

TEACHER TURNOVER AND STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BUGANGAIZI COUNTY WEST, KAKUMIRO DISTRICT

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Abstract

The article aims to examine teacher turnover and students' performance in selected secondary schools in Bugangaizi West County, Kakumiro district. The report is informed from a cross-sectional research design, and data was gathered using documentary reviews from 12 randomly selected secondary schools. Spearman's Rank Correlation was used to determine the influence of teacher turnover and students' academic performance. There was a significant negative relationship between secondary school teacher turnover and students' academic performance. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education and Sports should put in place a system that captures the statistics of teacher turnover and make the right decision through replacements.

Keywords: Teacher turnover, Private Secondary schools, and students' performance.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental part of the young people's preparation for their future lives and a central pillar in nations' development. This pillar of development and better lives for nations' citizens across countries hinges on learners' performance at school. Therefore, good performance is fundamental in acquiring education contrary to poor performance associated with failure. According to the National Centre for Statistics (2018), 80-84 percent of high school students pass their exams and graduate from high school in the US every year. In China, 94.1 percent and 92.5 percent of students graduate from middle and high schools annually. This implies high progression as compared to non-completion. In Kenya, 15-20 percent of the candidates who sit their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) achieve university entry grades. In comparison, about 30 percent fail to obtain other tertiary level entrance grades (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Theoretically, academic performance, which is regarded as the extent to which a student or an educational institution has achieved its short- or long-term goals, is affected by many factors (Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder, 2004). These factors may be termed as student factors, family factors, school factors, and peer factors. Student factors relate to student-centered circumstances, such as regular attendance, commitment, and mental abilities, among others. Family or home factors relate to the student's home environment, such as family income, parental support, parental control, educational level of parents, and religion.

Teacher turnover, which may be described as the rate at which teachers leave the teaching profession or occupation requiring replacement per 100 teachers, affects academic performance (Stromquist, 2018). On average, globally, the education sector at primary and secondary levels loses 15-50 percent of the teaching professionals leaving learners without teachers or untrained teachers (Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014). Most of the teachers leave the profession within five years of entry in primary and secondary education levels.

In Uganda, the education system has undergone several reforms to improve academic performance at different educational levels. At the secondary level, Universal Secondary Education Policy 2008 was implemented to increase students' enrolment, and funding to the education sector was prioritized (Ministry of Education & Sports, 2017). Moreover, salary enhancements for teachers, specifically for science teachers, were done to enhance academic performance. However, at the national level, statistics show that on average, over 10 percent of the students who sit UCE exams fail to obtain grades for further education while the majority of the candidates over 40 percent pass in fourth grade, the lowest promotable grade for further education.

In 2015, UNEB registered a 9.7 percent failure rate. This increased to 13.2 percent in 2016, then dropped to 8.6 percent in 2017 and rose again to 12.87 percent in 2018 (UNEB, 2019). This rate is high compared to the failure rate of 4.2 percent registered in 2011. Students who fail to obtain a grade are supposed to repeat senior four, thus wasting time and other resources. According to the Monitor Publication (21st February 2018), the government blames the teachers' failure rate but does not specify how teachers were responsible for this failure rate. In 2013, national average teacher attrition was estimated at 5% while it was as high as 20-50 percent in some schools, especially in rural areas (UNESCO, 2013). Could teacher turnover be the teacher-based factor responsible for this high failure rate that the government attributes to teachers?

Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District, like other parts of Uganda, has benefited from the government's salary enhancement interventions for teachers in the secondary schools and provision of educational materials for the better learning environment and academic performance. Besides, private schools have been encouraged to ensure teachers are remunerated appropriately, and the learning environment supports better academic performance. With the above, schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro, should be competitive, posting good grades.

However, no single school in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro, was among the best 300 schools in the 2018 UCE exam results. Over 90 percent of the candidates in 2018 had divisions 2,3 and 4 while over 20 percent did not obtain any grade and were meant to repeat Senior Four. This situation threatens the community's ability in Bugangaizi county West, Kakumiro, to benefit from an educated population's dividends. The cause of this disturbing situation is not well studied. As Jackson (2010) demonstrates, gaps in teacher turnover and student performance call for in-depth analysis to provide ground for policymakers to make policies that can promote high performance by reducing teacher turnover.

From the government's admission, teachers are to blame though the teacher-based factor responsible for this is not well known. The high teacher attrition rate has been mentioned by UNESCO (2013) as a possible cause of poor academic performance. Whether this is prevalent in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro is not known. This article proceeded to investigate the relationship between teacher turnover and students' academic performance to inform the public about the problem of poor academic performance in the district.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretically, turnover could be either problematic or beneficial for students in terms of academic performance. According to Adnot et al. (2017), turnover changes the composition of the teachers at the school and depending on whether the new teachers are of either higher or lower quality than the teachers who left, the overall 'compositional' effect of turnover on student learning could be either positive or negative. Positive when academic performance in terms of exam grades is better and negative when academic grades are poor.

Staiger and Rockoff (2010) claim that teacher turnover is beneficial when less effective teachers leave and are replaced by more effective teachers, while the contrary holds. Rothstein (2015) indicates that it is sometimes imperative to have teachers go to create a better match for students' academic performance. Identifying and replacing staff whose performance is below the satisfactory level comes with dividends such as better learning approaches, increased learner motivation, and better exam grades.

Erick (2016), while analyzing teacher turnover effects on the quality of instruction in Texas in the United States of America, discovered that teacher turnover affects the quality of instruction, ultimately affecting the quality of academic performance in low exam grades knowledge and skill acquisition. This study reinforces an earlier survey by Adnot et al. (2013), who found that high aggregate teacher turnover adversely affects academic performance quality, especially in lower achievement schools. There was evidence that turnover harms students even in classes with teachers who remain in the school. The above literature focuses on cases in the United States, and no lessons are drawn from the secondary level context in Uganda in general and Kakumiro District in particular.

Ost (2014) and Adnot et al. (2017) argue that teacher departure may affect academic performance through several channels. First, turnover may reduce the amount of accumulated general and specific human capital available to facilitate learning resulting in lower academic grades. Besides, teachers who are new to a school may have no prior teaching experience. Many new hires may come from the lower portion of the quality distribution or be required to teach at levels they have not taught before lowering the value-added (Ronfeldt et al., 2012). This may eventually lead to poor student academic grades in the final exams. Besides being from developed country experience, these studies differ methodologically from this study, which seeks to correlate teacher turnover and students' academic performance based on the actual figures of teachers' turnover in schools and the academic grades realized over time.

Even though in the educational community, high teacher turnover is presumed to yield lower student academic achievement. Adnot et al. (2017) study, conducted in the District of Columbia Public Schools, suggests that there is not enough evidence to demonstrate a statistically significant negative relationship. These researchers claim that under a policy in which effective teachers are hired to replace exiting low performing teachers, student achievement could increase. Used data-driven assumptions to simulate such effects, these researchers estimated that student achievement could improve by 50 percent of a standard deviation if highly effective teachers annually replaced low performing teachers. Similarly, Fitzpatrick and Lovenheim's (2014) study of a large-scale turnover due to Early Retirement Incentives (ERI) suggests no evidence that ERI-type turnover negatively impacts student achievement as measured by state tests scores. These researchers found that although ERI lowered teacher experience levels, the ERI program did not reduce test scores and, in some cases, lead to increased student achievement. The authors propose that ERI may provide an efficient potential intervention to increase test scores and save money by replacing expensive experienced teachers with lower cost new teachers. Their scenario is different from Uganda, which is a developing country. Therefore, it provides a platform to analyze the differences reflected among the surveyed scholars.

The empirical literature reviewed shows that globally, teacher turnover and students' academic performance are widely studied research constructs. Both variables' conceptualization is clear and specific (Adewumi et al., 2012; Adnoit et al., 2016 and Stromquist, 2018). Besides, the relationship between teacher turnover and students' academic performance as research variables is well articulated (Staiger & Rockoff, 2010; Wyckoff et al., 2013; Rothenstein, 2015; Evis, 2016; and Adnoit et al., 2018). Teacher turnover has been found to have a mixed influence on students' academic performance (Adnoit et al., 2017). In spite of the revealing literature about the relationship between teacher turnover and students' academic performance, the quest for the current study was based on the fDespiteisting gaps in the empirical literature; most studies are

from developed countries context which may have a limited relationship with observations in developing and rural set up as Kakumiro District.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study adopted quantitative and qualitative approaches in cross-sectional research design. The researcher used the quantitative research approach to collect existing statistical data on teacher turnover and students' academic performance from the selected schools (Singh, 2007).

Population and Sample Size

The primary target population was the secondary schools that had been in existence for over ten years and whose students have sat UCE exams for at least ten years, which is having 10 UCE sittings at the time of this investigation. The secondary target population was the headteachers of the selected secondary schools. The unit of observation was schooled, whereby the headteachers were targeted to provide relevant information for analysis. In Kakumiro District, 15 of the 19 secondary schools had been in existence for over ten years and had been fielding candidates for UCE exams (Kakumiro District Education Officer, 2019). Purposive sampling was used to select the schools to participate.

Data collection and analysis

Document review was used to obtain existing statistical data from staff and academic records about staff turnover in terms of the number of teachers who left and replacements and the students' academic performance in the selected secondary schools in UCE grades for the last 10 UCE sittings. The inferential statistics of Spearman's Rank Correlation was used to ascertain the relationship between teacher turnover and students' academic performance. This was so because the data items such as the teacher turnover were ranked in the form of percentages while students' academic performance was ranked in form of grade 1-grade U.

RESULTS

Relationship Between Teacher Turnover and Students' Performance at UCE Level

To determine the relationship between teacher turnover and students' performance in selected secondary schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District. It was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between teacher turnover and students' performance in selected secondary schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District.

Table 1: Relationship between teacher turnover and students' performance Correlations

		Academic performance
Spearman's rho	Teacher turnover	Correlation Coefficient
		-.729**
		Sig. (2-tailed)
		.007

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 shows the result of the extent to which the relationship exists among the variables. Calculation by computing the scores using Spearman's rho Correlation Coefficient with a statistical procedure of SPSS indicated that the relationship between the two variables exists significantly at 0.01 level (2-tailed) as Spearman's rho Correlation coefficient was -0.729 and r. value 0.007. The implication is that there is a relationship between secondary school teacher turnover and students' academic performance, which is negative. The coefficient of determination is -0.729×-0.729 , which is 0.531441×100 or 53.14%. The relationship is negative and average because other factors contribute to students' academic performance apart from teacher turnover. The null hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between teacher turnover and students' performance in selected secondary schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District is therefore rejected since there is a significant relationship at 0.01 significant level. The alternative hypothesis is accepted that there is a significant relationship between teacher turnover and students' performance in selected secondary schools in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro District. The significant relationship implies that teacher turnover may influence the students' academic performance negatively.

In interviews with headteachers, over 80% noted that teacher turnover negatively affects school academic programs as students miss lessons due to a lack of teachers. They further indicated that turnover hinders syllabus coverage in time, which influences poor academic performance. The impact of turnover is paramount on students' performance since sometimes new teachers find it hard to be accepted by students in case the teacher who left was more experienced than the replacement made. Likewise, they argued that schools find problems in achieving the goal in time as the teachers who have been with students leave, then the new teachers have to undergo orientation to fit in the system, which may impact the students' performance. The reverse is also true in cases where a new teacher is experienced and knows what to do with students he/she fits in, and students can perform well in their academics. Supposedly, the findings reflect the argument that, theoretically, turnover could be either problematic or beneficial for students in terms of academic performance. The results therefore concur with Adnot et al. (2017); turnover changes the composition of the teachers at the school, and depending on whether the new teachers are of either higher or lower quality than the teachers who left, the overall 'compositional' effect of turnover on student learning could be either positive or negative.

As the headteachers noted, students' academic performance is either positive or negative, depending on the type of teacher left. Staiger and Rockoff (2010) claim that teacher turnover is beneficial when less effective teachers leave and are replaced by more effective teachers, while the contrary holds. The current study's findings show a positive performance, which implies that teacher turnover impacts students' performance positively.

In pursuit of the impacts of turnover on performance, Adnot et al. (2017) provide a contrasting view of quitters' behavioral effects on the remaining staff. Quitters may have a demoralizing impact on the remaining staff leading to further decline in service delivery and ultimately poor academic grades. The scenario may be possible in all sorts of places rural or urban. However, the current study did not look at the effect on staff who remained rather on students' performance. Erick (2016), while teaming effects of teacher turnover on the quality of instruction in Texas in the United States of America, discovered that teacher turnover affects the quality of instruction, ultimately affecting the quality of academic perform preferably terms of low exam grades and knowledge and skill acquisition.

Therefore, it is concluded that teacher turnover affects students' academic performance negatively. Hence, the findings uphold earlier studies such as Adnot et al. (2013), who found that high aggregate teacher turnover adversely affects academic performance quality, especially in lower achievement schools. There was evidence that turnover harms students even in classes with teachers who remain in the school. Similarly, Ost (2014) argues that teacher departure may affect

academic performance through many channels. First, turnover may reduce the amount of accumulated general and specific human capital available to facilitate learning resulting in lower academic grades. In addition, teachers who are new to a school may have no prior teaching experience. Many new hires may come from the lower portion of the quality distribution or be required to teach at levels they have not taught before lowering the value-added (Ronfeldt et al., 2012). This may eventually lead to poor student academic grades in the final exams.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the study findings, it is concluded that teacher turnover had consequences on students' academic performance. Therefore, teacher turnover affected students' academic performance. This explains why there was no single school in Bugangaizi County West, Kakumiro, among the best 300 schools in the 2018 UCE exam results. This calls for policymakers to make policies that can promote high performance by reducing teacher turnover. The findings uphold the study's theory in which Lynch (1993) argues that performance falls as turnover increases. The theory recognizes that staff departure and replacement affect students' academic performance.

The Ministry of Education and Sports should put a system that captures the statistics of teacher turnover and make the right decision through replacements to help students' study and finish their syllabi.

Managing Directors of private secondary schools vest full power and authority in the headteachers they have employed to replace teachers who leave. They should also ensure that there are enough teachers who are recommended by the government in a given secondary school.

Besides, the stakeholders should work hand in hand to address teacher turnover issues through the recruitment process and incentives to teachers to promote their stay in schools.

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