

Unstable Working Conditions of Stable Teachers in Public Primary and Secondary Schools of Gedeo Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia

Adane Hailu Herut

Lecturer of Education Research, Center for Education Research, Dilla University

Phone: +251922083244, Email: adish2001@gmail.com

Dilla, Ethiopia

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Abstract: This study investigated unstable working conditions of stable teachers in Gedeo zone, SNNPR. It also addressed contributing factors and possible mechanisms to overcome the problem as well as possible solutions. This study employed sequential explanatory model of mixed research approach which accommodates quant-qual method to collect and analyze data. Four woredas and two town administration areas were in focus of the study. Then, the data were collected from a total of 306 study participants (300 teachers and 6 school directors) using developed questionnaires and interview guides. Finally, the study concluded that primary and secondary schools in Gedeo Zone are facing frequent turnover of their teachers which is resulted by unstable working conditions. As it was found in the study, inadequate benefit package, low social status given to teachers by the society, poor working condition, poor administrative support, students' character and disciplinary problem, lack of opportunity for professional development are the prominent unstable conditions that this study has identified as a major results for turnover of teachers in primary and secondary schools of Gedeo Zone. This problem reduces the overall effectiveness of the schools which leads to the hindering of quality learning. Implications were suggested based on the findings.

Key words: stable teachers, unstable working conditions, and turnover, job instability

1. Introduction

The growing debate about whether the concern lies with a shortage of teachers entering the field or with retaining teachers once they begin their careers (Hull, 2004; Ingersoll, 2001) is still getting a primary attention among scholars and stakeholders. The shortage of teachers is greater at certain grade levels and in certain subjects. Cities and poor urban areas have a significant deficit of teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Mason, 1961). Over the next decade (2020-2030) the need for newly hired public school teachers will range from 1.7 to 2.7 million (Alt et al., 1999). The need for hiring new teachers coupled with the fact that many teachers leave the field has created unease for educational leaders.

Employees', as well as, teachers dissatisfaction appears to have negative effects on the quality services as measured by any kind of business performance. But some simulations suggest that these inconveniences can instead have large, positive effect under a policy regime in which low-performing employees can be accurately identified and replaced with more effective ones (Rumberger, 1987). The problem, however, remains as a pressing issue in the developing and developed world. The work exit of teachers from the profession or the movement of teachers to better schools is a costly phenomenon, both for the students, who lose the value of being taught by an experienced teacher and to the schools and districts which must recruit and train their replacement (Ingersoll, 2001).

Education systems of every country have sworn to achieve universal primary and secondary education by 2030 as part of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-IV). However, about 263 million children and youth are out of school, according to recent UIS data. This includes 25 million children of primary school age who will probably never set foot in a classroom, while just 14% of youth complete upper secondary education in low-income countries. Clearly, SDG 4 demands a dynamic shift in the provision and quality of education and teachers (UIS, 2015). According to the UIS projection report, by 2030, countries must recruit a total of 68.8 million teachers: 24.4 million primary school teachers and 44.4 million secondary school teachers and of the 24.4 million teachers needed for universal primary education (UPE), 21 million will replace teachers who leave the workforce. The remaining 3.4 million, however, are additional teachers who are needed to expand access to school and underwrite education quality by reducing the numbers of children in each class to a maximum of 40 (*Ibid*).

In England, rates of teachers leaving the profession are particularly high among early-career teachers of science, maths and languages. The number of trainees for these subjects has also been consistently below the Primary's entry targets for the last 4 years. These factors have made finding suitable staff in these subjects increasingly difficult for secondary schools and may store up problems for future teacher supply. The proportion of working age teachers leaving the profession each year has increased since 2010 in both primary and secondary schools (Worth & Lazzari, 2017). Prevalence reports of National Foundation for Educational Research of 2017 also indicated that almost 70% of Australian teachers do not feel engaged in their work(Flook et al., 2013), and this affects their teaching, ability to be responsive and successfully perform their role, and their relationships with students and parents (Yoon, et al 2001). In the United States of America, 46% of all new teachers in the United States leave the profession within the past five years, NCTAF says leaders of at-risk schools are in a constant cycle of rebuilding their staff and it was estimated that the cost of teacher attrition was at \$7.3 billion a year.

In some aspects, teachers are regarded in the same way as other economic migrants in Africa in that they are often separated from their spouse and families due to the lack of suitable housing, the reluctance of spouse and children to live in rural areas and other economic and social factors (Bennel, 2007:494); and in some countries of the continent, teacher death was one of the major contributors to attrition. In Zanzibar 9% of teacher attrition was recorded as "transfer to other primary post". In Uganda transfer to a non teaching post accounted for 8% of primary teacher attrition and 16% of secondary teacher attrition. In Malawi the figures were 6.5% and 15% of primary and secondary attrition. Percentage of teacher attrition In Malawi death accounted for almost 30% of attrition of primary teachers, with figures of 15% in Zambia and 11% in Uganda. In addition, the poor pay and low benefits together with lower qualification requirements has contributed to relatively high rates of turnover in the teaching force. Voluntary resignation was the single greatest cause of attrition in most African countries where data were available. Due to rapid expansion of enrolment, however, the continent needs an accelerated increase in teacher employment (UNESCO, 2016).

Consequently, Ethiopia, as part of the Sub-Saharan African countries, shares the problem of unstable working conditions towards teachers that leads to turnover and it was also indicated that because of this staff turnover is one of the major challenges of the education system(MOE, 2015:25). Researchers conducted in different parts of the country for example (Mulugeta, 2010;

Motuma, (2006) indicated that teachers either leave the teaching profession or move from one school to another and join other occupation every year. In recent years, the recruitment rate of teachers has increased by an average of about 2.4% in recent years in demand of achieving EFA goals. Nevertheless, primary classrooms remain massively overcrowded, with an average of 64 pupils per teacher. According to the projection of the UNESCO (2016), the situation may deteriorate as the primary school-age population is estimated to increase by 18% – from 15.7 million in 2014 to 18.5 million in 2030. To reach all children by that deadline, the country needs to recruit 7.4% more teachers per year. This has important implications for countries' education system workforce planning because more teachers leaving the profession mean that more teachers need to be recruited to replace them and actions needed to be taken to steer their work stability in the profession. With this understanding of the concept, this study is aimed to answer the following basic questions:

- What are the working conditions of stable teachers in the public primary and secondary schools of Gedeo Zone?
- What are factors that influence stable teachers' decision to leave or stay in their current profession in public primary and secondary schools?
- What should be done to mitigate the problem and to increase their working conditions in both public primary and secondary schools of the Zone.

2. Theoretical Framework

This section contains the theoretical framework for the study. The theoretical framework was developed from a review of literature on teacher retention and job satisfaction of new teachers. The factors found in the reviewed studies were organized into seven major areas that became the domains. The domains are: (1) Societal Status for Teachers; (2) Administrative Support; (3) Working Condition; (4) Benefit Packages; (5) Students' Disciplinary Problems and; (6) Professional Development Opportunities. Each domain is hypothesized factor that contributes for unstable working conditions of teachers that lead to dissatisfaction (Bobbitt, Leich, Whitener, & Lynch, 1994; Manna and Tesfaye 2000; Alazar, 2007; Motuma, 2006; Temesgen, 2005; Crouzman, - Hampton & Herman, 2006; (Getachew, 1999; Temesgen, 2005: Darge, 2002; Alazar, 2007; Motuma, 2006; and Perie & Baker, 1997), and the underlying assumption is that the overall working conditions lead to teachers dissatisfaction as well as teacher turnover (Taylor, 2004). If

a teacher is satisfied with these aspects of his or her career, the decision is often made to stay at his/her current job. If a teacher is dissatisfied with these aspects of his or her career, the decision is often made to leave. The above factors are well illustrated to indicate the dependent and independent variables through conceptual framework of the study in the following diagram.

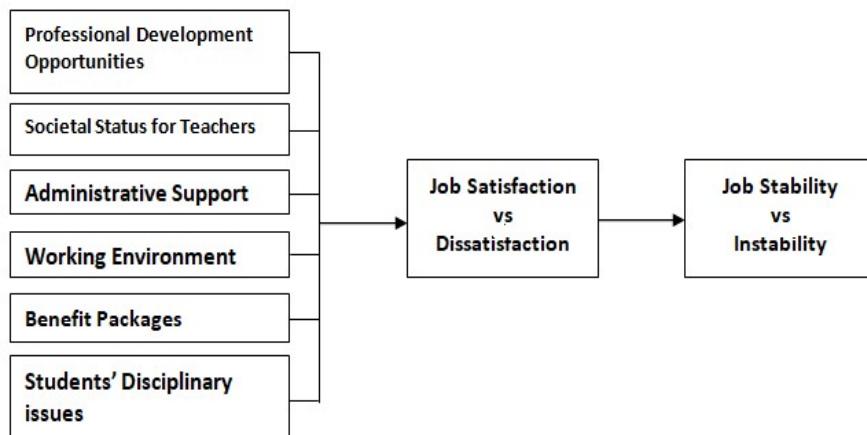


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

Gedeo Zone is located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) of Ethiopia. This Zone is named for the Gedeo people, whose homelands lie in this zone. Gedeo extends south as a narrow strip of land along the eastern escarpment of the Ethiopian Highlands into the Oromia Region, which borders the Zone on the east, south and west; Gedeo shares its northern boundary with Sidama. Dilla is the administrative center; other towns include Yirgacheffe and 7 woredas of the zone (Wikipedia, 2006).

The design of the current study is quant-qual approaches that accommodates sequential explanatory model. It is important to employ sequential explanatory model to study the teachers' perception towards their working conditions and compare the problem areas in the zone. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), sequential explanatory model mixed approach study is described as a two stage design which sees quantitative data being used as the basis on which to build and explain qualitative data. The quantitative data informs the qualitative data selection process that it enables to specifically pinpoint data that is relevant to specific research project. Furthermore, it is easy to implement and that it enables the focus of the research to be maintained, as a result of one set of data building upon the other.

The target population of this study is comprised of primary and secondary school teachers and school directors from the sample area. Since this study is based at a zonal level, woredas were selected through cluster sampling technique; then 4 woredas and 2 city administration areas were in focus of the study. Two schools (1 primary & 1 secondary) were randomly selected from each woreda and city administration. Teachers were selected using random sampling technique. Based on this, a total of 306 participants (300 teachers 6 school directors from the zone and woredas) have taken part in the study. The sample size of primary and secondary school teachers is tabulated as follows.

Sex	Primary				Secondary				Total	%		
	M		F		M		F					
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%				
Male	51	17.0	49	16.3	56	18.7	65	21.7	221	73.7		
Female	11	3.7	19	6.3	28	9.3	21	7.0	79	26.3		
Total	62	20.7	68	22.7	84	28.0	86	28.7	300	100.0		

Table 1 Number of primary & Secondary School teachers disaggregated by sex

In this study, questionnaires implemented. The questionnaire that includes open and close-ended questions was distributed for teachers working in primary and secondary schools. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 school directors. The school directors were selected using purposive sampling technique. The SPSS software was used to compute t-test results of the study. Descriptive statistics: i.e., frequency percentage, mean value, mean rank and t-test were computed and the alpha was set at 0.05 in the study.

4. Results and Discussion

Unstable working conditions are a set of challenges that teachers and school administrators are facing. Any discomfort of one teacher in a school where s/he is working may be considered to have minimal impact. However, when substantial number of teachers either expresses their grievance or leaves their work. The cumulative impact of discomfort of teachers on the school grows to be devastating (Ingersoll,2001) that it directly influences the teacher supply and the delivery of quality education. In secondary schools of Gedeo Zone, many trained teachers leave primary and secondary schools. For instance, in the sample schools of this study, data gathered from the directors of the schools revealed that both primary and secondary schools are losing

teachers as a result of job instability. In the selected sample primary and secondary schools, the turnover rate in 2015/16 was 20.01% and 13.4% respectively and in 2016/17 the turnover rate was 15% for primary schools and 18.3% for secondary schools (Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2017/18. The job instability of teachers can be caused due to different reasons. In this study, the unstable working conditions that affect the comfort of stable teachers in primary and secondary schools are identified. In addition, the study has explored the differences and similarities between primary and secondary schools in relation to unstable working conditions of teachers. And, possible strategies/measures that should be taken to improve working conditions of teachers and increase their retention are explored.

4.1 Unstable Conditions of Stable Teachers in Gedeo

The study has identified inadequate benefit package, low social status given to teachers by the society, poor working conditions, poor administrative support, students' character and disciplinary problem and lack of opportunity for Continuous Professional Development are factors behind teachers' turnover. Furthermore, the study found that inadequate benefit package and low social status given to teachers by the society had more of an impact on teachers' job instability than the other factors described in this study. In addition, in the interview responses, the primary school directors confirmed that poor working conditions like inadequate instructional materials, poor classroom conditions, and to some extent large class size is a factor in causing job instability. Moreover, the secondary school directors said that high workload that teachers have has an impact on teachers' decision to stay or leave.

4.2 Societal Status for Teaching Profession

Low social status accorded to teachers by the society is one of the outstanding reasons that teachers compelled to leave the profession (Manna and Tesfaye 2000). This current finding also proved that the stable teachers of the targeted schools indicate low social status accorded to teachers by the society as a factor that compels teachers to quit teaching.

Teachers working in primary and secondary schools refer low social status given to teachers by the society as a factor for job instability. They expressed that teaching as a profession has low socio-economic status in general, secondary school teachers have low socio-economic status compared to other non-teaching employees with similar qualification, there is lack of recognition

& respect for secondary school teachers by friends in other occupation, there is lack of recognition & respect for secondary school teachers by students and parents, there is low level of recognition for secondary school teachers by primary officials were factors that cause job instability. The t-test was computed to see if there was statistically significant difference between teachers working in primary and secondary schools as follows.

Group	M	SD	t-value	p-value
Primary	18.49	4.13		
Secondary	19.56	4.21	1.801	>0.05

Table 2 Statistical Significant difference about societal status about teaching

From the above result, it is possible to say that primary and secondary teachers indicated low social status given to teachers by the society as a factor for job instability of teachers primary and secondary schools. In addition, in the interview with directors of the selected sample schools of both primary and secondary schools it was confirmed that low social status given teachers to by the society is influential factor.

4.3 Administrative Support

The teachers of the targeted schools indicate that poor administrative support is a factor for teachers' job instability in secondary schools. Currently working primary and secondary teacher respondents expressed that Insufficient school management support, unfair promotion opportunity Delays in career structure promotion implementation and benefit package adjustments and Teachers' performance evaluation not being on the basis of teaching learning activities were major factors that hamper teaches retention in the schools. The t-test was computed to see if there was statistically significant difference between teachers working in primary and secondary schools as follows.

Group	M	SD	t-value	p-value
Primary	22.39	5.99		
Secondary	24.11	5.66	1.786	>0.05

Table 3 Statistical Significant difference about societal status about administrative support

Based on the above table, it is possible to say that for both primary and secondary school teachers' administrative problems are a reason for teachers' job instability. This finding was confirmed with

the finding of Cockburn and Hayden, (2004, p. 138) 45% of teachers quit their job due to school management problems.

4.4 Working Environment

Recent studies done in different part of Ethiopia shows poor working condition such as large class size, poor physical condition and poor school facility is among of the frequently mentioned cause for teachers' job instability from a particular school or from their profession (Alazar, 2007; Motuma, 2006; Temesgen, 2005). This current finding also proved that Poor working condition was also one of the factors that push out teachers from schools. The teacher respondents' of the targeted schools indicate that poor working conditions that exist in a school affect teachers' decision to leave their job. Currently working teacher respondents expressed that inadequate instructional material, poor classroom conditions and dissatisfaction with high teaching load were factors that affect teacher moral and contribute teacher' job instability. The t-test was computed to see if there was statistically significant difference between currently working primary and secondary teacher respondents as follows.

Group	M	SD	t-value	p-value
Primary	12.29	3.69		
Secondary	13.70	3.52	1.05	>0.05

Table 4 Statistical Significant difference about societal status about working conditions

From the result found it is possible to infer that poor working condition is a factor that influences teachers' job instability both in primary and secondary schools.

4.5 Benefit Packages

Inadequate benefit package of teachers is the most frequently mentioned reason for teachers' job instability. Different research findings show that low benefit package is the most significant factor that contributes to teachers' job instability (Crouzman, Hampton & Herman, 2006). In this study, the teachers of the targeted schools indicate that inadequate benefit package is a main cause for teachers' job instability. The respondents expressed that dissatisfaction of teachers by teaching benefit package; inadequate benefit package increment and insufficiency of teachers' income to meet their financial obligation to support their family were major areas of dissatisfaction of teachers that can result in turnover. The t-test that was computed to find out the

statistical difference between teachers working in primary and secondary schools as the following table shows.

Group	M	SD	t-value	p-value
Primary	17.72	3.29		
Secondary	17.59	2.83	0.058	>0.05

Table 5 Statistical Significant difference about societal status about benefit packages

From the obtained result it is possible to infer that inadequate benefit package is a factor that causes teachers' job instability both in primary and secondary schools. This result was also confirmed by the qualitative data, in the interview with directors of the selected sample of both primary and secondary schools expressed that inadequate benefit package that teachers earn is a factor in causing job instability. The directors of the primary school said that in spite of the housing allowance given to teachers by the primary, teachers have continued to leave because of the dissatisfaction that they have with the benefit package they get.

4.6 Students' Disciplinary Problems

Students' character and disciplinary problem also had a diverse effect on teachers' job instability. The teachers working in primary and secondary teacher respondents' indicate that students' character and disciplinary problem is a factor that results teachers frustration which influence teachers decision to leave their job. As both currently working primary and secondary teacher respondents expressed students' disciplinary problem affect teachers moral and increase teachers' job instability. The t-test was computed to see if there was statistically significant difference between teachers working in primary and secondary schools as follows.

Group	M	SD	t-value	p-value
Primary	13.55	3.79		
Secondary	13.64	3.43	0.509	>0.05

Table 6 Statistical Significant difference about societal status about disciplinary problems

From the above result, it is possible to say that primary and secondary teachers indicated students' character and disciplinary problems as factors that frustrate teachers and influence them to decide to change their work. In addition, in the interview responses the primary school directors confirmed that students' disciplinary problem like talking in classroom without permission, cheating during exam, violence against other students in class room or against the teacher is a factor that increases teachers' frustration which eventually lead to job instability of teachers. This finding was confirmed with studies conducted by different researchers (Getachew, 1999; Temesgen, 2005; Darge, 2002) which indicated that students' character and disciplinary problem is one of the cause for teachers' decision to leave or change their school.

4.7 Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development opportunity was also one of the factors that push out teachers from schools. Both primary and secondary school teachers indicate that lack of opportunity for further education is a factor that influences teachers to leave. Teachers working in primary and secondary schools expressed that minimum opportunity for further education and unfair selection of teachers for professional development opportunity was factors that affect teacher moral and result teacher er. The t-test was computed to check if there was statistically significant difference between teachers working in primary and secondary schools as follows.

Group	M	SD	t-value	p-value
Primary	8.05	2.05	0.509	>0.05
Secondary	7.55	1.33		

Table 7 Statistical Significant difference about societal status about professional development opportunities

The above table shows that there is no statistically significant between primary and secondary in perceiving lack of opportunity for further education as factor for job instability. From the result found, it can be inferred that both primary and secondary teachers indicated teachers' lack of opportunity for further education as a factor that forces them to leave their job. This finding was confirmed with studies s conducted by different researchers (Alazar, 2007; Motuma, 2006) which indicated that lack of opportunity for Continuous Professional Development was also one of the factors that influence teachers' decision to leave or change their school.

To sum up the above points in this study inadequate benefit package, law social status given to teachers by the society, poor working conditions, administrative problems, students' character and disciplinary problem, and lack of opportunity for Continuous Professional Development are the factors that were indicted by both primary and secondary school teacher respondents' as a cause for teachers' job instability in the targeted primary and secondary school. That in the two types of school (primary and secondary), the factors that were identified by respondents' of this research as causes for teachers' job instability are similar. And among the six factors inadequate benefit package, law social status given to teachers by the society are the prominent factor for both primary and secondary schools. Moreover this study found that the majority of respondents 71.8 % male and 69.6% female of current teachers would like to leave teaching as soon as they get other job. The statistical result of this study indicate that there is no significant relationship between teachers personal characteristics like sex, age ,work experience and field of specialization and teachers' job instability.

4. Mitigation Strategies

In order to retain teachers, different mechanisms can be devised by school administrators. This study found that based on the rating of respondents minimizing administrative problems, improving benefit package, improving working environment of the school, Facilitating professional development of teachers, improving the disciplinary problems of students are measures that should be taken to minimize teachers job instability. Both primary and primary school teacher respondents responses for all the items related to strategies of minimizing job instability were above the average mean value. More over in an interview with the sample directors most of them suggested; improving teachers' benefit package, recruiting interested and qualified teachers to the profession, improving the overall working condition of the school giving recognition to teachers work as solutions to minimize job instability of teachers and increase retention of teachers. This finding was consistent with the finding of Abassi and Hollman (2000) which suggested that job instability may be reduced through reduction of class size, more learning support assistant, and better resource for teaching, recognition and facilitating more in-service training.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of data analysis and summary made so far, it may be fair to conclude that primary and secondary schools in Gedeo Zone are facing unstable conditions of losing teachers because of voluntary turnover which is caused by job instability. As this study found Inadequate benefit

package ,Low social status given to teachers by the society , poor working condition , poor administrative support ,Students' character and disciplinary problem.

Lack of opportunity for professional and career development is one of the factors that this study has identified as unstable conditions of stable teachers in primary and secondary schools of Gedeo Zone. As one of the unstable conditions, turnover of teachers reduces the overall effectiveness of the school which leads to the deterioration of quality learning. Because, teachers are crucial to the success of students and the school, the instability of teachers in their work place affects the students achievement and the overall school activity.

Thus addressing the problem of teacher retention is an important concern for schools. The data from this study suggest that that improvement in the condition of teaching job would bring about the desired outcome. Particularly improvements in teachers' benefit package, administrative support, improving working environment of the school, Facilitating professional development of teachers, improving the disciplinary problems of students contributes to lower rate of turnover which is caused by job instability and ultimately enhance the performance of the school.

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