



A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF FREQUENT TEACHERS TURNOVER ON THE SYLLABUS COVERAGE IN SCHOOLS IN KENYA

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Abstract:

The purpose of the study was to critically analyze the impact of the frequent teachers' turnover on the syllabus coverage in the schools in Kenya. One of the main concerns in our schools is the absent teacher; a scenario caused by many factors, among them the frequent teachers' turnover. The study went further and critically analyzed the reasons for the frequent turnover of teachers like frequent transfers of teachers from one school to another, the mobility of teachers from one educational level to another, the teachers early retirement, the resignation of teachers due to poor working conditions and pursuit for career development and advancement aspects that all lead to poor syllabus coverage. The research methodology used was qualitative and specifically a critical analysis of the problem. The methodology enabled the researchers to critique the various dynamics of teacher turnover in relation to the syllabus coverage. The Researchers recommendations were made to the Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission, the school administration, the teachers and other stakeholders such as: transfer of teachers should not be done mid-way in the term and should preferably be done at the end of the year, mobility of teachers should be minimized by laying out strategies for retaining highly experienced and trained teachers in all schools, early retirement and resignation should be addressed by empowering teachers' with intrinsic motivation techniques, and a good career development plan ought to be worked out for all teachers. In sum, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education and Teachers Service Commission ought to have policies that deter disruption of teaching and learning and also address the grievances of the teachers on their working environment where possible. There is urgent need to train school administrators on good management practices so that teachers can be retained in the profession.

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1. Introduction

Turnover of employees is a worldwide problem. Van Vliet (2014) referring to the theories of Human Resource Management by Henry Fayol argues that stability of tenure of personnel is a key component of human resource. Turnover of employees causes disability and it is imperative that every organization looks for ways of stabilizing their personnel by avoiding turnover as this affects its operations (Vliet, 2014). Teaching like any other profession is affected by the turnover of the teachers. In Kenya, the Teachers Service Commission, the employer of teachers has had the challenge of stabilizing its personnel. Every year, there are reports of teachers leaving the schools for different destinations and different reasons.

A recent report revealed that a total of 3,921 teachers exited the primary schools while 601 left the secondary schools and other Tertiary institutions. Moreover, according to the Education Secretary Dr Matiangi about 90,000 teachers are needed in public primary and secondary schools (Wanzala, 2016). The current shortage of teachers paints a grim picture and therefore the trend is quite worrying. A study that was done showed that turnover of teachers affects the achievement of students (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). Meyer (2013) concurs with this observation (Meyer, 2013). In addition, they noted that there is a disruptive effect of turnover that impacts on syllabus coverage in the schools affected. The Kenyan schools have continued to grapple with the problem of teacher shortages for a long time. Consequently, the teachers' employer has kept conducting a recruitment and replacement exercise almost every year yet the turnover of teachers continues. It is important that those issues leading to the turnover be urgently addressed in order to curb the frequent turnover of the teachers which then affects the syllabus coverage (Wanzala, 2016).

2. Problem statement

Teachers' turnover is a concern in many countries. These include the developed world like USA and United Kingdom. In USA, it is said that 40 to 50 percent of teachers employed exit teaching within five years (Neason, 2014). A study done in Ethiopia, Gameda et al (2015) revealed that poor salaries and failure to reward performance bring out the challenges that demotivate teachers. The consequences of turnover in schools include poor syllabus coverage, as the employer may not immediately replace those teachers (Gameda, Fekede, & Tynjala, 2015). According to Mulwa and Mbaluka (2016), timely syllabus coverage is critical to learners because it enables them to perform well at the end of their course for example in KCSE. Their performance also affects their choice of Higher Education Institutions and career in later life that consequently affects their quality of life.

In their study, Mulwa and Mbaluka (2016) confirmed that performance improves through adequate syllabus coverage among other factors like management of quality teaching time by teachers and the input of the leaders and the community who create an enabling environment. The effect of teacher turnover on syllabus coverage is of great concern (Mulwa & Mbaluka, 2016). It is a fact that the standards of education are regulated by the school syllabus implemented through the school curriculum (Chinyani, 2013). According to Mutune (2013), influences that affect turnover in Kenya include job dissatisfaction, poor remuneration, inadequate support, professional growth and opportunities for promotion. This study therefore critically analyzed the impact of the frequent teachers' turnover in Kenyan schools especially on the syllabus coverage.

3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to critically analyze the impact of the frequent teachers' turnover on the syllabus coverage in the schools in Kenya.

4. Objectives of the study

1. To establish how the frequent transfers of teachers from one school to another affects the syllabus coverage in the schools.
2. To examine how the mobility of teachers from one educational level to another affects the syllabus coverage in the schools.
3. To assess whether the teachers' early retirement affects syllabus coverage in the schools.
4. To explore the effect of resigning of teachers due to dissatisfaction with working conditions on syllabus coverage in the schools.
5. To determine whether pursuit of career development and advancement affects syllabus coverage in the schools.

5. Research questions

1. How does the frequent transfer of teachers from one school to affect syllabus coverage in the schools?
2. To what extent does the mobility of teachers from one educational level to another contribute to poor syllabus coverage in the schools?
3. What is the impact of teachers' early retirement on the syllabus coverage in the schools?
4. How does resigning of teachers due to dissatisfaction with working conditions impact on syllabus coverage in the schools?
5. To what extent does pursuit of career development and advancement affect syllabus coverage in the schools?

6. Significance of the study

This study may be beneficial to the Teachers Service Commission, Ministry of Education and the school management in the schools as they make or review policies related to teacher management in the future. It may also contribute to the world of academia by adding to its knowledge reservoir. This study may also benefit the students, teachers and school management in many ways.

7. Research methodology

In this study, the researchers used the qualitative research methodology and specifically made a critical inquiry of the problem of teachers' turnover, the likely underlying factors like transfers, upward mobility, early retirement, resigning and career development and their effect on the syllabus coverage in the schools. The method enabled an in depth investigation as to the how those factors have contributed to the frequent teachers' turnover in Kenyan schools. The methodology was found to be appropriate because it allows the researchers to carry out in depth analysis of the situations and events that contribute to frequent teachers' turnover.

8. Critique literature review

8.1 A critical analysis of how the frequent transfers of teachers from one school to another affects the syllabus coverage in the schools

According to Mutegi (2014), teachers are an important resource and usually stand out as key to realizing the high standards emphasized in schools. It is also a fact that standards are regulated by the school syllabus implemented in the school curriculum. This therefore means that the high standards can only be maintained if the teacher is present in order to cover the stipulated syllabus. Frequent transfers of teachers' destabilize learning and hinder good coverage of the syllabus (Noor, Ishaque, Lodhi, & Memon, 2012).

Majority of teachers opt to work in around towns and their periphery and economically empowered areas in order to benefit from the social amenities available (Mutegi, 2014). This then necessitates many applications of transfers and sometimes this is done in the middle of a school term. Replacement of teachers takes time and therefore transfers from one school to another often leave learners unattended for some time. Noor, Ishaque, Lodhi (2012) point out that teachers frequent transfers which lead to poor students' performance in their academics are a threat to education in our schools. In addition, availability of teachers guarantees good coverage of the syllabus.

Transfers may be voluntary or involuntary and whichever the case they cause shortages. Temporary measures may be put in place whereby inexperienced or low qualified teachers are engaged. Moreover, other teachers present are allocated that work thus overloading them and sometimes classes are combined and all these measures affect the coverage of the syllabus. Kurgat and Tanui (2014) attribute poor

performance in exams to frequent staff movement through transfers or additional factors that affect the stability of teachers. They argue that stability of teachers give them adequate time to study their students well and plan for instruction effectively. These points to the effective syllabus coverage (Kurgat & Tanui, 2014). Wekesa, Simatwa and Okwach (2016) concur that the absence of the teachers due to transfer contribute immensely to the learner's poor performance as the syllabus is not adequately covered. They argue that if the syllabus is not covered adequately then the pupils may be examined on contents they did not cover or understand and this leads to poor performance (Wekesa, Simatwa, & Okwach, 2016).

The government through Teachers Service Commission has embarked on staff balancing arguing that some schools were overstaffed while others were understaffed (Kajilwa, 2016). Dr. Fred Matiangi, The Education Cabinet Secretary citing the 2016 report confirmed the problem by pointing out that deployment and posting of teachers was a challenge and may be wrongly perceived as shortage, as has often been reported. Deployment of teachers leads to mass transfers and disrupts teaching and learning and certainly affects the syllabus coverage.

8.2 Effect of the upward mobility of teachers from one educational level to another on the syllabus coverage in the schools

Teachers tend to move to better schools that have higher achieving students (Feng & Sass, 2012). In this case, teachers tended to move from schools with socially disadvantaged students to better ones. Teachers with less experience and less motivation would take over thus affecting learning. They also prefer moving to a school where the average teacher is like-minded. This has been the case in Kenya where teachers who have obtained high level of education and are very experienced tend to go to where they can earn better salaries in other levels. This has been common in the primary schools as many teachers have tended to move to other institutions of higher learning like secondary schools or colleges (Mulei, Waita, Mueni, & Mutune, 2016).

A study done in Italian Public Schools of concern in the lack of optimism of teachers and its effects on performance of students in schools revealed that this affects students learning and the quality of teaching (Burbieri, Russetti, & Sestito, 2013). In this case teachers tended to move to higher education institutions leaving their less experienced and less qualified colleagues behind. This affects the quality of teaching including the strategies for syllabus coverage. Kirabo (2013) adds his voice to this and argues that workers go for high quality and not necessarily better pay (Kirabo, 2010). This means there is an element of prestige in moving to an institution of higher learning meaning that motivation of mobility is not always the better pay. Policies are therefore necessary to ensure that teachers can be paid more and also get higher education as they remain in a given level as in the Kenyan primary schools (World Bank, 2012). This would ensure that quality teaching and learning continue with the input of the experienced and more qualified teachers.

8.3 Effect of teachers' early retirement on syllabus coverage in the schools

According to the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) in Kenya, there is a voluntary retirement policy that permits teachers to retire at the age of 50 years after serving for 10 years continuously when employed on a full time basis and when qualified for a pension (Teachers Service Commission, 2013). All that the teacher needs to do is write an application and submit it through the principal at least three months before the retirement date. A number of teachers have taken this opportunity and it is especially so for those teachers who have a master's degree and above (Orina, 2014).

The factors leading to this may vary and these include poor teacher management practices whereby teachers becoming demoralized and dissatisfied with their job such that they prefer to look for greener pastures. This is supported by Orina (Orina, 2014) who identifies low salary, posting to remote hardship areas, stagnation in job groups, conflict between teachers and principals, joining their spouses and affinity for further studies as the main factors leading to early retirement. He also ascertains that teachers who have attained masters and PHD opt to retire because they feel discriminated as they are not promoted automatically to higher grades (Chepkemboi, Kiriago, & Iravo, 2013) and these scholars concur with these observations (Mutune, 2013). Okungu (2012) also agrees (Okungu, 2012).

According to a report written by KSSHA (2010) an average of 6,000 teachers opt to change professions per year while Onwonga (2012) puts the number of quitting teachers at 7,000 to 11,000 annually and this leads to teacher shortages which then affect the quality of teaching, demotivates other teachers and affect curriculum implementation in general and consequently lead to poor coverage of the syllabus. It also leads to poor student performance (Onwonga, 2012). Early retirement creates need for replacement of teachers and this is a costly venture for the government because there are procedures to be followed that include training, recruitment, deployment, retraining or in-service, orientation and others. Factors leading to early retirement of teachers therefore need to be addressed urgently (Okungu, 2012).

8.4 Effect of resigning of teachers due to dissatisfaction with working conditions on syllabus coverage in the schools

On the other hand, there are those teachers who opt to resign and go to greener pastures. The TSC has a policy that permits a teacher to consider leaving the service indicating a notice of three months through writing or forgoing one month's salary in the event of no notice. Such a teacher also loses his pension benefits in case he is on permanent and pensionable terms. However, teachers like most employees often don't give notice and this disrupts work and leaves the students on their own. According to Helbuzki (n.d.) resignation of an employee has a negative ripple effect within an organization as their morale suffers and the co-workers feel uneasy as well as become anxious about having to take on projects or tasks previously handled by their colleague. Teachers face the same challenges and this often leads to work overload (Orina, 2014) and consequently poor syllabus coverage. Helbuzki points out that it is costly trying to replace employees and puts the cost at approximately 150% of a departed employee's

basic salary due to hiring and training costs in addition to lost productivity (Helbutzki).

According to Williams (2015) the top ten reasons for employee resignation are: employees feel unappreciated, lack of proper compensation, insufficient time off due to additional workloads and limited staff change in administration, old-fashioned machinery and tools, idealistic goals, inadequate of managerial support, the desire to be challenged, and deficiency of joyful environment and unclear prospects. These reasons can be applied to the teaching profession as teachers often express the same grievances (Williams, 2015). A report by Odour (2014) proposed that the curriculum based establishment (CBE) be changed in the school so that the minimum of 32 lessons of 40 minutes per week replace the earlier minimum of 27 lessons of 40 minutes in secondary schools. This change may not have been taken kindly by the teachers and would explain the continued exit of teachers. The data released by TSC this year (2017) states that there was a deficit of 92,000 teachers by 2016 and this could rise to 116,513 in 2018. The promise to employ 5,000 teachers, 2,205 to primary and 2,795 to secondary schools made by President Uhuru Kenyatta this year in his speech to the secondary school principals at Mombasa, only sounds like a drop in the ocean and may not have a big impact on arresting the situation (Odour, 2014) . As Mulwa and Mbaluka (2016) have argued, attainment of timely coverage of syllabus is achieved through teachers. Shortages of teachers in the schools are only making the bad situation worse (Mulwa & Mbaluka, 2016).

8.5 Effect of pursuit of career development and advancement on syllabus coverage in the schools

Beth Knuppel (2015) describes career development as the life long journey of a person's work identify and the big picture of someone's ultimate career goal which includes the years of education training and jobs. On the other hand, career advancement is a short lived stage and simply one part of a greater career development depiction. She argues that both career development and advancement ensure that a company has capable employees who are more engaged and this leads to higher retention rates and may as well attract and retain top talent (Knuppel , 2015). The teaching profession requires well trained teachers and therefore in addition to basic training, the Ministry of Education assisted by the teachers' employer improves education through in service training of teachers. These in service programs are part of professional development and are meant to ameliorate the pedagogical practices and cultivate their supporting abilities, for example the use of the latest technology (Mungai, Gathumbi , & Hintze, 2013).

In Kenya, the ministry of education facilitates in service training of both primary and secondary school teachers through Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology education in AFRICA (CEMASTEAM) and Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI). Such programs are useful to both teachers and learners and certainly the society desires teachers that are committed to helping their students improve their performance in school. However, such training programs take place while the students programs are also on, therefore

eating into the time meant for students learning as the teachers often train away from their schools for days and sometimes weeks. The absence of teachers from the schools point to one thing that work meant to be covered at the time is either not covered or is left to already overloaded colleague teachers within the school and this leads to poor syllabus coverage.

A case study in Macedonia revealed that teachers can adopt an annual training program for their professional, development without interrupting learning time for students. The teachers are obligated continuously to get professional development and to devote at least 60 hours of training over 3 academic years and each teacher makes his/her personal professional development plan for each school year (Stoimenova & Trpceska, 2015). This avoids interruptions and could be ideal for Kenya in order to ensure teachers are present in the schools to effectively cover the school syllabus. There is also a concern that those highly trained teachers often end up exiting teaching or move to better or higher learning institutions therefore becoming a liability to their employer, Teachers Service Commission and the government through the Ministry of Education. In fact, they are the most affected by the turnover tendency and therefore may need to be bonded for some years after training.

9. Conclusion

The study has revealed that frequent teacher's turnover does affect the syllabus coverage which also consequently impacts the students' performance at the end of their course. There is need to arrest this concern and ensure teachers remain in the schools long enough to cover the work stipulated in the syllabus effectively. The Ministry of Education and Teachers Service Commission should have policies that deter disruption of teaching and learning and also address the grievances of the teachers on their working environment where possible. There is urgent need to train school administrators on good management practices so that teachers can be retained in the profession.

10. Recommendations

- Transfer of teachers should not be done mid-way in the term and should preferably be done at the end of the year to avoid disruptions teaching and learning as well as causing inadequate syllabus coverage that leads to poor performance.
- Mobility of teachers should be minimized by laying out strategies for retaining highly experienced and trained teachers in all schools by urgently addressing their grievances regarding poor remuneration and proper teacher management.
- Early retirement and resignation can be addresses by empowering teachers' intrinsic motivation techniques.

- The curriculum-based establishment should be realistic and not punitive in order to encourage teachers to work in a friendly environment and avoid the feeling of being overloaded.
- A good career development plan ought to be worked out for all teachers involving both the employer and the employee so that learning is not disrupted.

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