

## **INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHER TURNOVER IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BARINGO DISTRICT, KENYA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Employee turnover occurs when workers leave an organization and need to be replaced by new recruits. High employee turnover is a common occurrence in the teaching profession in Kenya. Poor remuneration has often been given as a cause of low morale among teachers, but literature shows that salary is not a sufficient condition for job satisfaction. This implies that there are certain factors that influence labour turnover among public secondary school TSC teachers in Kenya. It is for this reason that the study was designed to examine the institutional factors responsible for the teacher turnover phenomenon within secondary schools in Baringo District, Kenya. The study was guided by the Herzberg's motivation theory. Descriptive survey research design was used. All the 21 public secondary schools in Baringo district were involved. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select 97 teachers out of the total population of the 329 TSC teachers in the District to participate in the study. Data was collected by the use of a questionnaire and the data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that remuneration, career advancement and working conditions were the domains mostly responsible for the teacher turnover in Baringo district secondary schools. On the whole, the study found that institutional factors influence teacher turnover in Baringo District. As such they should be taken into account in trying to reduce turnover of teachers.

**Keywords:** Institutional Factors, Teacher Turnover, Influence, Secondary Schools, Baringo District, Kenya

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary world, job satisfaction has become an essential element for the maintenance of the workforce numbers of any organization. However, a lack of job satisfaction among employees not only leads to high turnover rates but could also have detrimental effects on the individual, like burnout (Mrayyan, 2005). Employee turnover is a measure of movement of employees in and out of employment within a particular organisation. It is held that employee turnover is a normal process that can provide an organization with new ideas. But it does not need to be unnecessary and excessive. This is because a high turnover rate leads to the inability of an organization to provide quality care and job satisfaction to its employees.

It is believed that an annual employee turnover of 25% is considered normal. But a turnover rate of 100% is usually considered a major problem because disproportionate employee turnover in an organization is a sign of existence of internal problems. The main reason for this is because certain professional skills involve the use a lot of resources and usually take long to build. Consequently, a loss of such professionals will always have profound negative impact on the organization (Cole, 2002).

There is a consensus among scholars that organizations experiencing employee turnover either benefit or suffer the cost of turnover depending on the various factors having an influence on employee turnover (Koech, 2011; Susu, 2008). In most cases, these factors are very disruptive and can be costly when their effects are not identified and can cause chaos in the organization if not really maintained to a minimum. But if well maintained, it helps in retaining the best employees that will in turn improve their performance and subsequently result in enhanced productivity in the organization.

A high turnover in an organization is a sign of a problem in that organization because a high rate of employee turnover brings about negative publicity to the organization and causes dissatisfaction amongst employees resulting to negative production (Armstrong, 2006). In Africa for example, employee turnover is a common organizational problem facing both the public and the private sectors. In recent years, this phenomenon has increasingly become important in debates about the teaching profession. One reason for this is that turnover has reduced the quantity of teachers available to many schools, and hence aggravating professional teacher shortages. At the same time, it affects the quality of teachers, especially if the most able teachers are the most likely to leave.

The above assertion is supported by Kayuni and Tambulasi (2007) who contend that teacher turnover in Malawi has increased over the years. They note that teachers who get greener pastures often quit the profession while those who do not get better alternatives seek other supportive sources of income. While the causes of teacher turnover vary from one region to the other, Xaba (2003) maintains that organizational factors that range from commitment to the organization, long term prospects, and job satisfaction that mainly influence turnover of teachers.

### **Statement of the problem**

A high quality teaching staff is considered the cornerstone of a successful education system. This also elevates the teacher as the most important variable for student achievement because the daily interaction between teachers and students is at the centre of the educational process. However, the teaching profession nationwide is continuously beset by several problems. One of the most serious problems in the teaching profession is the high turnover incidences of its essential human resource: the teachers. Indeed

governments in both developing and developed countries are finding it difficult to retain teachers in schools (Kayuni & Tambulasi, 2007). This problem is so profound and overwhelming in Kenya that the country is experiencing problems in maintaining sufficient numbers of professional teachers to provide quality education (Susu, 2008). For example, a report by the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) shows that between January to June 2008, six hundred teachers left Kenyan classrooms for better paying jobs elsewhere. This is equivalent to three teachers leaving the service every day. Nonetheless, retention of teachers in schools remains an important issue because shortages could lead to work overload, burnout and dissatisfaction of teachers, and compromised standards of teaching (Ingerssol, 2001).

While teachers working in the public service seem to have better employment conditions than those within the private sector, many teachers in public schools in Kenya continue to quit the teaching profession. Some leave the profession to join private schools while others quit teaching completely to work in a variety of fields such as the media, financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations (Susu, 2008). As a consequence, the government incurs a lot of costs as it continues to recruit large numbers of fresh graduate and inexperienced teachers from colleges and universities. Worse still, the reasons these teachers quit are not known. School administrators only speculate because there are no follow-ups after employees leave the profession. This is a serious problem that necessitates a research, given the ever-increasing student enrolment in secondary schools as a result of the introduction of free primary education in 2003 as well the shortage of resources that schools have to grapple with. It was for this reason that the study was designed to investigate the influence of institutional factors on teacher turnover in secondary schools in Baringo district in Kenya.

### **The Objectives of the study**

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Assess the institutional factors that influence employee turnover among public secondary school teachers in Baringo district, Kenya.
2. Examine the relationship between teachers' personal factors and teacher turnover in Baringo district, Kenya.

## **RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Factors that Influence Teacher Turnover in Kenya**

Most of the factors that cause teacher turnover in Kenya can be attributed to poor working conditions and their related factors as discussed below:

#### ***Poor physical working conditions***

It widely agreed that the immediate working conditions can greatly enhance and enrich an employee's job. However, the Kenyan teachers are subjected to very poor physical working conditions. After the introduction of free primary school education in 2003, enrolment increased and there was not appropriate infrastructure to accommodate all the pupils. The increase did not match with teacher capability hence over-stretched the human resources available (MOE, 2005; World Bank, 2004). In some schools, classrooms were too small to accommodate the large number of pupils because they were packed like sardines in one classroom, as many as 90 pupils faced one teacher, yet the recommended ratio is 1:45.

The reality was that classrooms were old, dusty and equipped with at most a chalkboard and a

limited number of desks and chairs. Often they did not have glass on the windows, and were vulnerable to prevailing weather conditions: leaky in the rainy season, stifling during hot summer months, freezing in cold months. Teachers' housing mirrored this pattern, with teachers frequently inhabiting dwellings that suffered from poor maintenance and infrastructure and lacked electricity, running water, good sanitation and cooking facilities. The negative impact of poor housing cannot be underestimated. Housing conditions have a majority influence on the health, attitudes, opportunities and quality of life of individual and communities. Though not largely supported by studies, it can be deduced that the teachers' motivation, quality of work and commitment can also be largely influenced by their housing conditions.

### ***Poor remuneration***

In assessing how effectively an organization administers its compensation programme, the following major purposes of total compensation have to be kept in mind: (a) attracting potentially qualified employees, (b) motivating employees, and (c) retaining qualified employees (Schuler and Jackson, 1996). For a long time in Kenya, teachers' salaries have remained very low compared to those of their counterparts in the civil service. This scenario has compelled Kenyan teachers to go on strike on several occasions asking for pay increments. Usually, teachers who are not motivated can have serious negative influence on the learning process of their students. This implies that the future of the child is put at stake.

Literature by scholars in education shows that teachers contribute much to the educational advancement or regression of the pupils. In Kenya, secondary schools do not have sufficient teachers because most of them have left to join the private sector or picked up other jobs. This loss of teachers is as a result of lack of incentives in the teaching profession. At the moment the number of untrained teachers is gradually increasing in secondary schools.

### ***Educational reforms and frequent reviews in the Syllabus***

In recent years, reforms in education have had a negative impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of teachers. This is considered so because in most cases, reforms in education tend to ignore the role of the teachers. Day (2002) observes that reform has the following effects on the teachers: (a) they challenge teachers' existing practices, resulting in periods of temporary destabilization; (b) they result in an increased work load for teachers; and (c) they do not always pay attention to teachers' identities – arguably central to motivation efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness.

In a reality characterised by insufficient resources, the Kenyan government opened up to the donor community to assist in the development of education in their country. This has been through the introduction of free primary education and subsidised secondary education. As such, the Ministry of Education has been prone to external influence because the donors usually demand certain changes in the education system before dispatching their aid. Indeed, curriculum changes do not necessarily motivate the teachers – actually it demotivates the teacher because the changes are forced on them without training or guiding them (VSO, 2002).

### ***Teacher Stress***

Given the heightened stress levels, the potential stress factors that have been considered include: meeting deadlines, workload, limited time, continuous change (current), records of achievement and

organizational restructuring (Williams & Robertson, 1990). These factors have led the teaching profession to lose staff in crisis proportions. For instance, Finlayson (2003) observes that in the teaching profession in Scotland, stress was the major cause of ill health, teacher turnover, absenteeism and other related problems which cost the government about 43 million pounds a year. He notes that among other things, the cause of stress among teachers was attributed to increased workload, change, conflict at work and pupil discipline. Probably the words by Finlayson (2003) are more appropriate to remedy the problem of stress among teachers. He noted that in order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: they must be fit for it; they must not do too much of it; and they must have a sense of success in it.

Jesus and Conboy (2001) argued that it is a common research finding that teachers present lower levels of motivation and higher levels of stress than other professional groups. They note that less than 50 per cent of teachers in Portugal showed interest of remaining in the profession due to stress.

### **Teacher Recruitment, Selection, Appointment and Deployment Practices**

The teachers' Service Commission of Kenya (TSC) is mandated to ensure an adequate qualified teaching force to serve in all public schools in the country. Though centrally run from its headquarters in Nairobi, it has field units (TSC units) at all district headquarters to bring services closer and to ease communication with the teachers. Among other policy documents, TSC has a code of regulations (COR) for guiding the teachers. The Teachers' Service Commission, among other roles, registers recruits, and appoints teachers; deploys them to deserving public schools in the country; remunerates and transfers them when need arises. Since 2001, a demand-driven approach in employment has been adopted contrasting the period before 1998, when teacher employment was supply driven. This new approach is part of the wider national structural adjustment strategy on checking over expenditure in public sector employment. It is aimed at trimming the public budget, as part of the overall national budget, hitherto seen as bloated and a strain on the country's economy. In the approach the needs of districts and schools are identified country wide and declared before employment is considered (Nzomo, Kariuki, & Guantai, 2001; MOE, 2003). Fundamentally, no new employment has been undertaken since 1998. What TSC has basically done is to establish and fill gaps resulting from the normal attrition in order to maintain the countries teaching force at 235,000 (Susu, 2008).

District Education Board (DEBs) and (BOGs) are mandated to identify interested and qualified candidates and short list them for consideration for employment of teachers as primary and secondary schools respectively. The decision to delegate this sensitive, yet key, function to DEBs and BOGs is aimed at making the exercise participatory and accountable at the grass root level and therefore minimize allegations of malpractices such as nepotism, tribalism, political arm-twisting, among other hitherto levelled against TSC. Successful candidates are appointed and directly posted by TSC to specified secondary schools where they are bonded to serve for minimum period of five years before being considered for transfer. This is envisaged to regularize employment as well as help solve the parental challenges of understanding and or overstaffing coexistence in certain areas (World Bank, 2004). Yet despite the good intentions of TSC, criticisms or shortcomings continue to emerge about the exercise. The exercise is sometimes marred by tribalism as ethnicity and clan factors take the centre stage since MPs and councillors and other local leaders disregard the TSC recruitment guidelines and set their own. Other short-comings of the approach include allegations that it creates conflicts of interest in relation to professional commitment and personal interest has contributed to in-breeding in the profession, promote ethnicity and politicize the profession (MOE, 2005).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research targeted all professional graduate teachers in secondary schools in Baringo District. It utilised fully established schools with classes running from form one to four. The District has 21 fully established secondary schools with 329 government employed teachers.

The study employed a descriptive survey combining both quantitative and qualitative research strategies. A descriptive survey is most appropriate for studying users' attitudes, values and beliefs (Sekaran, 2008; Orodho, 2005). Similarly, according to Kothari and Kothari (2004), descriptive survey studies are designed to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of a phenomenon and wherever possible draw valid and general conclusions from the facts obtained. The study used the survey design because the researcher wants to get the precise information and make conclusive results regarding teacher turnover.

The researchers used all the 21 public secondary schools in the district. Out of the 329 teachers in these schools, 220 were male and 109 were female. The study sampled 99 teachers. This was equivalent to 30% of the target population which is higher than the 10% minimum sample recommended for social science research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1992). Stratified sampling was then used to select 30% each of the male and female teachers to participate in the study. This gave a total of 66 male and 33 female teachers. The teachers were selected proportionately from each school. Since the total number of the principals was 21(30%) of them were used. Additionally, the principals were stratified into male and female then selected by the simple random sampling method. A sample of 107 respondents was selected to be used in the study, i.e. 99 teachers, 7 principals and one DEO.

The research instruments used were a questionnaire and an interview schedule. The questionnaires targeted the teachers while the interview schedules mainly targeted the principals and the District Education Officer. After collection, the obtained data was arranged and grouped according to the relevant research questions. Qualitative data collected from the interviews were analyzed using content analysis while quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, i.e. the mode, median, and the mean. In addition, the Pearson Moment correlation coefficient was used to ascertain the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used in analyzing the data. Content analysis was used to analyze narrative data obtained from interviews.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper consists of 24 items about the institutional factors influencing turnover in secondary schools in Baringo District. Here the respondents were expected to indicate the degree of agreement and disagreement with reasons for teachers to leave their work place. Only those factors whose means ranked above average and were felt to influence teacher turnover have been discussed.

**Table 1: Institutional factors that could lead to turnover**

Institutional factors	S A		A		U		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1. My school performs well in national exams	15	15.5	30	30.9	4	4.1	36	37.7	12	12.4
2. My class performs dismally in exams	5	5.2	14	14.4	3	3.1	51	52.6	24	24.4
3 The school performs poorly in extra-curricular activities	18	18.6	37	38.1	4	4.1	28	28.9	8	8.2
4. Teachers' effort is not recognized through rewards	23	23.7	30	30.9	2	2.1	23	23.7	19	19.6
5. The principal does not seek teachers' opinions before making major decisions	16	16.5	25	25.8	8	8.2	31	32	17	17.5
6. Senior teachers are given more recognition in my school	13	13.4	20	20.6	6	6.2	44	45.4	14	14.4
7. Teachers are not involved in education policy decisions in the school	19	19.6	26	26.8	4	4.1	33	34.7	13	13.7
8. Higher qualifications are not recognized by TSC	36	37.1	20	20.6	5	5.2	25	25.8	9	9.8
9. I have not been considered for a position of responsibility in this school	9	9.3	18	18.6	1	1	36	37.1	33	34
10. The principal has a low opinion about teachers' ability to act responsibly	9	9.3	16	16.5	9	9.3	39	40.2	24	24.7
11. I am not involved in policy and decision making	13	13.4	25	25.8	2	2.1	40	41.2	16	16.5
12. There is heavy workload in this school (teaching, marking, lesson preparation)	47	48.5	32	33	0	0	16	16.5	2	2.1
13. We are not allowed to consult freely on professional issues with our colleagues in other schools	13	13.4	26	26.8	4	4.1	38	39.2	16	16.5
14. Colleagues have a negative attitudes towards my continued working in this school	1	1	9	9.3	9	9.3	49	50.5	28	28.9
15. Teachers/students discipline is not handled professionally in this school	4	4.1	27	27.8	3	3.1	35	36.1	27	27.8
16. This school does not have adequate teaching resources	17	17.7	16	16.7	0	0	30	31.3	33	34.4
17. Co-curricular activities are allocated very little time	18	19.1	18	19.1	4	4.3	36	38.3	18	19.1
18. I am not paid for working for extra hours	24	25.5	37	39.4	9	9.6	15	16	9	9.6
19. I handle pupils who are not motivated to learn	25	26.3	32	33.3	5	5.2	21	21.9	13	13.5
20. Teachers' problems are poorly handled by the school administration	13	13.4	36	37.1	7	7.2	28	28.9	12	12.4
21. The teaching profession provides me with opportunities for career growth	12	12.5	32	33.3	3	3.1	31	32.3	18	18.6
22. Teachers are not promoted fairly in the school	25	26.3	30	31.6	1	1.1	29	30.5	10	10.5
23. One's qualifications are not considered during promotion	5	5.2	23	24	6	6.3	41	42.7	21	21.9
24. Experience is always considered during promotions	14	14.7	24	24.7	6	6.3	41	43.2	10	10.5

As shown in Table 1, a big majority (48.5% strongly agreed and 33% agreed) of the teachers felt that there is a heavy work load in the schools they teach; 25.5% strongly agreed and 39.4 % agreed that they are not paid for working extra hours, and 37.1% strongly agreed and 20.6% agreed felt that higher qualifications are not recognized by TSC. Another 26.3% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed that they handle pupils who are not motivated to learn. In addition, 18.6 % strongly agreed and 38.8% agreed that the school performs poorly in extra-curricular activities while 13.4% and 20.6 agreed that senior teachers are given more recognition in their schools. Moreover, 23.7% strongly agreed and 30.9% felt that teachers' effort is not recognized through rewards; 13.4% and 37.1%

teachers' problems are poorly handled by the school administration. Another 19.6% strongly agreed and 26.8% agreed that teachers are not involved in education policy decisions in the school. In addition, 37.9% of the teachers disagreed and 12.4% strongly disagreed that their schools perform well in national exams.

It therefore emerges from the responses that the institutional factors that could lead to teacher turnover are the teachers heavy work load, non payment of teachers' extra hours, TSC failing to recognize higher qualifications, teachers handling unmotivated students, school performing poorly in both extra-curricular activities as well as national exams. In addition, most of the teachers felt that senior teachers are given more recognition yet their effort is not recognized through rewards. It is also evident from the responses that teachers' problems are poorly handled by the school administration. It is clear from the findings that teachers are not involved in education policy decisions in the school.

The above findings reinforce a study by Khojawa, Merchant and Hirani (2005) which found that work load is one of the main causes of job dissatisfaction among employees in Pakistan. Similarly, Shaver and Lacey (2003) agree with this sentiment that work-over load impacts negatively on employee productivity. It also emerges from the findings that teachers work extra hours without payment. This could contribute to teacher turnover because past studies (Shader *et al.*, 2001) indicate that having to work overtime predicts higher turnover rates among employees. The practice of assigning teachers with extra hours of work without paying them overtime deprives them of the ability to plan their personal and family lives without any financial compensation. The obligation to work overtime impacts negatively on the teacher's decision-making abilities concerning their work and their personal time schedules.

It is evident that the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) does not recognize higher qualifications. Yet the findings indicate that 15.7% of the teachers have Masters Degrees. This is a big number considering the cost of acquiring a Masters Degree. The findings also indicate that senior teachers are given more recognition than the other teachers. This may also influence teacher turnover because, according to Tappen (1995), organizations that do not give positive feedback to their employees increase employees' sense of no satisfaction. Employees may feel that their good work is not considered. This is because recognition promotes self confidence and boosts self-esteem of employees and therefore productivity.

On the other hand, most teachers are satisfied that teachers and students discipline is handled professionally, that most of them have been considered for positions of responsibility; that they are involved in decision making. It was their feeling that the teaching profession provides them with opportunities for career growth. Teachers consult freely on professional issues with their colleagues in other schools.

### **The Relationship between Teachers' Personal Factors and Teacher Turnover**

When subjected to Pearson's Moment correlation, an inferential statistical analysis technique for determining correlation whenever a measure of relationship is needed between two variables, the following correlation coefficients at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance on teacher turnover prediction emerge:

- a) A correlation coefficient of -.022 on teacher turnover intentions associated with gender was obtained.
- b) A correlation coefficient of -.055 on turnover intentions associated with Age was obtained.
- c) A correlation coefficient of .204 (significant at 0.05) on teacher turnover intentions



- associated with marital status was obtained.
- d) A correlation coefficient of .035 on teacher turnover intentions associated with highest level of academic qualification gender was obtained.
  - e) A correlation coefficient of .047 on teacher turnover intentions associated with teaching experience was obtained.
  - f) A correlation coefficient of -.048 on teacher turnover intentions associated with designation was obtained.
  - g) A correlation coefficient of .148 on teacher turnover intentions associated with Number of lessons per week was obtained.
  - h) A correlation coefficient of -.102 on teacher turnover intentions associated with Number of dependants was obtained.
  - i) A correlation coefficient of -.049 on teacher turnover intentions associated with residence of dependants was obtained.

As shown from the findings above marital status of the teachers had influence turnover intentions with correlations coefficients of .204 (significant at 0.05). This seems to suggest that most of the teachers were not staying with their families and would opt to go to work near their families. Another implication is that teachers' income was not sufficient for them to sustain their families hence are in search of better paying jobs elsewhere. All the other variables did not indicate any positive correlation with teacher turnover intentions.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the study findings, it is clear that a number of institutional factors are responsible for teacher turnover in Baringo District. These include heavy workload, not being paid for working extra hours, and higher qualifications not being recognized by TSC could influence teachers to leave their work places. Handling pupils who are not motivated to learn, Poor school performance in national examinations as well as extra-curricular activities also influence teachers' decisions to quit teaching. In addition, the fact that senior teachers are given more recognition is also considered a factor that influences turnover rates among teachers. Respondents also felt that if teachers' effort is not recognized through rewards teachers can quit. Furthermore, if teachers' personal problems remain poorly handled by the school administration then they could leave their work place. Non involvement of teachers in education policy decisions in the school could also lead to turnover.

To address these problems and reduce turnover, the school management should make deliberate efforts to involve teachers in school policy formulation and decision making to make them have a sense of ownership of schools hence facilitate implementation. Schools should also introduce welfare departments to address teachers' personal problems. The school management/administration should always emphasize with their teachers whenever they have problems. Moreover, on teacher work load, the school management in conjunction with the parents should set aside funds to employ more teachers to balance teachers' workload and teacher student ratio. The government should also hasten its attempt to address the teacher shortage in the country. Furthermore, school-administrators should support teachers in both curricular and co-curricular. Games equipment should be provide to make teachers fully participate in activities of their choice. Married teachers should also teach in places near their families or spouses. This will make teachers settle in their stations and concentrate on their duties. Principals can improve teachers' interpersonal relations by organizing bonding sessions or social gatherings outside the school environment.

Schools should recognize outstanding performance of teachers' through promotions, advancement opportunities, and other forms of rewards. This will make teachers feel that they are not working in dead-end jobs.

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