
PERSPECTIVES ON EFFECTS OF TEACHER TURNOVER ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN GEM SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT: *Teacher turnover poses a threat to the education sector by limiting or reducing the availability of qualified teachers to undertake teaching services. The purpose of this study was to assess the effects of teacher turnover on students' academic performance from the perspectives of head-teachers, teachers and students in secondary schools in Gem Sub-County, Siaya County. The research design was a descriptive survey research design. The study estimated the effects of teacher turnover in 14 secondary schools out of 42 secondary schools in Gem sub-county. This involved 14 head-teachers, 163 teachers and 371 students. To obtain the sample of the study, stratified random sampling was used. Data was collected using questionnaires document analysis guide and interviews. The data was analyzed using frequency distribution tables, measures of central tendency and percentages. The main factors of turnover reported in the study were resignation for non-teaching jobs or further studies, poor working conditions, poor transport system, social security, poor medical services, maternity commitments and school policies. The main effects of turnover reported were teacher shortage, poor syllabus coverage, impact on student's academic performance, disruption of teaching, learning and school planning, increased workload and reputation of the school. It is therefore necessary that controlling agencies should address themselves about this turnover and restore to schools the quality and dignity intended for them. This calls for an adoption of programmes geared towards the achievement of objectives, standardization of entry behaviours and discipline on the job.*

KEYWORDS: Teacher Turnover, Performance, Planning, Workload, Perspectives

INTRODUCTION

Turnover can be considered from different perspectives depending on the subject in question. Among teachers, turnover refers to the rate of departure among staff engaged in schools for a given time frame. Teacher turnover can be obtained by identifying the stock of teachers through government departments, principals of schools and even teachers themselves. This is then compared with the actual cases of withdrawals in percentage terms, having taken care of re-entry to derive turnover rates (Malanie, 2000).

Berkeley (2001) did his study in Los Angeles charter schools and found unusually high rates of teacher turnover. He studied 163 charter schools and found out that the turnover was around 40% compared to 15% at traditional public schools. His research revealed that burnout was one of the reasons that led to high teacher turnover since working conditions are tough and challenging in charter schools than traditional public schools. According to the National Commission on Teaching and Americas' Future (NCTAF, 2003) the debate surrounding how to keep teachers in the profession is still evolving.

In Kenya, a number of teachers have transferred their services to other sectors like the Ministry of Education, Youth and Gender; The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Secretariat; the Media Industry; Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) among others (Okungu, 2012). In Kenya, turnover is very high. The government froze the supply driven teacher recruitment in 1997 and resorted to replacing only those lost under natural attrition in 2001, due to not being able to get a teaching post. Because the Ministry of Education does not hire teachers, most teachers consider leaving the country and or the profession for elsewhere where their qualification would secure them jobs (Osmond, 2005).

National statistics indicate that 10,000 teachers are lost annually and currently more than 75,000 teachers are needed to replace the lost and to cater for the increasing student enrolments (Kasau, 2012). Studies carried out by Nyakundi (2011) and Okungu (2012) on teacher turnover found that among other factors, school administration plays a role in teacher turnover. These studies have dealt with the causes of teacher turnover and have only mentioned that teacher turnover is a problem but did not establish the effects of the problem.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher turnover remains an important issue in education. Not much is known on the effects of teacher turnover in Gem sub-county. This study therefore set out to find out the effects of teacher turnover on academic performance in secondary schools in Gem sub-county from those directly affected namely head-teachers, teachers and students, since it had not been established and remained a challenge.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to find out how teacher turnover affects the students' academic performance from the perspectives of head-teachers, teachers and students in secondary schools in Gem Sub County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature was reviewed to gain an understanding of the broader issues pertaining to the study. It was prudent to examine previous research which was related to this area of study

The Rate of Teacher Turnover in Secondary Schools

Teacher turnover rates are a big problem for America's public schools (Kain & Rivkin, 2004). According to Ingersoll (2003) in the United States about 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching. Annually teachers enter, leave and move within the first level (K-12) of teacher workforce. This movement affects the composition of teachers at these schools, institutional stability, and the demographics and qualification of the teacher workforce as a whole (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Post Secondary Education, 2005). States, districts and schools are forced to devote attention, time and financial resources to attract additional candidates to replace those teachers who leave the teaching profession. (Provasnic & Dorfman, 2005; Voke, 2002) said that one type of turnover which is retirement is inevitable and expected.

An analysis of schools and staffing survey data found out that leavers rather than retirees are contributing to teacher shortage (Keigher, 2010). A high level of teacher turnover implies that an organization has major problems and can cause instability and thus lead to additional problem. The movement of teachers from one public school to another does not represent a loss to the profession but it does create recruitment problems for the schools (Boe *et.al.*, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001).

Ingersoll (2003) analyzed a national data, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey, and found out that substantial number of schools have experienced difficulties in finding qualified candidates to fill openings. Ingersoll (2001) noted that employee turnover is important because of its link to the performance and effectiveness of the organization. Effective organization endorses a limited degree of turnover to eliminate teachers who are below par. Low levels of employee turnover are normal and effective in a well managed organization, however high level of employee turnover are both cause and effect of ineffectiveness and low performance in organizations.

Joftus & Maddox-Dalan (2002) said that many researchers have shown that salary and poor working conditions influence teacher attrition. Luczak (2004) documented that several teacher and school level characteristics influenced attrition, including teacher gender, whether or not teachers had graduate degree in a subject area, the percentage of minority students in a teachers' school, and salary as compared with the cost of living. Scott (2004) examined the past history of teacher turnover during the year 2001-2002 academic year by utilizing data from all public school systems in the state of Texas. Average teacher's salary, average years of experience teachers have in a district, the number of students per teacher, the percentage of minorities to total staff within a district, and percentage of students with disciplinary placements were described as factors related to teacher turnover.

Kiradi (2011) conducted teacher turnover in Sigor Division in Kenya and found that the main factors contributing to teacher turnover were inequitable pay and compensation for teachers serving under similar environmental conditions, inadequate and poor social infrastructural facilities, insecurity owing to tribal skirmishes over land and cattle rustling and persistent crop failure. The study by Karidi (2011) looked at extraneous causes of teachers' turnover in Bomet District. The present study will go beyond causes of teacher turnover and explore its impact on students' academic performance.

Coping Strategies with Challenges Caused by Teacher Turnover

According to Ingersoll (2001) the relationship between teacher's age and their mobility follows a U-shaped curve in the U.S.A. and that younger teachers have very high rates of teacher turnover which decline through the mid-career period and finally, rise again in the retirement years. Similarly, Harris & Adams (2007) also find a U-shaped curve in their study on understanding the level and causes of teacher turnover. Studies also show that teacher turnover is strongly correlated with the individual characteristics of teachers like qualification, gender, age, health, attitude and background. Stinebrickner's (2002) research on reasons why teachers leave, show that there is significant negative correlation between a teacher's likelihood of retention and their score in examinations. Teachers with higher scores in particularly Special Education, Mathematics and Science are found to cause the highest turnover in the U.S.A. On the other hand, a study by Ingersoll & Smith (2003) which is consistent with Hanushek *et. al.* (2004) report on U.S.A national findings, reveal that teacher

turnover is quite pronounced among Newly Appointed Teachers (NATs) and that 50 percent of NATs leave the profession within the first five years of their career. Schools in U.S.A which provided mentoring and induction programs had lower rates of turnover for NATs and schools that gave teachers greater autonomy had better success in keeping their teachers (Guarino *et. al.*, 2004).

Kayuni and Tambulasi (2007) found that in Malawi to cope with the challenges of teacher turnover, the government introduced distance learning for unqualified teachers, increased budget allocation to the education sector and encouraged programs that strengthen the link between teachers and communities around them. Financial incentives in the form of hardship allowance, travel allowance or subsidized housing in addition to non-monetary incentives such as special study leave or better training opportunities have had positive impact on teacher retention in Africa (Craig *et. al.*, 1998).

To cope with the challenges faced during teacher turnover, some school administrators employed inexperienced teachers paid by Board of Management, merged classes to make maximum use of the available human resource and sought the services of former students who had done well in the previous year's Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) and were waiting to join the universities (Kasau, 2012). This study only discussed how teachers and head-teachers cope with challenges of teacher turnover. The present study will go beyond this and will explore how students can also cope with these challenges.

ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Gender of Head-Teachers and Teachers

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender and the responses were as shown in table 1.

Table 1 Gender of Head-Teachers and Teachers

| Gender | Head-Teachers | Percentage | Teachers | Percentage |
|--------|---------------|------------|----------|------------|
| Male | 12 | 85.7% | 82 | 51.3% |
| Female | 2 | 14.3% | 78 | 48.7% |

Table 1 indicates that 12 (85.7%) and 82 (51.3%) were male head-teachers and teachers respectively while 2 (14.35%) and 78 (48.7%) were female head-teachers and teachers respectively. From these results it can be deduced that this study in Gem sub-county, headship and teaching staff is dominated by male.

The study established that there were more male teachers than female teachers in the sampled schools. Most of them responded that there were more male than female teachers since female teachers always leave their schools after a short period of time. A head-teacher reported that;

I recruited a female teacher the previous year in August but is on maternity leave as we speak right now. (Head-Teacher 3)

It was evident that there were more male teachers than female teachers thus implying gender disparity. This finding can be compared to the findings of Nyimbudzi (2009) who noted that in some districts in Tanzania, gender inequality is experienced in the teaching profession. Egu (2006) in Nigeria found that female teachers in their child bearing age could leave their jobs to have children while others joined their husbands after marriage. Therefore, from the above findings, gender inequality in employment and appointments could be the reason for fewer female teachers and principals thus a factor influencing teacher turnover.

Headship Experience, Teaching Experience and Turnover

To identify the level and type of association between experience and turnover the spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated. Table 2 shows the results of data analysis.

Table 2 Analysis of Correlation between Experience and Turnover in Secondary School Teachers in Gem Sub-County

| Teachers by Experience | Rank Order by Experience (X) | Rank Order by Turnover (Y) | (X-Y) | (X-Y) ² |
|------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Less than 1yr | 6 | 1 | 5 | 25 |
| 1-5yrs | 5 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| 6-10yrs | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| 11-15yrs | 3 | 4 | -1 | 1 |
| 16-20yrs | 2 | 5 | -3 | 9 |
| Above 20yrs | 1 | 6 | -5 | 25 |

Table 2 indicates that those teachers who had worked for over 20 years were ranked first, followed by those who had been in the teaching profession for 16-20 years. Those who had worked for 11-15 years were third, followed by those who had worked for 6-10 years, then those who had worked for 1-5 years and finally those who had been in the profession for less than one year. The table also reveals that those who had stayed in the teaching profession for less than one year had the highest turnover followed by those who had worked for 1-5 years, then those who had worked for 6-10 years. At number four was those who had worked for 11-15 years, then those who had worked for 16-20 years and finally those who had been in the profession for over 20 years.

Interviews with the head-teachers also revealed that those who had served for a short period of time had a high turnover because they join the profession expecting much and on realizing that their expectations cannot be achieved, they simply resign and go for non teaching jobs like in banks, N.G.Os and business. The study also established from interviews with the Head-teachers that those who had served for long were not willing to leave their stations since they had invested a lot within these areas and had children who were going to school within the area hence, they did not want any disruptions like transfers. This has led to low teacher turnover.

Location of the School

The Head-teachers were asked to indicate the location of their schools, these being urban, peri-urban and rural. Figure 1 shows the results obtained from their responses.

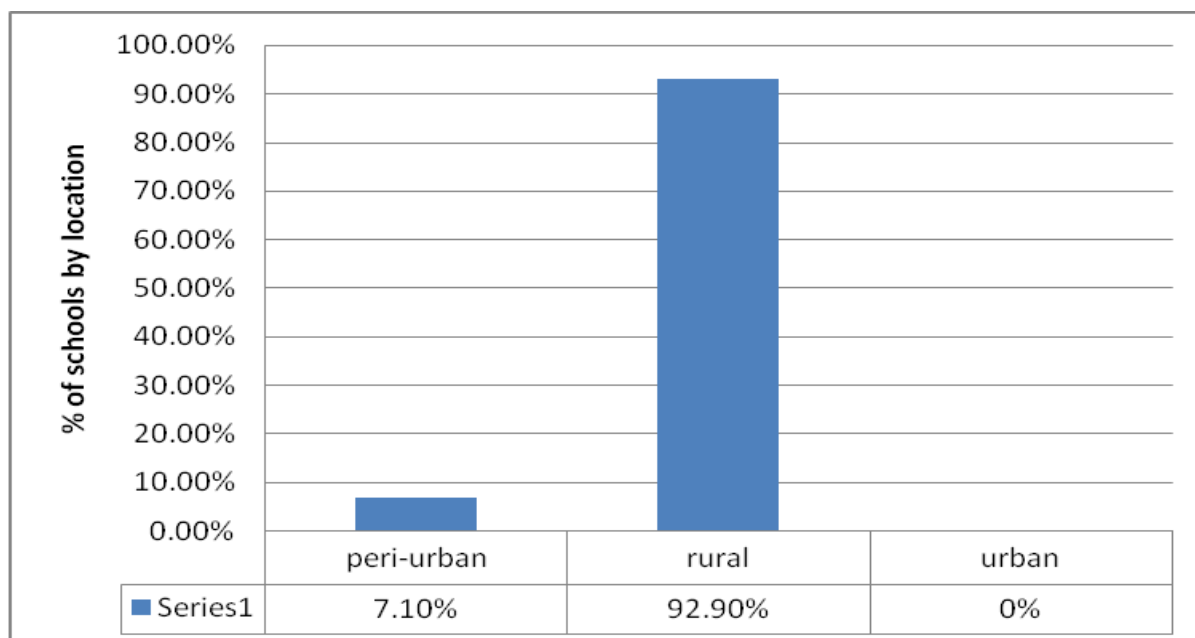


Figure 1 Location of Schools

Figure 1 shows that 92.9% of the principals indicated that their schools were located in the rural areas, 7.1% indicated that their schools were located in peri-urban areas and 0% were found in urban areas. These findings show that most secondary schools in gem sub-county are situated in the rural areas.

Interviews with head teachers established that most of the schools were situated in the rural areas which were very far from the main road. Majority of the respondents who were teachers observed that school location was important and could easily influence teacher turnover. One of the respondents mentioned that;

The school location is very far from the main road and basic services. It is very insecure as we walk along the foot path to school. It was not my dream place and I am planning to leave the school very soon (teacher 136)

The study also revealed that the location of the school was a challenge because teachers could go for interviews for employment but once they are successful most of them do not report on duty. The reason being that the school is in the rural area and most of the services cannot easily be accessed.

Rate of Teacher Turnover in Secondary Schools in Gem Sub-County

Head-teachers were asked to indicate the number of teachers that had left their schools and also give reasons why the teachers had to leave. They were also told to rank the factors that led to teacher turnover.

Results revealed that 85.7% of the Head-teachers and 97.5% of the teachers ranked resignation for non-teaching jobs first as a factor for teacher turnover. Resignation for further studies was ranked second by 71.4% Head-teachers and 95.0% teachers. 64.3% Head-teachers and 94.5% teachers ranked poor working conditions third while location of the school was ranked fourth by 57.2% Head-teachers and 93.9% teachers. Inadequate good transport system was ranked fifth by 42.9% Head-teachers and 92.1% Teachers, this was

followed by lack of security in the area as indicated by 71.4% Head-teachers and 94.5% Teachers. 42.9% Head-teachers and 92.1% Teachers cited poor medical services as the seventh factor while poor support from administration was ranked by 42.9% head-teachers and 95.0% Teachers as number eight. Maternity commitments, school policies and increased workload were ranked ninth, tenth and eleventh respectively by 64.3% head-teachers and 93.9% teachers, 57.2% head-teachers and 92.1% teachers and 71.4% head-teachers and 95.0% teachers. The last three positions as ranked by 71.4% head-teachers and 94.5% teachers were poor housing, lack of incentives and teacher's status.

The researcher established that teachers preferred non-teaching jobs to the teaching profession. They were citing low salaries as their major reason. This was after making comparison with their counterparts in other sectors and realized that they were earning very low. One of the teachers reported that;

We were employed with one of my collage mates at the same time, he taught for one term and the following term informed me that he was working as a banker. Currently he earns almost double my salary and has a car which he got through car mortgage and he reminded me that I will remain poor as long as am still in the teaching profession. This opened my eyes and soon I am planning to resign and start a business so that I become my own boss. (teacher 90)

A study carried out by GNAT (2009) found that teachers left the teaching profession for greener pastures in other sectors and that reasonable level of wages is an important instrument for motivating teachers to remain in the teaching profession. The study found that 98.2% of the teachers were not satisfied with their salaries. Teachers in Ghana earned relatively low salaries compared to their counterparts in other African countries and those holding comparable qualification.

During interviews on working conditions and promotion, the study established that teachers were dissatisfied with opportunities for promotion which led to low salaries being paid to them. They mentioned that a teacher can stay in one job group for more than ten years, from job group "M" and above the teacher will be attending interviews with (Teachers Service Commission) T.S.C. which does not yield any fruit since they base the promotion majorly on students' performance. One of the teachers reported that;

I am in a small rural school which admits students with very low mark. I have gone for the interviews two times which were never successful and when I tried to find out, I was told that the mean score has been too low. I am fed up since even the working conditions cannot allow for better grades and work is just too much. (teacher 80).

These findings relate to the findings of Bennell & Mukyanuzi (2005) who indicated that promotions were often seriously delayed without obvious cause and were inequitably awarded even among teachers and once promotions were approved it still took long for salaries to be adjusted. Further, the present study findings on promotion of teachers is also consistent with that of VSO (2007) which found that decisions on promotion of teachers appeared to be made arbitrarily rather than on the basis of a fair and transparent appraisal system. Consequently, promotion procedures which were perceived to be unfair further reduced the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

It was also established that schools in rural areas had high teacher turn over because the schools were very far from necessities like water, electricity and also accessibility of the school was a problem. This made some teachers who were employed not to report to those centers but those who reported were only to complete the five years indicated in the commitment letter then go on transfer. One of the teachers reported that;

I only wanted to be employed by T.S.C. that's why I had to come to this rural place. I am only waiting for five years then I will go back to our place. (teacher 40).

Location of the school and poor infrastructure was a major factor contributing to high teacher turnover. It was established that there were few teachers in the schools located in the rural areas since during interviews for teacher recruitment, the shortlisted teachers do not turn up for the interviews but in cases where they are interviewed they do not report. A Head-teacher reported that;

The T.S.C announced two vacancies in my school and I only got three applicants who failed to come for the interviews. I contacted one of the Head-teachers within the sub-county and managed to get the teachers who came and signed the contract forms but did not report on duty. (Head-teacher 7)

Findings of the present study on location of the school and infrastructure concur with the findings of International Task Force for EFA (2007) whose study of 12 low income countries found that rural schools typically experience high staff turnover and have the highest vacancy rates. Teachers in these schools face larger classes, increased workload and a more different school environment.

In addition, Lumandi (2008) also found that poor school infrastructure also contributed to disincentives to remain in the teaching profession. In South Africa, poor physical infrastructure is reported to contribute to high teacher turnover for example, in some schools, classrooms had broken windows, cracked walls, no doors for long period and some buildings were collapsing.

Interviews with the teachers also revealed that lack of support from administration and school policies were also contributing to resignation to non-teaching jobs and transfers to other schools. In addition, the findings revealed that principals place excessive pressure on teachers, make unrealistic demands and have rules and regulations that are not consistent hence leading to teacher turnover. Some teachers also mentioned favoritism and lack of motivation by the Head-teachers as a challenge, this shows that teachers are not satisfied with the leadership styles and will leave whenever an opportunity comes. These findings concur with the findings of Ingersoll (2001) who in his study found that principals tended to put a lot of pressure on teachers and criticized them in front of the rest of the staff. In addition, Kyacikou (2001) also found that principals imposed unrealistic demands and deadlines on teachers thus subjecting them to stress yet teachers needed adequate time for preparation. In addition, it was established that teachers were not involved in decision making. This led to them not having group cohesion thus making working together very difficult. This implies that majority of the teachers are not involved in important meetings to decide on important issues hence they are made to feel that they are not part of the school system and this may result into teacher turnover.

Coping Strategies with the Challenges Caused by Teacher Turnover

The Head-teachers, teachers and students were asked to mention challenges that they were facing due to teacher turnover. Their responses were as follows:

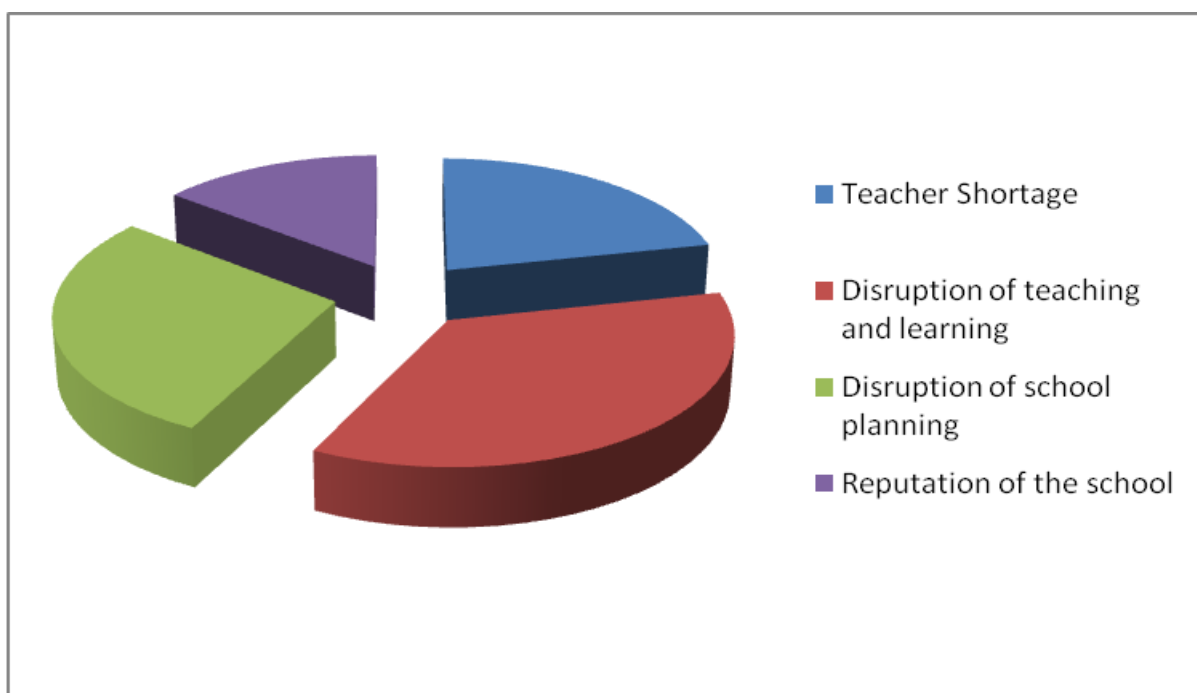


Figure 2 Head-Teachers Challenges

Figure 2 shows that from the 14 sampled head-teachers 3 (21.4%) mentioned teacher shortage as a challenge, 5 (35.7%) mentioned disruption of teaching and learning, 4 (28.6%) mentioned disruption of school planning and 2 (14.3%) mentioned reputation of the school. The findings show that most of the Head-teachers experience disruption of teaching and learning as major challenge since most of them mentioned it. When teaching and learning is interfered with, the students set objectives are also interfered with and this impacts negatively on students' performance.

Further interviews with the teachers showed that there were very few teachers with a lot of work since some of their colleagues had left the profession because of the working conditions. The teachers interviewed had so much work to do at the same time expected to deliver in the classrooms. One of the teachers' reported that;

I have all these books to mark. We are through with cycle 1 and the marks are needed by Friday, I am in-charge of games and am supposed to train a team for championships and am also a class teacher expected to rank the students plus other duties just because we are very few. All these work can make a teacher breakdown. (teacher 83)

This showed that both the head-teachers and teachers were in agreement that teacher shortage caused by teacher turnover impacted negatively on student performance thus undermining student achievement.

Table 3 Students challenges

| Challenge | Students | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Poor performance | 180 | 60% |
| Lack of continuity | 40 | 13.3% |
| Big classes | 20 | 6.7% |
| Adjusting | 60 | 20% |

Table 3 shows that 60% of the students mentioned that poor performance was a challenge, lack of continuity was mentioned by 13.3%, 6.7% mentioned big classes and adjusting was mentioned by 20% of the students.

From the responses, poor performance was brought about by students taking a lot of their time trying to understand the new teacher, getting used to the methods of teaching and styles of teaching being used. Exam time reaches before they do all these hence they are not able to perform well. One of the students reported that;

We lost track of what we were being taught, got confused and did not understand hence failed when exams were administered to us. (Student 104).

Lack of continuity as a challenge was mentioned by 40 (13.3%) students who said that the new teacher always starts with the topics they like best leaving the one which was being handled half way. 20 (6.7%) of the students mentioned big classes as a challenge. Classes were being merged so that the remaining teachers could handle all the students. This led to lack of concentration due to poor class management since the number of students is very large.

CONCLUSIONS

The first concern was resignation for non-teaching jobs, poor working conditions, poor medical services and school policies. Although individuals' will to move cannot be suppressed as a result of the push-pull factors of socio-economic determinants, attempt should be made in the education service to pay competitive wages in relation to other sectors of the economy in order to stop this perennial losses from the teaching profession to other employers of labour.

The second issue is on resignation for further studies. Efforts should be geared towards a comprehensive scheme of study leave with pay. Such schemes will be more beneficial if coordinated through professional institutions. Through this recipients acquire professional additional qualifications for the improvement of their jobs. From the results of the analysis and their implications, there are major issues that stand out. These are high degree of turnover amongst less experienced teachers, factors contributing to turnover in schools and the negative impact on students caused by turnover. It is therefore necessary that controlling agencies should address themselves about this turnover and restore to schools the quality and dignity intended for them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that a body of experts is needed to carry out job evaluation amongst teachers, identify areas of material shortages in schools and recommend measures to the government for the rehabilitation of our schools and the teaching profession in Kenya.

The study also recommends that there should be an adoption of programmes geared towards the achievement of objectives, standardization of entry behaviours and discipline on the job within the teaching profession to help reduce teacher turnover.

Lastly, efforts should be geared towards a comprehensive scheme of study leave with pay and such schemes will be more beneficial if coordinated through professional institutions which will ensure that every advances this will curb resignation for further studies which was one of the reasons for teacher turnover.

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