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WHAT IS IT THAT KEEPS GOOD TEACHERS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION: A REFLECTION ON TEACHER RETENTION

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ABSTRACT

The role of quality, qualified and effective teachers is invaluable that one may fail to come up with proper expression to express the magnitude of their significance in its exactness. Through classroom interaction with students, teachers work as transmitters of knowledge, values and skills which work as tools for rural and urban transformation. Teachers provide education which works as a solution to poverty alleviation, empowerment, sustainable development and environmental challenges. Oziambo (2010) asserts that teachers are responsible for high standards in education, transmission of values and norms to students by teaching them or being models. They are at the front line of developing students' understanding, learning and core values.

Despite such teachers' significance, teachers do not stay in the teaching cadre. Teacher retention is currently akin to a puzzle especially when Smith and Ingersoll (2004) view the decision to enter teaching by now as being related to 'a sink or swim' experience. Teacher retention challenges that have been engendering teacher attrition indisputably called for this study. This paper therefore, firstly attempts to explore the nature and characteristics of teachers who leave teaching. Secondly, it seeks to craft strategies that help to obliterate unnecessary teacher attrition so as to retain good teachers in the teaching cadre.

This study deployed the documentary search to explore the topic under scrutiny. It concludes that teaching may become 'a profession at risk' if no quick measures are taken to redress the situation. This is due to the fact that Sinyolo (2007) postulates that teachers no longer like teaching, they have lost the morale to teach and some discourage their own children to become teachers. Thus, investing in human resource is indubitable so that working environment for teachers becomes favourable; teacher salaries turn out to be in proportional to teachers' qualifications and salaries of other fields.

Keywords: Good Teachers; Teacher Motivation; Teaching Profession; Teacher Retention.

INTRODUCTION

Indisputably, currently the retention of teachers is akin to a puzzle especially when Smith and Ingersoll (2004) view the tendency of new teachers to enter teaching by now as related to 'a sink or swim' experience. Qualified, effective and quality teachers play a very fundamental role to the success of the entire education system and in particular the learners in this case pupils and students. Numerous studies such as Dobbie (2011), Goldhaber et al. (2007), MetLife Foundation Issue Brief (2008), NTC policy brief (2007), and The Sutton Trust, (2011) have studied the significance of effective, qualified and quality teachers. In their studies, they came up with almost unanimous results that there is general consensus that the single most pertinent factor in improving students' achievement is the effectiveness and

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quality of the teacher. In that respect, it is arguable to come up with assertions such as quality teachers matter for quality teaching and learning.

Despite the fact that teacher's tendency of leaving teaching is frustrating the education stakeholders the world over, MetLife Foundation Issue Brief (2008) is of the view that teacher attrition may and probably should not be noted to be bad all the time. Teacher attrition is therefore bad if and only if they are qualified, effective and quality teachers who leave teaching. If they are unprofessionally trained teachers who in most cases become incompetent teachers who leave teaching, then this attrition is not necessarily bad. This is because unqualified, ineffective, mediocre and underperforming teachers in whatever way do not effectuate students' performance and achievement. This paper therefore, firstly attempts to explore the inherent nature and characteristics of teachers who leave teaching. Secondly, it seeks to craft strategies that can help to obliterate unnecessary teacher attrition so as to retain teachers in the teaching profession particularly in the classroom.

INHERENT NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHERS WHO LEAVE TEACHING

Questioning on which group of teachers leave teaching most than the other group is definitely essential. Its importance is from the fact that, knowing which teachers leave teaching most is helpful in devising the strategies to retain teachers in the teaching profession.

Is Teachers' Ability Or Level Of Education A Factor?

Grissmer & Kirby (1993) in refining the basic principle of human capital theory came up with two types of human capital theory. Firstly, it is generic human capital. This makes a teacher to transfer to other occupations fairly easily because of multiple experiences one has from diverse fields and/or disciplines. Secondly, it is specific human capital. Specific human capital makes one [a teacher] not to consider leaving the profession because of the institutional or specialized knowledge s/he has. The literature makes arguments that, the more individuals have the greatest amount of knowledge and experience characteristics, the greater the probability of them to leave or stop teaching. Another standpoint is that, the more the amount of specific capital, the less probably it is that such individuals will even consider leaving the profession. In most cases, these teachers with specific human capital are least qualified, mediocre and inexperienced teachers because they are not multi-skilled. This makes them difficult to find other jobs elsewhere. As a result, they end up being posted to rural areas schools (Mpokosa & Ndaruhutse, 2008).

Relying on the above two arguments without any critical analysis may mislead the governments and other education providers that teachers do not need either on-job training or continuous professional development programmes. Providing in-service training and continuous professional development programmes to teachers, equip them with generic human capital where they update and upgrade themselves. Consequently, they are being exposed to a greater amount of experiences. In line with that Goldhaber et al. (2007) are of the opinion that teachers who have high academic credentials like having the highest undergraduate grade point average are the most group likely to leave teaching for other reasons than retirement reason. Correspondingly, the Utah Foundation RAND Report No. 679 of (2007) adds that teachers with higher measured ability teacher certification tests have the greatest probability of leaving teaching than teachers with lower measured ability. The most important question here is what should be done? Should teachers be stopped from updating and upgrading themselves in a worry that they will acquire the generic human capital and leave teaching? Should there be no measures taken to annihilate staff turnover in

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order to make teachers stay teaching? Obviously, the answer is no but the most important panacea is to devise mechanisms that could help to make teachers remain in teaching.

Teacher attrition can be described in a loose-gain scenario. It is like a loose-gain game. In this case therefore, regrettably attrition becomes bad to the teaching profession when knowledgeable and skilled teachers leave teaching altogether. Interestingly, on the other hand, attrition becomes good to a place where such knowledgeable and skilled teachers opt to go. Such assertion is in tandem with Macdonald (1999) who postulates that attrition from the teaching cadre may be good for other economic sectors as teachers with sound knowledge and skills move across employment sectors.

The Youngest and Least Experienced Teachers; And the Oldest and Most Experienced Teachers

Young teachers who do not have adequate experience in the teaching profession have been deemed to be most likely to leave teaching for one reason or another. The oldest and most experienced teachers have the lowest probability of leaving teaching unless they have reached retirement age. In line with that, numerous studies such as Egu et al. (2011) and Utah Foundation in RAND report no. 676 of, 2007 reveal that youngest and least experienced teachers have the highest degree of leaving teaching. Old aged teachers are likely to leave teaching if they are near retirement age. Mfaume (2012) observed that youngest and least experienced teachers are likely to leave teaching due to the fact that they have nothing to lose in terms of fringe benefits such as pension, given their few years of serving the profession in case they are terminated. One young teacher was quoted saying:

> *"...Sir, with my two years of working as a teacher ... I have nothing to lose if I am terminated today. After all, to the moment my pension is less than a million...Those who have served for years, are the ones to tolerate since their pensions are somehow a lump sum ... If I get a good deal now, I quit quickly"(pg. 64)*

Thus, here an observation is made that old aged teachers stay in teaching because they are near retirement age. They are committed to the work for the purpose of waiting for their pension. Therefore, relying on the study by Utah Foundation in RAND report no. 676 of (2007) above, the attrition of old aged teachers seems to be natural due to the fact that this group is near retirement age. Furthermore, on the oldest and most experienced teachers leaving teaching, it should be well-known here that although retirement may not be the primary reason for the current teacher attrition, it is wrong to ignore completely that retirement due to age is also a factor for teacher attrition. In MetLife Foundation Issue Brief (2008) study in America, it is hypothesized that retirement accounts for about a third of the public school teachers who are leavers [31.4%]. However, when examined in the context of total attrition that public schools experience, retirees are responsible for 16% of the attrition.

On the other hand, attrition of old aged teachers may not be natural. It may be engendered by the failure to meet old aged teachers' expectations from their posts particularly high salaries and favourable working and living environment. Failure to meet their expectations may lead to demoralization and hence lack of commitment. This assertion is similar to Mfaume (2012) study who found that demoralization and lack of commitment unquestionably make teachers find themselves implicated in incidents such as excessive alcoholism, absenteeism, sexual affairs with students and/or generally overlooking the teachers' code of professional ethics. Failure to comply with the rules and regulations governing teachers' profession, irrefutably leads to terminating teachers from teaching.

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Additionally, to prove that young and inexperienced teachers are the most likely to leave teaching, researchers are of the opinion that, to some extent teacher shortages exist for the reason that graduates from teacher education universities and colleges do not either enter teaching or a significant number of those who enter, leave in a short period of time such as within three to five years Cooper & Alvarado (2006) or even in their first two years of teaching (Guarino et al., 2004). Most of the time, the youngest and least experienced teachers will leave teaching because of the complexities of teaching profession especially at the early stages when teachers are completely new to the world of work.

Gender Factor

The social role relationship that exists between a male and a female has been scrutinized by researchers as among the inherent nature and characteristics of teachers to leave teaching. Although, women were and are more likely than men to enter teaching as a number of studies have documented Guarino et al.(2004) numerous studies such as Adams; Allred and Smith, Grissmer and Hudson; Gritz and Theobald; Kirby; Stinebrickner; and Rees as cited by Guarino et al. (2004) on which teachers either male or female leave teaching most, have been conducted since 1980's and 1990's. In these numerous studies, women were found to have the highest attrition rates than men. Thus, family-related reasons, such as maternity or marriage, seem to be the most forecasters of teacher attrition.

Bearing in mind that teachers of the 1980's and 1990's are not teachers of this decade, one might think that such findings are no longer the relevant and appropriate by now. Conversely, in a very similar way recent studies such as the Utah Foundation RAND Report No. 679 of 2007 and Egu et al. (2011), have revealed that females have higher attrition rates than males. The literatures pointed up that female teachers in the childbearing age leave teaching to have children only and return when they are done with their baby making. Others still leave to join their husbands after marriages. This is a very common phenomenon among the female teachers. But, sometimes even young male teachers join their wives, especially when these families are still young. At this period the need to stay together is of paramount meaning to the couple.

Socio-Economic Status and Family Characteristics

Family characteristics and socio-economic status of the family matter for teachers to decide to stay in the teaching profession. Socio-economic status of the family is measured by occupation of the head of the household (Guarino et al., 2004) income and the level of education. The study done by Dworkin as cited in Guarino et al. (2004) found that teachers who came from high-status families were and are more likely to seriously consider quitting teaching than those from medium-status or low-status families.

From such an observation, it is not surprisingly to find that most teachers in the developing countries continue teaching. That is not because they are satisfied and motivated to teach but rather because of the low socio-economic status and family characteristics. For instance, Javaid (2009) points up that, in Pakistan because of a very high level of poverty incidences, men choose teaching profession and continue to teach as 'a stop-gap arrangement' when they prepare themselves for civil services or police forces entry examinations. Unfortunately, women on the other hand, continue teaching in order to earn income that could work as a supplement to the income earned by their husbands.

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Teachers Living In Mountainous Areas

In Sub Saharan African countries like Tanzania experiences show that, during deployment, most of the graduate teachers are posted to the regions they never chose. This makes these teachers report to the schools and leave in a short period of time because they are not accustomed to the environment. In highlighting that Ngimbusyi (2009) posits that graduates from the universities and colleges normally fill special forms to choose three regions they wish to work. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training [MoEVT] posts these graduates to different parts of the country without their choice of the districts and schools they would like to work.

Deploying teachers in areas that they never chose inevitably triggers teacher attrition hence impairing teacher retention. Mpokosa & Ndaruhutse (2008) argue that in areas where staff ['teachers'] is posted nationally without their full choice over where they are sent, there is a tendency for teachers to be deployed to rural areas. This necessitates either not to turn up for the job they have been deployed to do. Some transfer as quickly as possible into an urban-based school or quit teaching altogether. For instance, the study unveiled that in Nepal, one of the Asian countries teaching in the mountainous areas was and is so challenging. Teachers are supposed to climb the mountains or sometimes pass across the gorges before they reach the schools. To rescue themselves from such 'risk' they only stayed for a short period before leaving.

If teachers never chose to work in such areas, but from nowhere the government deploys them, the probability that these teachers will remain teaching is very low. However, a question comes what if no one chooses to work in such deprived community areas? Should the students remain without teachers? The answer is obviously no. Therefore, the country concerned, inter alia, needs to ensure such deprived areas are reconsidered. The improvement may be through paying them handsomely by raising the salary to teachers working in such areas.

Science and Mathematics Teachers

It is almost commonly known to us that science and mathematics teachers are marketable than teachers from other arts subject fields or discipline. This is because other than teaching, science teachers such as chemistry teachers can work in chemical engineering companies as quality controllers. Mathematics teachers can easily get involved in banks or even in Information Communication Technologies. They can also engage in operations research and space research. Therefore, due to teacher's areas of specialties in their universities or colleges, it has been speculated that teachers who specialized in science and mathematics are more likely to leave than teachers in other fields such as arts subject (Sinyolo, 2007; Foundation RAND Report No. 679 of, 2007). Having common findings, (Podgursky et al., 2004), on teachers who leave teaching found that math and science teachers are more leaving teaching than the other teaching fields. Teachers with such pedigree of having degrees in technical science subjects such as chemistry (Goldhaber et al., 2007), have a tendency of leaving teaching earlier than the other teachers.

Generally, personal and professional achievement and success seem to be among other factors to make good teachers retain in the teaching profession. Such view is from the fact that, studies have explicitly unveiled that, teachers ranked at the bottom in terms of effectiveness leave teaching more than others. Whereas that is the argument, on the other hand, teachers who necessitate the increase of student's academic performance stay in the teaching longer (Aaronson et al., 2007; Goldhaber et al., 2007).

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STRATEGIES THAT KEEP GOOD TEACHERS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

In most cases, the strategies to manage and retain teachers in the teaching profession require that one has determined the inherent nature and characteristics of teachers leaving teaching, factors accounting for it, developed and implemented the retention strategy. Therefore, strategies to teacher retention are inherently in one way or another linked to the causal factors for teachers to leave teaching. Thus, it is no wonder that, the strategies to retain teachers in the teaching profession may and probably should be scrutinised from the same causal factors for teacher attrition.

Comprehensive Induction Programme

Relying on the grounds stated earlier that personal and professional achievement and success of teachers is among other factors that make good teachers stay on the profession Aaronson et al. (2007) and Goldhaber et al. (2007) calls for the necessity of teachers being given the opportunities for success. This adds value to the retention of teachers. The question here is what are these opportunities for success that need to be provided to teachers? Smith and (Ingersoll, 2004) mentioned a comprehensive induction programme. To them, it includes basic induction; participation in an external network of teachers and being assigned a teacher's mentor. Comprehensive induction programme is agreed to work as an opportunity for teacher's achievement and success because (MetLife Foundation, 2008), study found that a teacher who has worked for one year and received an induction programme is likely to produce the same levels of student's achievement as a four years teacher who has not received an induction.

Numerous studies such as Utah Foundation in RAND report no. 676 of, 2007 and Cobbold (2007), reveal that providing induction programme familiarize new teachers to the new environment. Assigning each novice teacher an expert or veteran mentor, on the other hand, significantly improves teacher retention. For emphasis purposes, Kelly as cited by Cobbold (2007) speculates that the induction process provides opportunities for new teachers to engage early in the collegial dialogue that is vital to commitment, growth and effectiveness in one's profession.

This suggests that induction and mentoring programmes effectuate teacher retention. This will link and bridge a gap between the initial teacher training and the beginning of a teaching job. Inextricably, induction programme brings about what Smith and Ingersoll (2004) perceive it as a bridge that facilitates the 'students of teaching' to become 'teachers of students'.

Teacher Salary and Remuneration

Remuneration related issues have been among the most educational debated topics in almost all countries the world over. Teacher salary increase has been a concern in order to address teacher's working conditions so as to retain teachers in the teaching profession, in particular, in schools and in classrooms. GNAT & TEWU (2009), study in Ghana where teachers gave their opinions such as:

> *"The take home salary cannot take me home"*
> *"The salary cannot make ends meet"*
> *"The salary does not commensurate my qualification and workload"*
> *"My colleagues in other sectors are earning higher" (pg. 31)*

It reminds the government and other education stakeholders to re-think about teacher's salary and remuneration in order to rescue the teaching profession from being 'a profession at risk'. It is therefore, no wonder that ILO as cited by Macdonald (1999), and GNAT & TEWU,

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(2009) recommend that rises in teacher's salaries is significant in order that the salaries are proportionate with other professionals; and the teacher qualifications and skills.

Despite the need to increase the salary, the most critical and important issue is to remember the naivety conclusion that qualified teachers are always quality teachers. This is because studies on teacher qualification and teacher quality have been conducted. It has been unveiled that the contribution of teachers towards the attainment of students' achievement is only weak when teacher qualification and teacher quality is judged on observable and quantifiable teacher's attributes such as academic credentials and test scores (Clofelter et al., 2007; Goldhaber et al., 2007; Gordon, 2006). Therefore, with the increase of the salary, *inter alia* the government and education stakeholders such as institutions need to ensure that they professionally groom qualified quality teachers.

Regular In-Service Training and Continuous Professional Development for Teachers

Regular in-service training for updating and continuous professional development for upgrading teachers' understanding is one among the strategies to make teachers stay in teaching. After pre-service training and deployment, teachers need to be opened up to workshops, seminars, short courses and further studies without unnecessary conditions. Shanghai City in China has taken on-job training and continuous professional development as a very vital stage to every teacher. In that respect, according to OECD (no date) every teacher is expected to engage in 240 hours of teacher professional development within five years. Higher-level teachers are required to have up to 540 hours training. Teachers do research, write articles and attend on-the-job training as a condition for one to be promoted. This motivates them to remain teachers. They find themselves in the deeply imbedded Chinese special respect given to teachers that, if someone is your teacher for only a day, you should regard him as your father for the rest of your life.

In some countries such as Tanzania in Sub Saharan Africa, school leaders have not been supportive to teachers who strive to attend in-service training or continuous professional development programmes such as going for further studies. Very succinctly Anangisye (2011) hypothesizes that requests for professional development have been poorly handled. For instance, release letters for teachers to attend such in-service training and continuous professional development programmes have been granted the time when candidates were already time-constrained. This act has been leading to some teachers forcing to leave teaching for further studies. However, because they left the schools without the school leaders' permission, after completion these teachers do not come back for teaching as they study courses that are unrelated to teaching.

In line with that Chediel (2010) posits that attrition is caused by teachers seeking further studies such as master's degrees. Some teachers opt to study law, administration and Information Communication Technology, which open them up to other professions. It should be noted that presence of on-the-job training and continuous professional development is a strategy to retain good teachers in the teaching profession. This is because it helps teachers to cope with the changes in the syllabus. In tandem with that Komba & Nkumbi (2008) postulate that continuous teacher professional development provides teachers with the opportunities to explore new instructional techniques and strategies; improve their practice and broaden themselves as educators and individuals.

Raised Bar for Entry into Teaching and Recruiting Top Students into Teaching

Among other factors that make teachers enter and leave teaching is its social acceptance and appreciation. Prospective teachers join the teaching profession not because it is their call to be responsible for the child, the community, the state and the profession itself but rather

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because it is the only available alternative or the last resort. Towse et al. (2001) underscore that this is due to the academic qualifications they get in the high schools and financial limitations.

Since teaching profession no longer commands high status and teachers are undervalued by the society Kadzamira (2006) those entering in teaching enter only as a waiting place or a transitional profession. This makes them leave teaching soon as they get an opening. Raising the bar for entry into teaching and recruiting top-third students is a solution to that. Entry qualification in teaching profession has been proven to be a way into which good teachers are retained in teaching. Countries whose teacher retention is tricky can learn from Shanghai City-China. According to OECD (no date) Shanghai City-China has raised the bar for entry of new entrants to the teaching profession. Shanghai primary school teachers are diploma teachers and secondary school teachers are degree holders where many of them have master's degree.

Far from raising bar into teaching, recruiting top students into teaching has also been proved to be an appropriate way that makes teachers stay in teaching. Auguste et al. (2010) view that top performing nations in education such as Finland, Singapore and South Korea treat teaching as a highly selective profession. Given such a high respect to the teaching profession, these countries have opted for what they call recruitment of 'top third+' students. Through this, as among the central educational strategies, the literature shows that they have attained scintillating results. These top third students after being recruited, they are screened in other qualities which are deemed to be predictors of teaching success. These include perseverance, learners' motivation ability and passion for learners. This notion brings us to similar standpoint as stated earlier that teacher qualification and teacher quality should not be judged on observable teacher's attributes such as academic credentials (Clofelter et al., 2007; Goldhaber et al., 2007; Gordon, 2006).

Generally, raising the bar for entry into teaching and recruiting top students into teaching keep the teaching profession respected. Thus, not everyone can enter but only the best performers who are probably thought to be willing to stay in teaching. Therefore, those who enter really love teaching and they would not easily leave teaching.

Deploying Teachers in Areas They Choose To Work

Deploying teachers from universities and teacher colleges in the regions they choose could help to make good teachers stay in teaching. As stated earlier experiences have shown that, during deployment most of these graduate teachers are posted to the regions they never chose (Ngimbusyi, 2009), and therefore being posted in areas like in rural areas or mountainous areas (Mpokosa & Ndaruhutse, 2008). This makes these teachers report to the schools and leave because they are not accustomed to this new environment. Since in most cases, those who accept to stay in such deprived areas are those who's all options even leaving teaching has failed due to the lack of secondary alternatives. Thus GNAT & TEWU (2009) suggest that while the government or the authorities are taking efforts to improve the infrastructures in such deprived communities, teachers who accept to stay in such areas need to be compensated significantly.

In general, to retain teachers in teaching Mulkeen & Crowe-Taft (2010) are of the view that attrition of this kind responds to deployment practices which are teacher 'family friendly' or are perceived to offer greater personal safety, such as appointments that are near to relatives, near to communities from the same ethnic group, or posting of newly qualified teachers in pairs. The postings of newly qualified teachers in pairs would shove into obscurity all sense of isolation and loneliness.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teaching profession almost in the world over is becoming a 'profession at risk' if no quick measures are taken to solve teachers' problems in the teaching cadre. In my own view, in the future, teaching may become a 'profession at risk' if no quick measures are taken to redress the situation. Such a conclusion is made from the view that currently, according to Sinyol (2007) teachers have lost the morale to teach and some discourage their own children to become teachers. The government and the authorities are forgetting that schools are more than physical capital such as school buildings, classrooms and offices without well prepared, retained and retrained human capital. The former being significant, it loses its meaning if the latter is overlooked.

In that respect, investing in human resource becomes inescapable so that working environment for teachers become favourable, teacher salaries turn out to be in proportional to teacher qualifications and other fields' salaries. Schools also need income for induction and mentoring programmes; and on-the-job training activities at school level. Borrowing the human capital theory Minghua (1996) argues that volumes of computations have been done since 1960's with almost common results that education does pay off when comparing its returns with those on physical capital. Consequently, among other factors, investing enough in education and using the allocated budget appropriately will be of great assistance to improve the teachers' conditions of service. This will make good teachers like teaching and be motivated to teach. However, if the governments do not invest enough in education, for teachers in particular to solve their queries, the future may not make a difference. Lamentation on the failures will never stop, researchers will continue researching and findings will continue to be neatly kept away in files and on the shelves without use.

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