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Abstract

The purpose of this analysis was to examine the causes of primary school teacher attrition between 1996 and 2011 in Malawi. Data collected by the Ministry of Education was used to extract the number of teachers leaving the profession along with the reasons for leaving by reasons and overall annual teacher attrition was calculated. Overall teacher attrition declined from 4.9% in 2004 to 4.0% in 2007. Mortality was the main cause of attrition since 1996, and it increased from 0.5% in 1996 to 1.8% in 2001 but declined to 1.2% by 2004. The finding of the analysis shows that primary Teacher attrition was highest (5.2 %) in 2004 for male teachers compared to females (4.5 %) and declined to 3.2% and 1.9% in 2007, respectively. Considering all the reasons for teacher attrition in percentage terms, about 33% of teacher attrition was caused by death in males and 40% in females from 2004 to 2007. The paper concludes that instead of seeing teachers leaving the system due to retirement and resignation, as has been the case many years, a number of teachers died in service and many also left due to dismissal and other reasons that are not known. This pattern needs to be checked and attended to if Malawi is to attain the Education for All Goals.

Key Words: Teacher Attrition, HIV and AIDS.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher attrition remains a concern for education systems worldwide. Rapid increases in educational demand and a decline in national resources are among the reasons that have raised concerns for teacher attrition. It is viewed that schools have more pupil enrolment than the number of teachers trained to meet the demand (Kirby et al., 1993; Billingsley, 1993; Chapman, 1994; Ingersoll, 2001). An understanding of causes of teacher attrition is therefore essential prerequisite to planning for teacher supply.

Other views have emerged which posit that high teacher attrition is caused by reasons other than the commonly known retirement and resignation (Ingersoll, 2001; 2003, Wushishi, et. al. 2013). The impact of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) on teachers (Gachuhi, 1999; Kelly, 2000; Bennell, 2002), and the need to fulfil Education for All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals has raised concerns for teacher attrition. It is feared that the number of teachers required to provide the needed education will not be met if HIV and AIDS continue to reduce the number of teachers. This particularly is the case for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) where most of the infected people live. Countries like Malawi, where the prevalence has been high, it was expected that many teachers would die or exit the education system for reasons related to HIV and AIDS (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The purpose of this analysis was therefore to examine the trend in primary teacher attrition in Malawi from 1996 to 2011 and determine what are the main causes. The pandemic is known to have existed in Malawi since 1985. Trend analysis of number of teachers, and teacher attrition were examined from 1996 to 2011 dataset with the assumption that HIV and AIDS effects were expected to be severe ten years after contracting the virus in a situation where Anti Retro Viral Therapy (ART) was not available. As a background, the analysis begins with a brief review of the definition, theories and patterns of teacher attrition. Results and discussion come after an explanation of the methodology of the analysis

Teacher Attrition rates

The term *attrition* has been associated with other terms such as *turnover*, *burnout*, and *exit* (Billingsley, 1993; Chapman, 1994; Stinebrickners, 2001; Ingersoll, 2003). Although sometimes the word *transfer* is used, it does not refer to teachers who are exiting the education system so much as those who are only moving from one working station (school, district or region) to another. Teachers on transfer continue within the teaching profession but are a loss to a particular work station (Billingsley, 1993). Other authors however feel that the term attrition has no single appropriate definition (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987, cited by Billingsley, 1993, p.139). In this paper, the term attrition refers to teachers who are leaving the education system for any particular reason.

Literature reveals some variations in teacher attrition across countries with developed countries having higher teacher attrition than developing ones. Teacher attrition in OECD countries ranges from 2% to 14% per annum (International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, 2010). Between 2000 and 2001, the USA had attrition of 15.7% (Ingersoll, 2003). In Germany, it has been reported that less than 10 percent of teachers reach normal retirement age and in the United Kingdom (UK) the attrition rates for primary and secondary school teachers in 2004 were 10 and 7.2 percent respectively (Bennell, 2005b). The OECD (1996) reported that in the Czech Republic about 25 percent of newly qualified teachers did not even enter the profession (Macdonald, 1999).

In SSA, available literature suggests that teacher attrition is lower than in the developed countries. It has been reported that in Botswana, Malawi, South Africa and Uganda, teacher attrition has been declining or has stabilized since alternative employment opportunities for trained teachers became scarce (Gottelmann-Duret & Hogan, 1998). A research report from South Africa, by the Mobile Task Team (MTT), shows that teacher attrition in 1997/98 was 9.3 percent, dropping to 6.4 percent in 1999 and declining again to 5.5 percent, before rising to 5.9 percent in 2002/2003 (MMT, 2005). In Namibia, total annual attrition rates among teachers are reported to have increased from 7.2 percent in 1999/2000 to 8.2 percent and then declined to 6.8 percent in 2001/2002. In other countries the attrition appears low. For example, in Lesotho it is reported that between 258 and 380 teachers, representing 3 and 4 percent of the teaching force, left the profession within a year. In Mozambique, teacher attrition was estimated at 7 percent (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). The Ministry of Education in Malawi estimated teacher attrition to be 4.5 percent of the primary teaching force (Ministry of Education, 2001).

Causes of teacher Attrition

The reasons why teachers leave the profession are numerous but are inclusively captured in theories developed by Lortie, (1975); Kirby, (1993), Chapman, (1994) and Billingsley, (1993). These theories remain pivotal in the discussion about teacher attrition as many other reasons of teacher attrition rest on them. Lortie (1975) suggested an appeals theory that posits that there are certain inherent appeals in the teaching profession that attract people to work in schools. When such appeals do not exist, teacher attrition occurs.

Kirby et al. (1993) affirmed this through the fundamental tenet of the human capital theory of occupational choice which says that individuals make systematic assessments of the net monetary and non-monetary benefits from different occupations and make systematic decisions throughout their career to enter or leave an occupation. Thus as a person stays in a profession, the accumulated wage premiums translate into human capital. The greater the amount of capital accumulated, the less likely it is that the individual will consider leaving the profession.

Chapman, (1994) identifies two types of factors that he refers to as root causes and enabling factors to teacher turnover. Root causes are those that can be addressed if turnover is to be reduced. Enabling factors are those that do not themselves cause teacher attrition but are conditions which allow it to continue once it started. He establishes that the root causes that directly lead to teacher attrition include: economic incentives that encourage turnover, lack of incentives, government policies that encourage turnover, poor working conditions, limited alternative access to higher education, reforms, relevance of teacher training and community apathy.

Finally, Billingsley (1993) introduced a model which suggested that teacher attrition is influenced by three major factors: external, employment and personnel. External factors include societal, economic and institutional variables that are external to the teacher and the employing organization. An example of the societal factor is lack of respect from the community that is associated with the teaching profession. Economic factors, on the other hand, include good salaries, wages and other benefits provided by other organizations. Institutions that may have an influence on teachers' decision to leave or stay in their profession include colleges, universities and teachers' unions.

Recently, HIV and AIDS have become one of the factors of teacher attrition in SSA. Many studies carried out have found out that the numbers of teachers in SSA were decreasing (Amoné & Bukuluki 2004; Bennell 2003; Mbwika, Mburu & Thuita 2003; Ndamugoba, Mboya, Amani & Katabaro 2000). Apart from focussing on the declining number of teachers, high mortality has also been focused as evidence to severe effects of the pandemic. The use of mortality was recommended due to paucity of hard data although it does not indicate AIDS specifically as the cause of death. Besides, it measures deaths that occur in service only leaving out teachers who die after resigning the teaching profession on health grounds (Boler 2003; Desai & Jukes, 2005).

Bennell (2005) established that teacher mortality rates (from all causes) did not exceed 1 percent in Southern African countries (Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa and Swaziland) during 2003-2004. The mortality rates were below 1 percent in Tanzania and Uganda and around 2 percent in Malawi and Zambia. Actual mortality rates for teachers are reported to be generally much lower than the estimated mortality rates for teachers generated by standard AIDS-adjusted demographic projections. Furthermore, teacher deaths are said to account for less than 20 percent of total teacher attrition in most countries, and less 10 percent of total teacher turnover. Teacher mortality rates are said to be falling or are reasonably stable in a significant number of countries (Bennell, 2009). It is against this background that this analysis is done to examine how the primary education sector has lost its teachers in Malawi. This will help in strategising on the management of teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Educational Management Information System (EMIS) dataset from 1996 to 2013 obtained from the Ministry of Education were used. Each year the ministry of education collects data. Questionnaires are designed and administered in all education institution and schools in Malawi. In primary schools the questionnaires are administered through primary school head teachers.. Using a computer Program called Access, the data is coded and captured for a particular school and aggregated at district, division and national level. This paper provides a national level analysis extracting number of schools, enrolment and teachers leaving the system for various reasons.. Teacher attrition was calculated by dividing the number of teachers who left the ministry in a year by reason by the total number of teachers in that year and multiplied the result by a 100.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Trends in primary school teachers

Table 1 shows status of primary education in Malawi in terms of number of schools, enrolment, teachers and pupil-teacher ratio. Before analysing its trends, it is worth noting that there are some challenges in the management of EMIS in Malawi. As can be seen, data for teacher attrition was not available in 2002 and 2003. It is reported that the data had a number of anomalies and was not included in the statistical bulletin (MOEST, 2002, 2003). Also, looking at the available figures for school percentage change and teacher percentage change, it is evident that some of the schools were not counted consequently this affected the total number of teachers. Surprisingly advocating for accurate data started long time ago.. Experts called for improved and strengthened EMIS in SSA but this is not yet materialised. No wonder, lack of accurate and appropriate data still remains one of the impediments to analysis of teacher attrition related to HIV and AIDS. Many analysts expressed this concern and called for more relevant data (Shaeffer, 1994, p. 25; Kelly, 2000, p. 99; Coombe, 2004, p.109; Carr-Hill et al., 2002, p. 82-83). Despite these shortfalls, the available data will still help in providing a glimpse of causes of primary teacher attrition in Malawi.

First, the table illustrates that since 1996, the number of primary schools has increased by 40.8% and this has seen the enrolment increasing by a million. Overall, the number of teachers, which is our main concern in this analysis, has increased by 2,391 representing 4.8 % increase. This is on the lower side considering that Malawi has been training teachers every year through its Teacher Development Programmes to attain the PTR policy of 60:1 (NESP, 2007). It should be of great concern to see that the PTR has escalated from 59:1 in 1996 to 78:1 in 2011. In short, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of schools as well as in enrolment indicating an expansion of the sector. The increase in pupils has put pressure on the supply for education particularly the teachers. The increase in teachers however has not necessarily followed the increase in learners as evidenced by the increase in PTR. While the table shows some incompleteness and inconsistency in the data as discussed above, overall it shows that many teachers leave the profession. If this is not corrected urgently there can be a serious shortage of teachers such that Malawi can hardly attain the EFA goals. It is therefore important to find out what causes the loss of these teachers.

Table 1: Trends in primary schools, pupils and teachers, 1996-2011

Year	Schools	School Percentage Change	Pupils	Teachers	Teacher Percentage Change	Pupil Teacher Ratio
1996	3 706		2 887 107	49 138		59
1997	3 761	1	2 905 050	47 370	-4	61
1998	4 025	7	2 805 785	41 634	-12	67
1999	4 481	11	2 896 280	45 812	10	63
2000	4 525	1	3 016 972	47 840	4	63
2001	4 857	7	3 187 835	53 444	12	60
2004	5 113	5	3 166 786	43 952	-18	72
2005	5 159	1	3 200 646	45 074	3	71
2006	5 041	1	3 242 483	41 637	-4	76
2007	5 086	2	3 264 594	40 612	-2	78
2008	5 118	1	3 542 019	43 325	7	82
2009	5 106	0	3 614 324	43 201	0	84
2010	5 191	1.7	3 818 829	46 380	7	82
2011	5 225	0.7	3 996 831	51 529	11	78

Source: Ministry of Education data, 1996 to 2011

Second, the table shows that between 1997 and 2000 there was a lot of teacher loss. Reports indicate that the number of teachers increased between 1999 and 2000, as a result of 4,000 teachers recruited in 2000 (Actionaid 2007; Kunje, Lewin & Stuart 2003). It was also reported that between 2000 and 2004, 4,000 teachers left the service and a further 2,071 left in 2006 (Actionaid 2007). This was supported by other studies (Bennell, Hyde & Swainson 2002; Kadzamira, Maluwa Banda & Kamlongera 2001; Moleni & Ndalama 2004; UNDP 2002) which show that primary school teacher attrition has been a concern for many years in Malawi. The increase in number of teachers in 2009 to 2011 was attributed to the government's initiative in recognizing the need to train more teachers. A one year Initial Primary Teacher Education programme started in 2005 with a target of training 18750 students by the end of 2012. It was reported that by the end of 2010, 10 640 qualified as teachers (Mambo, et, al, 2012). Much as this can be celebrated, it is important to monitor and support these teachers to stay in the system.

What the figures suggest is that Malawi experiences a decline in the number of teachers and these are caused by a number of reasons. One possible interpretation of these statistics would be that the decline in number of teachers could be a result of the effects of the pandemic. Many teachers exited the system, either because of deaths and illnesses resulting from the effects of HIV and AIDS. . A second, equally likely interpretation is that the decline associated with the period 2001 to 2004 is a result of teacher disillusionment. The implementation of poor teacher training that was effected with the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE), in addition to poor working conditions, could have frustrated the teachers and caused them to leave the system. As evidenced from a report, many of the teachers who were recruited during the introduction of FPE dropped out either due to poor conditions or because they could not complete the course through failure (Kunje, Lewin & Stuart 2003). This cohort had recruited teachers with only a Junior Secondary Certificate of Education which is a weak qualification because it is written at the mid of secondary education unlike Malawi School Certificate which is a final certificate for secondary education. Let us now take a look at the trend in teacher attrition for the years that data was available.

Teacher Attrition

Table 2 presents the statistics on teacher attrition by retirement and death from 1996 to 2004 at national level. Data from 1996 was obtained from an analysis that was done by UNDP (2002) and the rest of the data is from EMIS. As can be seen, deaths and retirements are among the main causes of teacher attrition in Malawi, rising from 0.8 % in 1996 to 2.5 % in 2001 and declined to 1.7 in 2004. The table illustrates also the dramatic increase in the number of teachers, who have died while in service, a threefold increase, from 246 in 1996 to 787 in 2001, before declining to 500 in 2004. At the most basic level, teacher attrition due to death and resignation at national level increased from

0.8 % in 1996 to 2.1% in 2001 and declined to 1.7 % by 2004. Attrition due to death or mortality alone increased from 0.5% in 1996 to 1.8% in 2001 but declined to 1.2% by 2004. Put differently, in 1996 one in every 200 teachers died in service. By 2004, the number had increased to just less than one teacher in every 50 teachers, representing 260 percent increase. Together the overall picture of the attrition from both deaths and resignations show a dramatic rise in the period of the study from a very low level in 1996 to its highest in 2004.

Table 2: National teacher attrition by cause (1996-2004)

		1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total teachers in post	n	49138	47370	41634	45812	47840	43946	45075	43287	42330
Number of teachers died in service	n	246	302	472	531	453	787	737	618	500
	%	0.5	0.6	1.1	1.2	0.9	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.2
Number of teachers retired	n	168	228	332	294	218	217	280	239	203
	%	0.3	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5
Attrition due to death and retirement	n	415	531	805	826	672	1004	1019	858	704
	%	0.8	1.1	1.9	1.8	1.4	2.3	2.3	2.0	1.7

Table 3 provides the numbers of teachers who left the profession for various reasons excluding those who died in service. More data on the reasons teachers left the profession started being collected in 2004 presumably because of the call by the experts. The table indicates that the number of teachers who left the profession for various reasons were generally high between 2004 and 2006. Those who left for unknown reasons were the highest from 2006 to 2010

Table 3: Teacher attrition by gender and cause 2004-2011

		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total Teachers in post	n	43946	45075	43287	42330	43325	43201	46380	51529
Number of teachers Dismissed	n	197	393	421	229	183	123	97	119
	%	0.4	0.9	1.0	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2
Number of teachers on prolonged illness	n	181	155	149	100	91	62	81	84
	%	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2
Number of teachers resigned	n	244	249	230	255	235	215	150	163
	%	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.3	0.3
Number of teachers retired	n	314	280	239	203	121	121	170	609
	%	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.4	1.2
Number of teachers left for unknown reasons	n	176	180	476	296	229	297	200	313
	%	0.4	0.4	1.1	0.7	0.53	0.69	0.43	0.61
Total Attrition	n	1112	1257	1515	1083	859	818	698	1288
	%	2.5	2.8	3.5	2.6	2.0	1.9	1.5	2.5

Source: Ministry of Education: 2004-2011

Teacher attrition was highest in 2006 at 3.5 %, and lowest in 2010 at 1.5%. Notable also, unknown reasons, dismissal and resignation have been the other main causes of teacher attrition in that order from 2004 to 2011. Retirement and prolonged illness have been the least causes of teacher attrition.

What is coming out of this analysis is that the ministry of education in Malawi has been losing on average about 1000 teachers a year for other reasons besides those who died in service. No wonder that since 1996 despite several initial teacher programmes that have been carried out, the overall increase of teachers in public primary schools has been 2,391 representing an increase of 4.9% from 1996 to 2011. This is a serious scenario that ought to

be improved if quality of primary achievement levels are to be improved. An immediate impact of loss of teachers is high pupil teacher ratio which shows that it has increased from 59: 1 in 1996 to 78: 1 in 2011. This is likely to have caused deterioration in achievement levels. This loss of teachers also indicates a loss of investment that has been provided in teachers education over the past 7 years. The ministry therefore ought to critically look at ways that retain teachers. As noted by Kirby 1993, Chapman 1994, Lortie 1975 and Billingsley, 1993, teachers tend to move out the profession in search for better working conditions. This particularly has been the case in developed countries where teacher attrition is relatively high compared to SSA because of the availability of well-paying alternative jobs and also because of high economic status. Provision of relatively good working conditions can therefore retain teachers in countries like Malawi where employment is also scarce. Kavenule, (2013), reports of a study that show that teachers who came from high status family were likely to leave teaching than those coming from poor status family.

That death, dismissal and other unknown reasons are among the main factors for teachers attrition should be of concern for the ministry too. Although it is not clearly known that some of the teachers died of AIDS related diseases, it is likely that some might have died of the AIDS. There is a need for the researchers to find out what escalated the death of teachers from 1998 to 2004. It is important therefore for the Ministry of education to keep monitoring the situation by collecting relevant data, including information on teachers on ARV.

Dismissal, as a contributing factor to teacher attrition ought to be looked into seriously too. High dismissal can indicate lack of commitment and motivation from the teachers. Due to lack of jobs in low income countries teachers do not want to leave the profession although they are not motivated to stay. This can lead teachers to commit offences that can warrant dismissals. A study by Faume, (2012) discovered that demoralization and lack of commitment make teachers be implicated in indiscipline issues like, bear drinking, having sexual affairs with students and indulge in absenteeism. This eventually can lead to a number of teachers being dismissed.

But is the trend in teacher attrition catastrophic as has been suggested? The evidence appears not robust enough to support this for two reasons. First, while the percentage increase is nothing short of dramatic, it is an increase of a very low base. Even at its highest point in 2004, the attrition rate from death and resignation and these factors combined is not cataclysmic. At the highest point in 2004, an attrition rate of 2.3% remains considerably lower than attrition rates in other countries (Macdonald 1999; Borman & Dowling 2008; Ingersoll 2001; McCreight 2000, Kirby & Grissner 1993). It is however surprising that death, dismissals and some unknown reasons are among the main cause of teacher attrition. Retirement and resignation has been the main cause according to many studies that have been carried out. This emerging pattern is a threat to the teaching corps in Malawi and needs to be monitored.

CONCLUSION

In the face of HIV and AIDS there has been a growing concern that education sectors particularly in sub-Saharan would lose its teachers due to sicknesses and death of teachers. The purpose of this article was therefore to determine the causes of teacher attrition between 1996 and 2011 in Malawi. This was done through analysing secondary data collected annually by the Ministry of Education. Analysis of number of schools, teacher pupil teacher ratio, and attrition were conducted.

Among other factors that contribute to teacher attrition This was expected to have happen when the pandemic reaches its peak. The analysis has shown that overall teacher attrition indicates that the teaching corps have been affected but not catastrophically as suggested. Despite that mortality has been the main cause of teacher attrition; overall the attrition has not been as alarming as expected.

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