Impact of Education Governance on Teacher Attrition and School Effectiveness in Zambian Public Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to ascertain how secondary school efficacy in Zambia's public secondary schools was impacted by education governance in connection to teacher attrition. The study employed a mixed method with a qualitative bias, utilizing a case study design to gather data from thirty school managers and three District Education Board Secretaries from Chongwe, Lusaka, and Kafue districts, allowing for a deeper understanding of actual situations. Thirty school managers from high attrition schools participated in a study to understand its impact on school effectiveness. Focus groups, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews were instruments for data collection whose analysis included thematic and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21. The single and cumulative variables were described using descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and cross-tabulations, and the results were shown and discussed using tables and graphs. The results showed a positive correlation (r=0.812) between low student achievement and teacher attrition and low staffing levels. All participants reached a consensus that teacher attrition results in low student achievement, staffing shortages, and dispersed instructional and professional staff. The majority of school managers (73%) agreed with the study's findings regarding the effects on student achievement, which indicated that teacher attrition is the primary reason for low student achievement. The impact that a teacher's departure from a school has on the relationship between teachers and students was also discovered. The inconsistent teaching strategies used every time a new teacher takes over have a detrimental effect on student performance which invariably means that teacher shortage causes the remaining teachers to be overworked, which negatively affects the teacher-to-pupil ratio. This implies that teachers are not providing the necessary one-on-one time with their students, which affects academic performance. Additionally, it was discovered that there was a direct link between teacher availability and learning; as a result, student performance in environments without teachers continued to be low. Considering the study's findings, school administrators should coordinate their institutions' organizational climate. This can be done by making changes in each of their unique schools to create a culture that reduces teacher attrition. School administrators can ensure that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) strategies are effective in retaining teachers by ensuring that all programmes and activities are tailored to meet the needs of teachers for ongoing professional development. Enough assistance should be given by school administrators to help with school management. By highlighting the significance of reducing teacher attrition, the Ministry of Education ought to provide school administrators with specialized training.

Key Words: School managers, impact, teacher attrition, school effectiveness, factors, public secondary schools, District Education Board Secretary (DEBS)

INTRODUCTION

Globalisation is a key characteristic of the world economy, driven by multinational corporations seeking new markets to sustain its rapid growth and profitability (Arav & Narsing, 2015). This has led to increased migration of skilled workers, particularly teachers, nurses, doctors, and engineers (MoE, 2011). This migration

is causing concern in developing countries, as it leads to brain drain and loss of investment in education. Teacher attrition is a significant issue in this context (Hong, 2010).

UNESCO (2012) reports that 50%-80% of highly educated citizens in Africa and the Caribbean live and work abroad, while developed countries address teacher shortages by developing innovative strategies (Kaiser & Cross, 2011). Teacher exodus negatively impacts less developed nations, as schools and national education systems must create a supportive environment for local teachers or risk losing them to international recruitment agencies. Manik (2010) points out that, the responsibility falls on schools and national education systems in developing countries to create an attractive, healthy and supportive environment for local teachers or run the risk of losing them to international recruitment agencies offering rewarding work and travel packages overseas.

A similar scenario seems to replicate itself in the sub-region where, an increasing number of teachers from other African countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, are migrating into South Africa due to that country 's economic prosperity, political stability and promise of better working conditions and income (Education International 2015). Further, OECD (2015) reports that many teachers are reportedly leaving the profession for greener financial pastures in countries in the sub-region like South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana as well as other developed countries. In view of the above, this study sought to investigate the impact of educational governance on teacher attrition in selected secondary schools in Zambia.

Zambia's Vision 2030 aims for a prosperous middle-income country by 2030, with the Human Capital Theory focusing on education as part of its National Development Plans (MoE, 2011). The Seventh National Development Plan in Zambia emphasizes the importance of human capital for the country's development, emphasizing holistic approaches to address teacher attrition. Human capital is a crucial issue in Zambia, addressing teacher attrition and promoting an educated public capable of making wise decisions, thereby enhancing family well-being and economic development (USAID, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative to note that, effective and efficient Human Resource Management is a key component in an organization due to the fact that it enables employees and managers to contribute effectively and productively to the overall business direction. Accomplishment of the organization's goals and objectives in an organization can be through various functions such as employee motivation, effective hiring, performance management, organizational development, safety, wellness, benefits, communication, career development and training to mention but a few.
(Chalwe & Nyimbili, 2024).

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study investigated strategies used by school administrators in Zambia's public secondary schools to combat teacher attrition, focusing on the issue of teachers dissatisfied with their terms of service, leading them to choose between quitting their jobs and moving to better opportunities. This study investigated how Zambia's public secondary school administrators address teacher attrition, focusing on school effectiveness which impacts on learner achievement.

1.3 Research aim and objectives

This study's main objective was to investigate how Zambian public secondary school administrators handle the issue of teacher attrition. The following goal was connected to the primary study objective:

- to examine how educational governance on teacher attrition affects the functioning of public secondary schools

1.4 The Rationale and motivation for the study

The Zambian context rarely studies teacher attrition, with inconsistent information. Statistical data is primarily used to report attrition, with 5,600 of 11,500 teachers leaving in 2008 for other reasons (MoE, 2009). Zambia's Ministry of Education reported 8,893 primary and secondary school teachers resigned in 2015, with 6,475 quitting for non-teaching roles or unspecified reasons ((MoE, 2015). The Ministry of Education reported that

1,902 out of 6,475 teachers resigned in 2016, primarily due to retirement, illness, or death, highlighting the widespread issue of teacher attrition in secondary public schools (MoE, 2016).

1.5 Significance

This study aimed to enhance understanding of teacher attrition in Zambia's public secondary schools, raise awareness, and fill knowledge gaps in educational governance strategies, contributing to the existing knowledge on its effects. Further to that understanding factors influencing teacher decisions could help implement systemic changes for better instruction and improve retention strategies, benefiting educators globally.

1.6 Sampling and sample size

Purposive sampling is used to obtain the most abundant data for research inquiries (Patton, 2015). The researcher chose an appropriate sample to understand public secondary school administrators' approach to teacher attrition. Purposive sampling is supported by Patton's argument that a small number of cases provides a wealth of information about the subject (Patton, 2015).

1.6.1 Site selection

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define site selection as the process of identifying and defending the location of a site chosen to house study participants. Based on the number of schools experiencing an excessive teacher exodus, the current study was carried out in Chongwe, Lusaka, and Kafue districts, three (3) of the seven (7) districts that make up the province of Lusaka.

1.6.2 Selection of individual participants

Three District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS) were specifically targeted and purposefully chosen because of their roles as district-level representatives of the MoE in the districts where this study was conducted. They oversee instructors who are pursuing continuous professional development and are in charge of overseeing the district's educational program. Additionally, a total of thirty (30) school administrators, ten (10) from each of the three (3) districts, were specifically chosen. A list of schools with high rates of teacher attrition was used to select them.

1.7 Data collection instruments

The study utilized focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires to gather data, as suggested by Vogts et al (2014), for more accurate analysis and conclusions.

1.7.1 Interviews

This study utilized focus groups and interviews to gather qualitative data on teacher attrition in Zambian secondary schools, gaining insights from the opinions and beliefs of the three District Education Board Secretaries.

Qualitative interviews are effective data collection methods as they allow researchers to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, assumptions, beliefs, and values, allowing a deeper understanding of the world (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Nieuwenhuis, 2011).

1.7.2 Focus group discussions

Three (3) focus group discussions were attended by thirty (30) school managers overall, ten (10) from each district. However, Nieuwenhius (2011) cautions against researchers relying solely on focus group discussions because this can impede the acquisition of vitally important alternative perspectives on the subject under study. Furthermore, Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) point out that it would be foolish to rely solely on the

information from a single focus group, given the popularity of administering multiple focus groups within a single focus group.

1.7.3 Questionnaires

This study utilized questionnaires for triangulation, a common tool for gathering demographic data. The investigator created semi-structured or closed-ended questions to gather data from respondents. Surveys were used due to their potential advantages and disadvantages, as well as their ability to accurately describe participants' circumstances. Conversely, conversations provide forums in which participants can clarify ideas and explain positions they have taken on various topics. Both strategies are important ways to get participants' honest responses regarding their perceptions, understandings, attitudes, and beliefs regarding the topic of the study (Yin, 2014).

1.8 Data Analysis

The data was analysed using a thematic approach, employing inductive procedures for exploratory, sorting, and associating processes, ensuring trustworthy descriptions in the investigation (Cohen et al., 2012). The data gathering, analysis, and report writing processes were not performed independently but were completed simultaneously. This study utilized SPSS Version 21 for descriptive data analysis to examine survey Likert scores in a quantitative research setting (Cohen et al., 2012).

1.9 Delimitation

The study focuses on Zambia's public secondary school administrators' handling of teacher attrition, specifically in Lusaka province, avoiding data manipulation or unrelated issues (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Yin (2014) asserts that case studies' findings can be applied to similar situations and backgrounds, ensuring the investigator's confidence in the results.

1.10 Limitations

The only respondents were district education board secretaries and school managers from thirty (30) schools in the three (3) districts of Lusaka Province that were chosen. These restrictions were recognized and considered when analyzing the data and making recommendations.

1.11 Ethical considerations

The study involved public secondary schools' respondents, who provided consent from the Lusaka Provincial Education Office. Participants were informed of morality, anonymity, ethical challenges, and the option to withdraw.

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design

This study used a mixed methods research design that combined qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate teacher attrition in Zambian public secondary schools. Cohen et al. (2011) claim that mixed methods offer a variety of perspectives on the world that are complementary to one another. Additionally, it can be seen from Creswell (2014) that combining qualitative and quantitative methods has advantages and disadvantages, with the latter being the ability to counteract biases in one method. Using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques, the mixed methods approach combines qualitative interviewing with the descriptive survey design, which is a component of the quantitative paradigm.

2.2 Justification for a mixed-methods approach

Exploratory sequential mixed methods are a design in which the researcher explores the qualitative data, analyses it and then use the findings in the quantitative phase. The second data base builds on the results of the

initial data base (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher first collected individual interviews and focus group data, analysed the results, developed an instrument and then administered to a sample of the population. In essence, the researcher employed a three phase procedure with the first phase exploratory, the second as instrument development and the third as administering the instrument to a sample of the population, (Delport, 2016).

The mixed-methods design was used in this study, integrating the quantitative and qualitative methodologies. According to Vogt et al. (2014), there are advantages and disadvantages to both quantitative and qualitative research methods that affect how useful they are for a given research question. Additionally, according to Creswell (2014), mixed methods research is an empirical investigation approach that entails gathering data in both qualitative and quantitative ways, with the main premise being to offer a more thorough understanding of the research problem. While Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2023) affirms that both qualitative and quantitative data is collected so that informed decisions are made basing on the observed behaviour. According to Kukano (2019), a data collection plan lays forth a comprehensive approach for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

3.1 Teacher attrition and functioning of public secondary schools

During the empirical investigation, it was discovered that the majority of participants were aware that teacher attrition affected the functioning of public secondary schools. As 'DEBS 3' aptly put it, my district has experienced high teacher attrition, with many teachers joining other government departments or the corporate sector, this means that staff establishment of schools will be difficult to be met.

A participant stated that low salaries, poor working conditions, and lack of professional development are factors contributing to teacher attrition, leading to teachers leaving schools for better opportunities. Implementation of effective incentive strategies should be considered as a priority by educational planners and policy analysts. This could be a way of improving their motivation, and accordingly improve their performance and ability to remain in the profession (Kukano, 2018). Further to that Borman and Dowling's (2008) and Kraft and Papay's (2014) findings, suggest various constructs that contribute to teacher attrition challenges.

3.2.1 Teacher attrition leads to poor staffing levels

During the interviews with the school managers, it was discovered that the majority of participants were aware that teacher attrition led to the depletion of the staff establishment in a school. The majority of the school managers' bemoaned the lack of replacements once teachers left the school. For example, a manager at school '1' described how teacher attrition leads to poor staffing levels as follows:

In our school, five teachers left within a term and there were no replacements. This meant that some teachers having an overload, that is teaching combined classes and some classes have as high as one hundred pupils in one class. This brings about inefficiencies in terms of teaching and learning because the environment is not conducive.

In line with this opinion, one participant mentioned that there was a need to supply schools with more teachers. Implied in the above view is an assumption that addressing the challenge of teacher attrition in schools was a precondition for effective teaching and learning.

3.2.2 Teacher attrition results in poor student achievement

The study found that teacher attrition negatively impacts student achievement, particularly in talented and gifted teachers, as the absence of teachers leads to poor school results, highlighting the importance of effective teacher retention. The manager of school '6' attested thus:

The cream of my teachers has left for greener pastures. One way we have identified how teacher attrition affects student achievement was that we had to examine poor academic results whether these accrue only to

students who had new teachers in the school or whether this was also the case with students whose teachers had remained. We found that teacher attrition influenced those students of teachers who were coming and going, to somehow impact on student achievement negatively.

Most of the DEBS pointed out that student learning is linked to teacher effectiveness implying that teacher attrition leads to poor student achievement. DEBS '2' commented:

In my district, there has been the consistently poor performance of learners at composite final examinations in schools that have been hit hard by teacher attrition. In most cases, teachers who have left are high performers compared to those who remain. There is a breakdown in the culture of teaching and learning in the affected schools. This has contributed to poor student achievement.

The views captured through the focus group interviews with the school managers identified poor student achievement as one of the main causes of teacher attrition. Similar results were obtained on this variable from the quantitative data obtained from the school managers through the administration of the questionnaires. The findings were as presented in Figure 4.1
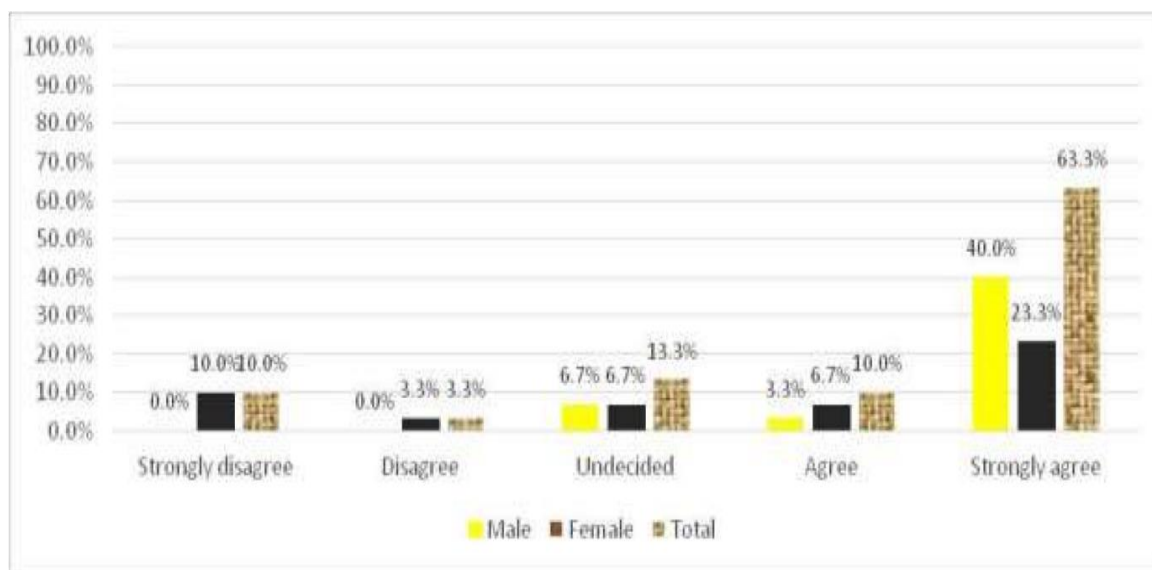

Figure 4.1: Teacher attrition results in poor student achievement (n = 30)

Source: field data

The figure shows that the majority of the school managers "strongly agreed" that teacher attrition results in poor student achievement. Among these school managers, n = 12 (40.0%) were males whereas n = 7 (23.3%) were females. The figure also shows that n = 4 (13.3%) of the participants were undecided while n = 3 (10.0%) and another n = 3 (10.0%) "agreed" and "strongly disagreed" respectively. Among those who "agreed" n = 2 (6.7%) were females while n = 1 (3.3%) were males. Of those who "strongly disagreed", none was male. The figure further shows that only n = 1 (3.3%) female "disagreed" with the statement. As can be seen from Figure 4.2, the majority of the school managers, n = 22 (73.3%) were of the view that teacher attrition leads to poor staffing levels and poor student achievement. These findings conform to those of the interviews with most of the DEBS.

3.2.3 Teachers lack the opportunity for continuous professional development

Findings from the interviews with the school managers showed that most of them were of the view that the lack of continuous professional development influences teacher attrition in secondary schools. The school manager '18' had this to say:

My understanding of CPD is that it refers to formal and informal activities undertaken by teachers either individually or collectively throughout their careers to enhance their professional knowledge, understanding,

and competence. However, in Zambia, little effort is being given to this issue, which may be due to lack of funding. From my point of view, very few teachers from my school have had a chance to attend this training. CPDs act as incentives for teachers. Given such training would bring about a reduction in teacher attrition because an effective teacher is one who is abreast of the current changes taking place in the education sector. The government should consider giving schools enough funding for this venture.

Another school manager stated thus:

CPDs entails professional development which includes in-service education and training, professional growth, human resource development, and staff development which are key to teacher retention in schools. A content teacher, especially in terms of training which upgrades him/her will not otherwise think of leaving the teaching profession. With this in mind, it is felt that the government should consider CPD as an integral part of the teaching profession.

The empirical evidence also revealed that there were no school-based activities related to teachers' CPD in the identified public secondary schools. During data collection, no participant mentioned or even implied that any of the sampled schools organised activities sought to capacitate teachers. Instead, reference was made to the CPD interventions provided at Zonal meetings. . The findings were as portrayed in Figure 4.2 below.

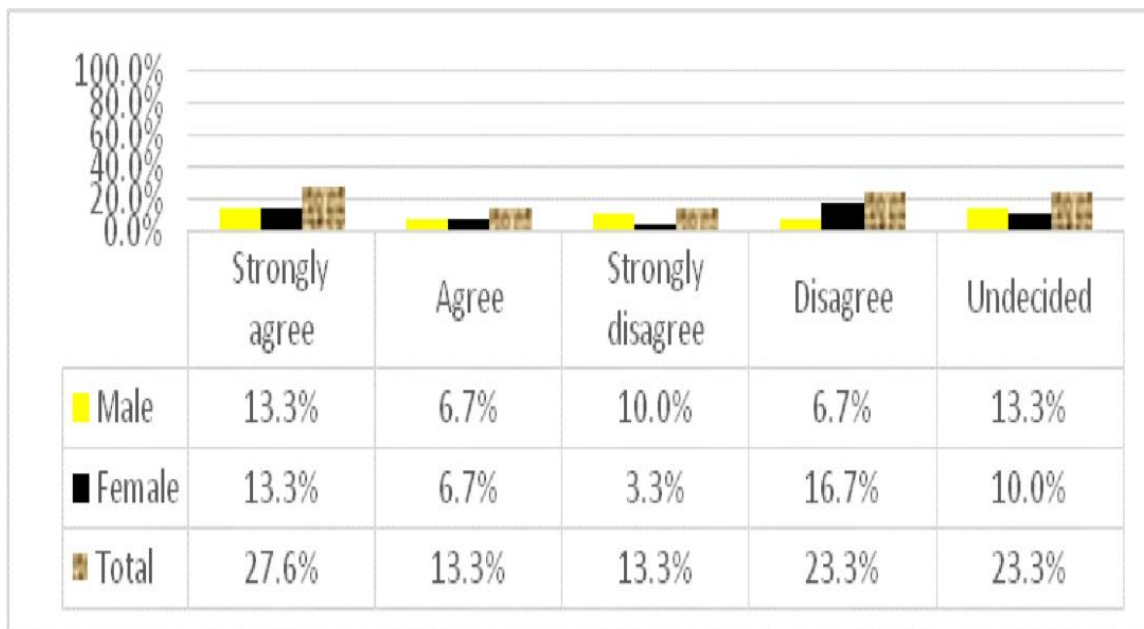|	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided
■ Male	13.3%	6.7%	10.0%	6.7%	13.3%
■ Female	13.3%	6.7%	3.3%	16.7%	10.0%
■ Total	27.6%	13.3%	13.3%	23.3%	23.3%

Figure 4.2: Lack of opportunity for continuous professional development contributes to teacher attrition (n = 30)

Source: Field data

As can be seen in Figure 4.2, most of the school managers, n = 8 (26.7%) agreed that lack of continuous professional development influence teacher attrition in secondary schools, while n = 7 (23.3%) of them "disagreed" and a further n = 7 (23.3%) were undecided. As for those who strongly agreed, there was an equal percentage of n = 4 (13.3%) for both male and female participants whereas for those who disagreed, n = 5 (16.7%) were females and n = 2 (6.7%) were males. Further for those that were undecided, n = 4 (13.3%) were males and n = 3 (10.0%) were females.

Further analysis of the data shows that taking into consideration the percentage of the school managers who "strongly agreed" and "agreed", n = 15 (40.9%) compared to those who "strongly disagreed" and "disagreed", n = 11 (36.6%), the study finding points to the fact that less than half of the school managers were in agreement and another less than half were not in agreement that lack of continuous professional development influence teacher attrition in public secondary schools in Zambia.

3.2.4 Adequate administrative support

The empirical investigation also indicated that the majority of school managers affirmed that a lack of administrative support was a contributing factor in teacher attrition. School manager '19' vented his frustration on failure to provide the needed support to his staff:

In my school, I will speak for myself; I find it a challenge when to advise my teachers. I have given leeway to the Heads of Department (HODs) to assist teachers in their instructional programmes but it seems they are not doing it. In the end, teachers are coming back to me and say that they are not being supported others are saying am not providing opportunities for them to go for further training, with this scenario some teachers have expressed the desire to leave the school and teaching altogether.

The participants, however, felt that school managers should play a significant role in ensuring that teachers are motivated and show a sense of efficacy and exhibit a positive attitude towards the teaching profession. Consistent with the above views, Kukano et al (2020) argue that implementation of continuous professional development motivates teachers in executing their duties diligently.

Analysis of the quantitative data revealed the following as presented in Figure 4.3.

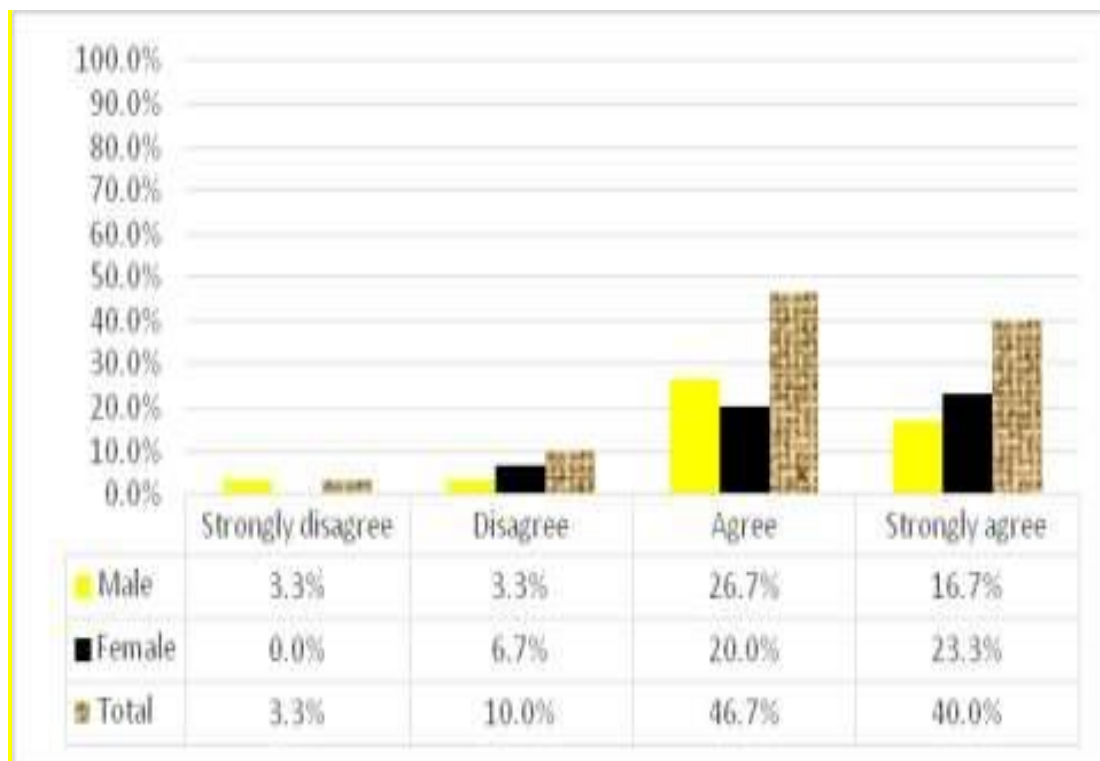|	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Male	3.3%	3.3%	26.7%	16.7%
Female	0.0%	6.7%	20.0%	23.3%
Total	3.3%	10.0%	46.7%	40.0%

Figure 4.3: Whether poor administrative support influenced teacher attrition (n = 30)

Source: Field data

As can be seen from Figure 4.3 above, the majority of the school managers "agreed" and "strongly agreed" that poor administrative support influenced teacher attrition in public secondary schools accounting for n = 14 (46.7%) and n = 12 (40.0%) of the total participants. Among those who "agreed", n = 8 (26.7%) were males while n = 6 (20.0%) were females whereas for the ones who "strongly agreed", n = 7 (23.3%) were females and n = 5 (16.7%) were males. Only n = 3 (10.0%) of the school managers "disagreed" with the statement. Of these, n = 1 (3.3%) was male and n = 2 (6.7%) were females. Further, n = 1 (3.3%) female school administrator "strongly disagreed" with the statement. Considering the frequency distributions for "agree" and "strongly agree", which corresponds to n = 26 (86.7%) compared to "disagree" and "strongly disagree" which accounts for only n = 4 (13.3%) of the total participants, it is evident that the school managers were of the view that lack of administrative support encourages teacher attrition in public secondary schools.

3.2.5 Reduced workload

Work overload on teachers is a significant obstacle to effective duties, as school managers and participants in focus group interviews reported heavy workloads, particularly in schools with teacher shortages, and attrition causing additional workloads.

Teachers are stressed due to multiple classes and increased workloads, which can take up to three years to deploy due to government insufficient funding. The Teaching Service Commission recommends an average teaching load of 18 lessons per week, but increased workloads can lead to teachers leaving for better-paying jobs or career changes. Reducing workloads may help retain teachers.

School manager '11' emphasized the need to reduce teachers' workload to reduce attrition, stating that most schools are grappling with increased workload due to attrition. Teacher shortages are prevalent in subjects like Mathematics, English, and Science, with few teachers and low graduation rates. This burdens remaining teachers and increases workloads. School managers have complained to the Ministry of Education for more teachers, but no action has been taken. The only solution is to continue using available human resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Teacher attrition and functioning of public secondary schools. The study found that teacher attrition and poor governance negatively impacts public secondary school operations, leading to staff shortages, curriculum implementation issues, and poor student achievement, with talented teachers often leaving schools. The study found that most participants acknowledged factors affecting teacher attrition in public secondary schools, including poor working conditions and low salaries. The study found that external factors like good governance, a positive school climate, reduced workload, and high salaries significantly influence teachers' decision to stay in the profession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Zambian Ministry of Education should improve data generation on qualified teachers leaving the education system, including all segments, sex characteristics, and school type. This data should be reflected in the annual publication tabloid.
- The research shows low pay and poor working conditions are major factors contributing to teacher attrition, highlighting the need for government and stakeholders to improve these conditions.
- Unpredictable teacher enrolment makes the profession unattractive. Implementing a re-staffing program can restore confidence and address the serious teacher shortage in the country.
- School managers should transform their establishments by creating conducive environments, requiring functional steering committees, and enhancing hands-on decision-making with teachers and stakeholders taking responsibility.
- The Ministry of Education should mandate school managers to enroll in annual management programs, which can lead to certification. This should be done in collaboration with the Zambia Qualification Authority and the Teaching Council of Zambia, ensuring continuous professional development at both individual and school levels.

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