobald, 1990 & Imazeki, 2004). Teachers' turnover rates are high particularly in urban areas with many of those who leave joining other professions, going for further studies and eventually never come back as they join the private sector while others quit teaching to engage in personal businesses.

Figure 2.1: Teacher Attrition



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

202 participants including 171 teachers, one Sub-County Human Resources Officer, one sub-county director of education and 29 principals participated in the research. Of these 171 teachers, there were 98 male and 73 female teachers. For Sub-County Director of Education, Sub-County Human Resources Officer and the principals, the researcher used purposive sampling technique while for the teachers; proportional stratified sampling was used to represent various teacher groups since teacher population was heterogeneous.

3.2 Instruments

The instruments used in this study were: questionnaire, interview schedule and document analysis. The Sub-County Director of Education responded to the interview and gave in-depth trends on teacher attrition and the numbers that quit. The Sub-County Human Resources Officer provided documents ranging from annual teacher returns and teacher audit reports that confirmed actual number of teachers who had quit teaching in the sub-county. Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) notes that interview guides are open in nature and help in getting deeper details on the circumstances on the ground.

Another instrument used was questionnaires,” the most common method of collecting data.”(De Vas 2001 & Orodho 2004) the respondents were expected to supply bio data that helped in determining which age group of teachers and principals were greatly affected. On the next section of the questionnaire, the respondents were expected to indicate how much they agreed with each item on the scale each with a measurement such as: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. Strongly agree on the scale indicated that the item being measured was positively influencing teacher attrition (to a large extent) while strongly disagree meant that the item being measured had no influence whatsoever on influencing teacher attrition.

Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics where graphs, charts and frequency tables were used. Narrative descriptions were used on data generated from interview schedule an inferential statistics was used for this qualitative data.

4. Findings and discussions

There were more male teachers who left the teaching service in the district than females. This indicated that the district had large number of male teachers posted there. It also pointed that male teachers were also looking for exit at a higher rate. It was also noted that male teachers had issues of professional misconduct at a rate that was alarming since all the teachers affected by interdictions and dismissals were all male.

Table 4.1 teacher loss per gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	63	62
Female	39	38
total	102	100

4.1 Research findings and discussion

The study established that 102 teachers had left teaching in the district from 2007-2012(June). The table below shows the percentages of responses that respondents gave as per item. The scale used is: Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Not Sure (N.S), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (S.D)

Table 4.11: Teacher attrition

Factor influencing teacher attrition	S.A	A	N.S	D	S.D
1.Age influences attrition	27	30	7	30	6
2. Promotion influences attrition	23	40	9	25	3
3. Chronic sickness makes teachers leave teaching	6	40	18	22	14
4.Teachers indiscipline led to attrition	34	40	15	4	7
5.Working environment influences attrition greatly	41	34	8	6	11
6.Departmental transfers made teachers leave Mbooni East Sub-County	0	12.2	44.1	23.4	20.3
7.Poor remuneration influenced attrition greatly	41	37.2	3.8	11	7
8.Career advancement affected retention of teachers	45.1	24	11.3	11.3	8.3
9.HIV and AIDS impacted highly on attrition	13	32	28	17	10
10.Desire to join family influenced attrition	45.1	35	6	10	4.5
11. Head teacher's supervision style influenced attrition greatly since it dissatisfied teachers	30	28	8	30	4
12. Teachers' level of education affected attrition greatly	28	32	5	30	5

4.2.1 Influence of working environment on teacher attrition

Mbooni East District is gazetted as one of the hardship zones in Kenya. Data from DEO's office indicate that the district was classified as a hardship zone due to high poverty index, poor housing, inadequate rainfall, frequent famine and perennial water shortage and is also located in the remote rural area characterized by inadequate social amenities and transport network. These hardships propelled the teachers to seek for transfers to other districts. For instance Figure 4.7 indicates that transfers to other districts were the leading with 37 percent. The DHRO through the interview schedule and oral interview pointed out that this was the major push factor and his office receive at least 60 transfer requests annually but most of them were declined due to acute teacher shortage in the district.

The DHRO and the DEO pointed out that 65 percent of the transfer requests were due to the hardships teachers faced and one of the avenues to sort this was getting out of the district hence

teacher attrition. 75 percent of the responses from the 177 respondents (Table 4.11) cited that poor working environment was a major push factor that led to teacher attrition. Such sentiments are echoed by Akiyeampong (2007), VSO (2007) and Hedges (2010) who had argued that poor working conditions made employees to seek an exit either by looking for greener pastures, seek transfers to urban areas or at times resign. In line with Figure 2.1, poor working environment lowers job satisfaction, demoralizes workers and this is a recipe for employee turnover. Teachers are no exception and therefore this study established that working conditions influenced teacher attrition and teachers left the district through inter-district transfers (37%), others sought departmental transfer (4%) and others quit to join the private sector (10%) according to Figure 4.1.1 and therefore teacher in other parts of Kenya can be influenced by the working conditions

4.2.2 Influence of teachers' levels of education on teacher attrition

Desire for further studies was high with 5.3 percent of those who participated in the research having acquired Master of education degrees. Statistics from the DHRO's office indicated that 10 percent of teacher attrition is attributed to higher studies. From the annual teacher returns, there were 56 teachers who were undertaking further studies through the school based programme. Thirty of them were doing a Master of Education degree while 26 were doing their degree courses having completed their diploma courses earlier and now that they are working they are paying for their further studies. Four percent of the number that left went for departmental transfer (Figure 4.7 and table 4.11) with two joining tertiary institutions and others were assigned non-teaching duties in the Ministry of Education.

Mareku (2002), Hedges (2010) and Haddad (2010) had previously cited that in situations where rates of returns do not match with individual's level of education, the employee is bound to look for greener pastures or look for ways of improving their skills for example going for further studies to increase their competencies in anticipation that this will help them get a job with higher returns.

78.2 percent of the teachers who participated in the study cited poor salary (Table 4.11) and 69.1 percent cited career advancement which meant further studies (Table 4.11) as push factors that were necessitated by demotivation with the returns in teaching which in line with Figure 2.1 led to low morale for the teachers eventually leading to them leaving teaching in the district. This led to loss of 10 teachers to further studies, 4 to departmental transfers (higher returns than teaching) and 10 more joined the private sector where they anticipated getting returns commensurate with their level of education (academic knowledge, skills, experience). Therefore this study through the statistics in Figure 4.7 and tables 4.1.1 established that teachers level of education was a factor that influenced teacher attrition in Mbooni East District and therefore teachers from other parts Kenya and the rest of the world can still be influenced by the same and will eventually quit teaching to look for jobs that have higher rates of return than teaching.

4.2.3 Influence of teachers' level of discipline on teacher attrition

Statistics from the TSC Unit at the district indicated that there were cases of professional misconduct and approximately 40 cases had been dealt with. Verdicts for such cases ranged from warnings being given to the affected, transfers to nearby schools and where the cases were severe stern measures like interdiction and summary dismissal were arrived at. Statistics from the office of the DHRO and the DEO indicate that 15 percent of teacher attrition was through interdictions and 4 percent due to summary dismissals (Figure 4.7)

Fifteen teachers were interdicted during this period due to offences ranging from desertion of duty (7), insubordination (5) and chronic absenteeism (3). Only four teachers were given summary

dismissal, one principal and three teachers due to gross misconduct which included sexual abuse of female students and misappropriation of school funds. All of them were males and one is from a Boys school while the other three are from mixed schools. According to table 4.11, 74 percent of the respondents agreed that professional misconduct was one of the push factors that led to loss of teachers. Ruto (2010) in her study cited that professional misconduct as one of the ways through which the country was losing its teachers (attrition) since the discipline policies formulated by the Teachers Service Commission laid out the verdict for various offences and this influenced the decision to retain or fire a teacher (Figure 2.1) who violated the code. Therefore this study established that teacher attrition was influenced by teachers' level of discipline especially where gross violation of the Code of Regulations for Teachers happened.

4.2.4 Influence of HIV and AIDS on teacher attrition

The study established that there was no sufficient data at the DHRO's office neither in the DEO's office. However in 2009 and 2012 two teachers were reported to have died due to HIV and AIDS related complications. Death only accounts for the 4 percent of the teachers lost where two were affected by HIV and AIDS complications, one died due to accident and the other one due to prolonged sickness. The DEO and the DHRO pointed out that it was an uphill task to establish those infected but pointed out that only two teachers had sought transfer to their home district near their family members due to HIV and AIDS complications. According to table 4.11, only 45 percent acknowledged that HIV and AIDS were influencing teacher attrition through the death and seeking of transfers and therefore the study established that HIV and AIDS related complications led to loss of teachers although at a very low rate in the district. HIV and AIDS prevalence has been noted to be low in rural areas (UNESCO 2007 and Mareku 2002) and therefore this might be the reason for the small numbers of teacher who were lost due to the same. However, teacher attrition due to HIV and AIDS related complication is reported to account for the 6500 of the 10000 teachers lost annually (TSC 2010) and this national statistics coupled with the few numbers at the district and the responses from the respondents in an indication that the challenge remains in getting the numbers but it still remains a push factor in teacher attrition.

Working environment for people infected or adversely affected by HIV and AIDS related complications can lead to one seeking transfer to go to places they are not known or to be near their family members as justified by the 80.1 percent of the responses given by the respondents.

4.2.5 Influence of head teachers' supervision style on attrition

The DHRO reported of cases of problems between teachers and the principals and due to irreconcilable differences only four teachers were transferred to other school but within the same district. This study also established that 58 percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the mode of head teachers' supervision (Table 4.11) This in itself may not be a push factor per se but coupled with other negative factors within a working environment could lead to teachers looking for their way out either through going for further studies or seeking transfers to be away from those they are not comfortable with.

This study therefore established that dissatisfaction only may not be a push factor and provision of extrinsic motivation as cited by Haddad (2010) can be averted but in cases where there are other negative factors this becomes a demotivating factor and eventually a push factor. According to Figure 2.1 demotivated and disgruntled employees end up seeking their way out of the organization and finally attrition. Teachers are no exception and they too may leave teaching or seek transfers to other districts or the private sector.

4.2.6 Influence of workload on teacher attrition

Table 4.2.6: work load per teacher

Number of lessons per week	Frequency	percentage
Above 27	98	55
Below 27	79	45

According to TSC (2010) an Average Teaching Load (ATL) of a teacher is 27 lessons per week. According to Table 4.2.6 percent of the respondents reported to be teaching more than 27 lessons a week. This excess workload leaves teachers with high levels of burn out, demotivation and eventually demoralization. Coupled with the excess work load is the assignment of other duties within the school, dealing with large number of students whose enrolment went high due to Free Day Secondary Education programme by Ministry of Education in 2008. This creates poor school climate and the environment is not therefore conducive.

Quartz (2004) and George (2010) pointed out that employee burn out is an ingredient for dissatisfaction with a job and eventually this lowers rates of return for them. Low rates of returns force employees to seek for alternative employment/greener pastures where there is no excess workload. Therefore this study established that 55 percent of the respondents were overworked and there were no extra payments or rewards for the same. Coupled with this was the issue of working in a hardship zone. This is recipe for dissatisfaction with the teaching job itself. Sediments and records from DHRO' office cited dissatisfaction as one of the The study generated numerical data that captured the number of teachers who left the district against the pull or push factor behind their exit. This is presented in Figure 4.5 below. This numeric data was gotten from both the office of the DHRO and the analysis from the school themselves and it was confirmed by the documents provided by the DHRO which include teacher returns annually, transfer files and the discipline files for teachers.

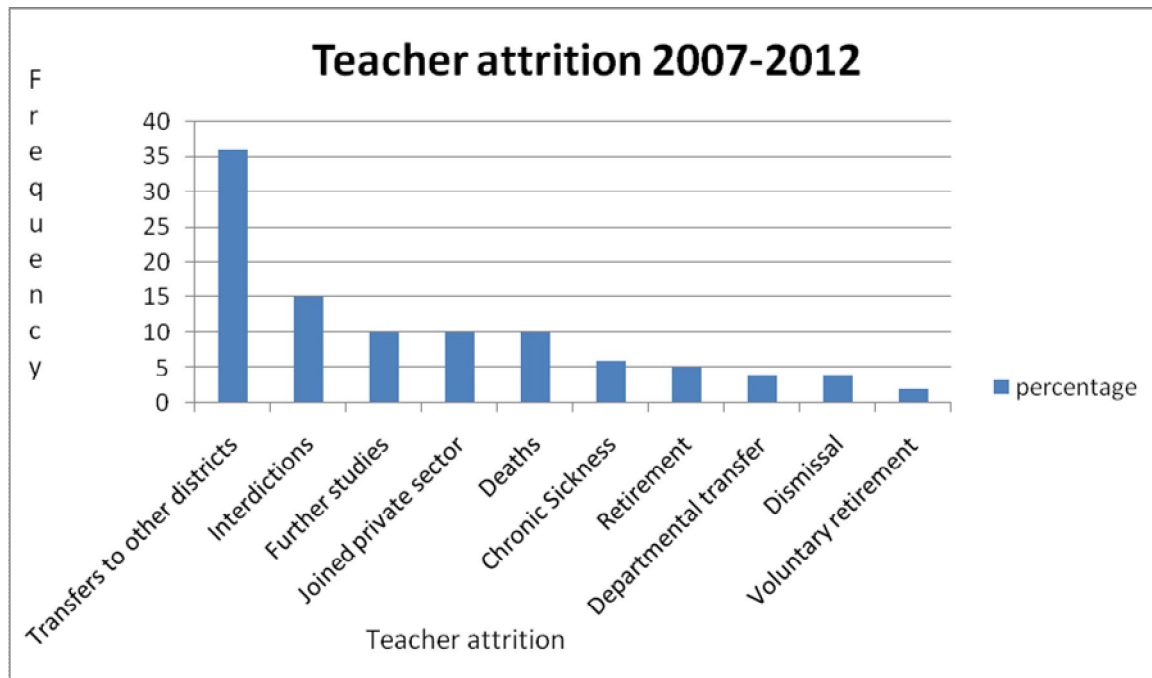


Figure 4.7 Teacher Attrition from 2007-2012
(Source: DHRO'S Office Mbooni East District as at June 2012)

Data accrued from the documents analyzed at the DHRO's office indicated that 102 teachers had left the district due to various reasons. Five percent of them had left due to old age and eventually had retired in 2007 and 2008 only. Since then no teacher has ever retired since the retirement age was pushed to 60 therefore teachers will start retiring in 2014. This strategy was formulated by the government to retain teachers for more years in the service however this did not fully address the issue of teacher shortage.

Death accounted for ten percent of the attrition majorly due to prolonged illness/chronic sickness, cardiac problems and one due to accident. Interdictions saw fifteen percent of the lost number leave the service. All the teachers involved were male and this was because of dissipation of duty, professional misconduct and others had chronic absenteeism without official permission from their respective principals. Once reinstated these teachers were redeployed to work in other districts especially Makueni and Mbooni West District.

Four teachers were summarily dismissed from the service, one principal and three teachers due to gross misconduct that involved sexual abuse of female students all of them males. This was four percent of the total attrition. Coupled with this was the issue of departmental transfers with four teachers leaving; two joining technical training college at Machakos and the other two joining mainstream ministry of education to undertake non-teaching duties.

Chronic sickness saw at least six teachers eventually leave the service; five teachers and one principal. Three sought to be transferred to home district while the other three sought to be granted retirement on medical grounds. The DHRO expressed concerns over the large number of teachers who sought inter-district transfers with most of them, sixty five percent being female teacher who wished to join their families while other sought to go to teach in urban schools at Wote town and Machakos.

Concluding remarks

Teacher attrition is greatly influenced by both individual and institutional factors which could also be either pull or push factors that are natural (not controlled by man) or unnatural. Majority of the teachers left due to hardships including lack of good housing, inadequate water, inadequate social amenities, and excess work load. Poor remuneration was a major push factor just like the availability of job opportunities in the main stream ministry of education.

The pull and push factors were greatly affected by government policies regarding transfer, remuneration, departmental transfers, motivation and generally the welfare of the teacher. This study established that teacher attrition can be controlled and the losses minimized by improving teachers' working conditions, pay and motivation among other things.

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