
Determination of the Effect of Graduate Teacher Attrition on Students' Performance in Government Senior Secondary Schools in the Gambia

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ABSTRACT: The study looked into the impact of graduate teachers' attrition in government senior secondary schools to choose other financially rewarding careers over teaching. The study was limited to senior secondary government schools in the Gambia's West Coast Region. The study aims to assess the influence of graduate teacher attrition on student performance in Gambia's government senior secondary schools. The problem of the study revealed that poor school conditions, high-income families for extra classes, and private schools for income negatively impact graduate teachers and students in the Gambia. They also seek better opportunities in other institutions due to poor motivation, remuneration, and promotion. As a result, students become frustrated by the frequent changes in graduate instructors since the most seasoned graduate instructors are the ones who quit teaching. The methodology used was the questionnaires administered in the case study area to 328 students and 7 graduate teachers. Prepared interview guidelines were used to interview 8 school and 2 educational administrators. Relevant literature was reviewed on the theories and findings on teacher attrition from different authors. The study population involves 2564 senior secondary students and 54 graduate teachers from four different senior secondary schools. Findings from the study show that graduate teachers face challenges such as large class sizes, demanding workloads, and an unfavourable work climate in schools. Parents in the Greater Banjul Area are sending their children to private and missionary senior secondary schools due to a high graduate teacher attrition rate. The study recommends that to retain graduate teachers, it is crucial to offer attractive retention allowances and housing that align with their qualifications and newly acquired skills. Graduate teachers who are assigned to deprived and hard-to-reach areas should be granted additional special allowances.

KEYWORDS: Teachers, attrition, performance, secondary school

INTRODUCTION

The region faces challenges in recruiting and retaining highly qualified graduate teachers due to poor environmental conditions and a mix of urban and rural areas. Graduate teachers often work in high-income communities or private schools, causing stress and limiting their time for rest and preparation for future lessons. Rural schools face staffing issues due to limited teacher supply, lack of training, and isolation, causing recruitment and attrition of quality graduate teachers, and increasing attrition rates. Research on the shortage and attrition of quality graduate teachers in government schools has not been serious, leading parents to prefer missionary and private schools in urban areas. Policymakers, educators, and wealthy individuals prioritize the welfare and improvement of these schools. There are no genuine policies in place to improve the welfare of graduate teachers in schools. Workshops and seminars are often money-making, not aimed at improving the status of the teachers or the schools. New graduate teachers are often poorly oriented and face challenges, requiring professional support and mentoring to develop their pedagogical skills.

Graduate teachers in government schools often resign due to higher social status appointments, causing a loss of instructional hours and exposing students to uncovered topics. This leads to poor grades and haphazard replacements, compromising recruitment processes. Graduate teachers lack motivation and are not prioritized by school administrators. Their poor remuneration leaves them unable to provide housing and a balanced diet for their families. The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education lacks a proper appraisal system for school staff, leading to arbitrary promotions and neglect of hardworking graduate teachers. This situation, particularly in rural and deprived communities, results in stagnation and a lack of necessities, causing frustration and frustration among deserving teachers.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH

The problems the study found out included the following: Poor school conditions negatively impact graduate teachers and

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students; graduate teachers prefer high-income families for extra study classes, while others prefer private schools for income; graduate teachers in the Gambia face poverty and low status due to inadequate housing, food, and education, leading them to seek better opportunities in other institutions; graduate teachers in government senior secondary schools are leaving due to poor motivation, remuneration, and lack of promotion, with nepotism, bribery, and corruption being the primary reasons.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses a descriptive survey design, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches, to collect data from senior secondary teachers in the West Coast Region. The data was analyzed to identify high attrition rates of graduate teachers and student performance, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject. This research involved 2,564 senior secondary students, graduate teachers from four West Coast Region government senior secondary schools, and school administrators, including 303 graduate teachers.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Teaching has the highest number of staff on the Gambia government payroll. Likewise, it has one of the highest attrition rates. Teaching as a profession employs 4% of the American workforce. The annual teacher turnover rate in the USA is about 15% consisting of those who move to teach in other schools and those who leave the profession altogether (Harrison 2006). A lot of teachers are hired annually to replace the teachers lost to attrition and retirement to meet the teacher demands. Approximately 150,000 new teachers are hired annually to replace the teachers who left the system through attrition and retirement in the United States of America. For the increasing teacher demand to be met McCreight (2000) estimated the number of new hires will have to increase to 222,000 a year to keep abreast of the need.

The problem of teacher attrition does not only lie in the recruitment of a high number of new staff annually. As new staff are employed, they as well are intending to quit teaching for more lucrative jobs. There is a serious shortage of graduate teachers in government senior secondary schools in this country. This is evident by the serious loss of instructional hours encountered in schools at the beginning of each academic year. As the attrition rate keeps increasing at an alarming rate, the schools are as well-staffed with new inexperienced teachers that seriously retard the students learning. These new staff lack the confidence, experience, and expertise to easily disseminate information to the students. Due to the huge loss of resources and the high negative impact of teacher attrition on student learning. Numerous studies and articles have concluded that teachers are one of the most critical problems facing American education (Certo & Fox, 2002; Harris et al., 2003; McConney et al., 2003; Useem & Neild, 2001). Guarino et al.'s 2006 studies show that teacher attrition is primarily due to the quality of human capital, with higher-value certificates less likely to retain teachers. Research indicates that early career teachers' support, including mentoring and induction, significantly impacts their intentions to leave the profession (DeAngelis et al., 2013; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kelly, Sim, & Ireland, 2018).

Performance of Students at West African Senior Secondary School Examination (WASSCE)

The West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) marks the end of senior secondary and determines students' access to universities, colleges, and tertiary institutions. The University of The Gambia grants admission with five WASSCE credits, while private universities have their requirements. In Gambia, 86.3% of WASSCE candidates are from public schools, with 14,805 registered in 2022. Annual examination malpractice and poor student performance have raised concerns among stakeholders, parents, teachers, and school authorities. In 2023, 16,234 students from 131 senior secondary schools participated in WASSCE, a 13.11% increase from 2020. Of these, 44.016% were male and 55.99% female. They wrote 32 subjects, with 5.75% obtaining credit passes. Males and females had a gender ratio of 6.45% and 5.2% respectively. West African Examination Council (WAEC) 2023 student performance summary shows that 12.25% of students received credit passes in nine subjects, while 20.93% received credit passes in one subject, indicating limited university admission requirements.

Existing Gaps in Literature

Policymakers in The Gambia have introduced special skills and provincial allowances to motivate and retain teachers in rural areas, but no research has been conducted to demonstrate the impact of these measures with evidence. The Gambia school system lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework for teacher retention and attrition. Studies on these issues are often focused on specific factors. Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006) and Borman and Dowling (2008) contributed to this by analyzing 34 studies and identifying 60 factors associated with teacher attrition and retention.

Findings from the Study

The students' performance at WASSCE is poor due to graduate staff attrition, 43%% of the respondents agreed (14% strongly agreed and 29% agreed) to this statement, and 57% disagreed (43% strongly disagreed and 14% disagreed). Students do not perform

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to expectation due to inadequate staffing. This statement was agreed to by 57% of the respondents and 43% disagreed (14% strongly disagreed and 29% disagreed). The leaving of school by graduate teachers affects students' performance. The respondents that strongly agreed were 14% 57% agreed to this statement, 14% strongly disagree and 29% disagreed.

Graduate teachers leave schools due to the poor performance of students. Was agreed by 14% of the respondents, 43% strongly disagreed and 29% disagreed with the statement. Graduate teacher's leave due to inadequate learning materials was agreed to by 43% of the respondents, 29% strongly disagreed and 29% disagreed. Graduate teachers teach in more than one school. This statement was agreed to by 57% of the respondents, 29% strongly disagreed and 14% disagreed. Graduate teachers leave the profession at odd times of the academic year which affects students' performance, this was strongly agreed to by 14% of the respondents and 57% agreed. Whilst 29% disagreed with this statement. Overall, graduate teacher attrition contributes to poor performance of students. All of the respondents agreed (71% strongly agreed and 29% agreed) to this statement.

Table 1: The Level at which Graduate Teacher Attrition Affects Students' Performance.

No	Graduate teacher attrition badly affects students' performance.	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Strongly Disagree		Disagree	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	The student's performance at WASSCE is poor due to graduate staff attrition.	01	14.29	02	28.57	00	00	03	42.86	01	14.29
2	Students do not perform to expectation due to inadequate staffing.	00	00	04	57.14	00	00	01	14.29	02	28.57
3	The leaving of school by graduate teachers affects students' performance.	01	14.29	04	57.14	00	00	01	14.29	02	28.57
4	Graduate teachers leave schools due to poor performance of students.	00	00	01	14.29	00	00	03	42.86	02	28.57
5	Graduate teachers leave due to inadequate learning materials.	00	00	03	42.86	00	00	02	28.57	02	28.57
6	Graduate teachers teach in more than one school.	00	00	04	57.14	02	28.57	00	00	01	14.29
7	Graduate teachers leave the profession at odd times of the academic year which affects students' performance.	01	14.29	04	57.14	00	00	00	00	02	28.57
8	Overall, graduate teacher attrition contributes to poor performance of students.	05	71.43	02	28.57	00	00	00	00	00	00

Source: Field survey (2023).

The purpose of this study is to find out the effect of graduate teacher attrition on students' performance in government senior secondary schools in the West Coast Region of the Gambia. This research gauged the perceptions of senior secondary students, graduate teachers, and school and educational administrators on the teaching profession and the consequences of teacher attrition on the performance of students at the WASSCE examination. From the data analysis of the administered questionnaires and the interviews conducted. It was found that graduate teacher attrition in government senior secondary schools in the West Coast Region (case study area). Most graduate teachers leave at odd times of the academic year without informing the school authorities, which makes their replacement very difficult. In most instances, the attrition of graduate teachers is realized by the authorities through their unattended lessons. They quit their appointment without going through the public service regulation requirements. At times it's the students who will notify the administration of the staff quitting their appointment. This makes the replacement of such staff difficult and time-consuming. The concerned authorities have to be informed of the vacancy and urgent replacement by a new staff.

CONCLUSION

Due to the poor salary low motivation and series of challenges all the graduate teacher respondents were dissatisfied to remain as

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graduate teachers. The survey has shown that the retention allowances were insufficient leading them to live from hand to mouth. The delayed promotions that are not based on any standardized format were the major dissatisfaction for all graduate teachers. Poor motivation, low salary, and poor working conditions are the main factors that push graduate teachers out of the school environment. Graduate teachers in government Senior Secondary Schools in the West Coast Region are regarded as a low-status profession due mainly to the low living standards among graduate teachers, caused by their low remuneration.

RECOMMENDATION

The study suggests that enhancing the remuneration of graduate teachers in senior secondary schools in Gambia can decrease attrition rates.

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