

# **Teacher Turnover Phenomenon: The Management Perspective**

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## **Abstract**

The increasing demand for public school teachers coupled with the increasing salary triggers the migration phenomenon of private school teachers to the public schools. This research focuses on examining the perspective of the school administrators in determining how private schools are responding to the problem of teacher turnover. It primarily sought to identify strategies to mitigate the impact of teacher turnover and to address the root cause of the migration of teachers. Examining the management strategies of school administrators in relation with the teacher's needs will ensure sustainability of the private schools and enable policy makers to create policies that will safeguard the survival of those schools and their complementary roles with that of the public schools. Findings show that teacher turnover is experienced by the school administrators every year. The frequency of teacher turnover suggests that it is directly associated with the demands of teachers in the public school. Teacher turnover is primarily brought about by teachers searching for a better income. Other reasons include job security and income sufficiency to support the family. Others find employment in the public school to be with their families. When a teacher leaves the school, it will surely have some effects on the system in general and stakeholders in particular. Administrators mentioned the following effects: students' adjustment, parents' adjustment and trust, replacement difficulty, training, quality of teaching, emotional and financial cost, and disruption. To manage teacher turnover, administrators employed the strategies such as: imposing penalty for breach of contract, distributing the load of teachers who left to those qualified to teach, hiring teacher replacement, strengthening relationship, providing professional development, career advising, providing safe and secure environment, and reducing workload. Other strategies include benchmarking, increase of salary, increase of incentives, and giving of recognition. Despite all these strategies teacher turnover is still alarming.

Keywords: teacher turnover, management perspective

Movement of people from one place to another has been happening since the history of people. Azoulay (2019), Director-General of UNESCO, argues that these movement to public schools is triggered by better opportunities. These movements can have a great impact on education systems. UNESCO (2019) claims that migration continues to elicit some negative responses in modern societies.

Blömeke et al. (2016) pointed out that the quality of instruction is highly related to the quality of teachers. Garcia and Weiss (2019) maintained that there is a growing shortage of qualified teacher in the private schools. As a result, administrators are forced to look for teachers who have at least the basic skills to fill in the vacancy.

The teacher workforce is dynamic. Teachers continuously move from one school to another for professional career. This movement affects the composition of teachers in campuses, institutional stability, and the demographics and qualifications of the teacher workforce (Provasnik & Dorfman, 2005).

According to Tabora (2014), the President of Ateneo de Davao University, private schools have to adopt difficult measures to survive since the school depend only on tuition income conditioned, on the one hand, by the free market, and on the other hand, by the income limitation of the students who either opt for private schools for private reasons or they cannot be accommodated by public schools which might not have been adequately functional.

The reasons why teachers move within the profession is varied and complex. Job dissatisfaction, poor salary, poor administrative support, and student discipline problems are among the most frequent reasons teachers leave the profession (Ingersoll, 2001). The study conducted of Harell (2004), found out that the most influential factor in teacher turnover is monetary consideration. It is followed by raising a family, problems with in-school administrators and lack of mentoring.

Ortega-Dela Cruz (2016) in her study entitled “Attrition of Private and Public School Teachers: A Comparative Analysis” reveals significant difference between public and private schools in terms of job security and work conditions. The result of her study reveals that these are the primary reasons why teachers leave their school of work. When teachers leave from private school to public school it is mainly due to job security. Teachers in the public school feel more secure than those in the private schools although the latter might have better working conditions.

Being overworked is also considered one important factor that triggers teacher’s transfer to another work station. Hart (2015) argues that in private schools, teachers are given an enormous amount of responsibility if they are relatively capable and somewhat emotionally stable. This responsibility is, most of the time, free of the burden of additional compensation. This will eventually cause burnout and pushes teachers away from the private school.

There are several reasons why good employees quit. These are combination of things that weigh in their minds and impact their decision to quit over time. Despite this, there is a distinct set of common reasons that drive employees to want to leave the organizations they work at (Phan, 2018).

Though economics is a strong factor, Mulvahill (2019) argues that teachers leave the teaching profession not only because of monetary issues. Cabigas (2019) pointed out that detrimental school systems, negative self-perceptions, and personal-environmental concerns contribute the most to teacher turnover. Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin as cited by Chisolm (2009) maintains that teacher

salaries are not the only deciding factor; teacher preferences across a variety of jobs and school conditions are just as important in retention. According to their study, teachers might be willing to take lower salaries in exchange for better working conditions. An institution that nurtures appreciation promotes a better working environment (Chapman & White, 2019).

Turnover of teachers in the private schools is now becoming a common scenario in the Philippines. Sambalud (2014) indicates that low pay, poor work benefits and no security of tenure cause exodus of teachers in private schools. Bond (2017) states that teachers migrated due to the feeling that their present system does not sufficiently satisfy their needs. These needs are not only for physical development but also for self-actualization and social well being. Teachers opt to seek employment where they perceive that they will be in a better position to satisfy their needs.

Economics is one powerful factor. Appleton and Sives (2006) state that the main reason for the teachers turnover is huge salary gain. It cannot be denied that as of the present scenario, majority of the private schools have lesser compensation for their teachers compared to that of the public schools.

The Federation of Associations of Private Schools and Administrators (FAPSA) affirms that some of its member schools have been closing down because they are having a hard time retaining teachers who prefer to move to public schools because of higher salaries and benefits. According to the National Education Association, the high turnover rate of teachers is forcing several schools to spend substantial amounts of time and money on recruiting new teachers, ultimately hindering the school's success.

Turnover of teachers creates a "brain drain". Hodge (2006) claims that the turnover of teachers resulted in the loss of skills and knowledge. Transfer of experienced teachers from the private schools to the public schools, will definitely be a loss on the part of the former. In an article from a YORKshire Post on January 21, 2020, the turnover of teachers creates shortages of qualified teachers. As a result, administrators are forced to look for teachers who have at least the basic skills to fill in the vacancy.

The teacher shortage has serious consequences. A lack of sufficient, qualified teachers threatens students' ability to learn (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Ladd and Sorensen, 2016). Reid (cited in The Gleaner, 2016) reacted that the Ministry of Education in Jamaica maintains that after the teachers left, some schools found it hard to maintain the standards of teaching and learning which had been established over the years leading to low performance in Math examination.

Turnover of teacher may lead to poor quality graduates. According to Speid (cited in Jamaica Daily Observer, 2019), the ongoing migration of teachers to the so-called greener pastures have negative impact on some schools. He added that, if the current trend continues, the education sectors could be producing dysfunctional graduates in the future.

According to the UNESCO and International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA), there are three main reasons why the topic on teacher turnover is very important. First reason is related to teacher supply. There is a concern on who should be responsible for teacher training investment and who benefits from them. In the transferring of teachers from the private school to the public school, it seems that the private schools are investing for the training and the public school is receiving the benefits.

The second reason is related to the quality of teachers. In the scenario of the private schools, they are left with teachers who are not yet qualified for the public schools or are waiting for the opportunity in the public schools. Buenaventura (2013) cites in his study that majority of private school teachers are in the younger age bracket, gaining experience before transferring to the public schools. There is now a concern of the quality assurance of teachers in the private schools. Thirdly, is the importance to ensure ethical recruitment of teachers in the public school, considering the rights and obligations of the private schools. School administrators play an important role in these scenarios. Hidalgo (2005) states that administrators are key personnel in retaining teachers. Principal leadership and support are among the most important factors in teachers' decisions about whether to stay in a school or in the profession (Learning Policy Institute, 2017).

Boyd et al. (2009) in their study entitled "Influence of School Administrators on Teacher Retention Decisions" said that teachers' perceptions of the school administration have by far the greatest influence on teacher retention decisions. Sutchter (2017) states that principals play a critical role in addressing widespread teacher shortages by creating school environments that attract and retain competent teachers. The most effective principals assume a range of responsibilities, including setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and leading instruction.

With the changing demands of the modern learners, hiring qualified teachers is a challenge. Sutchter et al. (2016) argue that principals have serious difficulty finding qualified teachers for the vacant positions, especially in fields like Mathematics, Science, Special Education, and Bilingual Education/English language development. Podolsky (2016) says that one of the most pressing issues facing policymakers is how to staff classrooms with a stable teaching workforce responsive to complex student needs and the growing demands of the knowledge economy. Recurrent teacher shortages are a function of both declines in entrants to teaching and high rates of teacher turnover, especially in low-income schools.

Administrators are under pressure. Mahfouz (2018), in her study, points out that various job demands continue to be very stressing and exhausting for school administrators who must work under unprecedented pressure. In the migration phenomenon, the administrators or principals have the primary responsibility to make sure that teachers stay in their school. They need to think and implement strategies to keep qualified teachers. This responsibility puts the administrators or principals in a stressful situation. Thus, how school administrators respond to the phenomenon of teacher migration is crucial in finding ways on how to sustain the educational services of private school institutions.

On the other hand, Adrianzén (2012) in her study entitled "Elementary School Teachers' Reasons for Staying in Their Current Schools: A Comparison Study" reveals that high salary, job satisfaction, a greater sense of camaraderie, and the love for the vocation of teaching is one of the highly important factors why teachers stay in their current school. Furthermore, Clarksen (2014), in her study "Why Teachers Stay: Elementary Teachers Share Perceptions of the Job Since Legislative Reforms in Wisconsin" reveals that the primary reason why teachers stay is due to intrinsic factors such as working with students and personal growth. The idea of teaching as a "calling" motivates them to stay.

Shuls and Flores (2020) in their study suggest that schools which succeeded in teacher retention did not have explicit teacher retention policies. Rather, they have policies which promote teacher voice, supported teacher induction and development. Flores (2021) in his study finds that school culture and administrative support matter the most in the retention of teachers.



Hanover (n.d.) research reports four strategies to increase teacher retention. These include the support to teacher wellbeing, promotion of teacher engagement, creation of a supportive school climate, and the monitoring of teacher retention and attrition.

Shavers (2018) points out that teachers stay when there is an emotional connection with students, parents, coworkers, and administrators. He further adds that salary is not always a factor. Instead, many teachers want to make a difference in the lives of students because they care about them.

### **Research Design**

This is a qualitative research. It emphasizes the in-depth examination of the inter-related factors affecting the phenomenon of teacher's turnover. Six school administrators were interviewed, and the interpretation was based on methodological triangulation of data from the interview and documents obtained.

These administrators were chosen in consideration that they a) belong to the private school b) experience the phenomenon of teacher transfers to the public schools c) have been administrators at least for one year; and d) are directly involved in supervising teachers.

### **Results**

The findings have the following highlights based on the methodological triangulation of data from the interview and documents collected.

#### **1. Frequency of Teacher Turnover in the Private School**

The data shows that teacher turnover is a regular phenomenon in the private schools. This turnover is happening even in the middle of the school year.

Based on the data, school year 2017-2018 is the peak of teacher turnover which coincides with the full implementation of the K-12 curriculum. It can be noted in the pattern that as the demand of teachers in the public schools gets higher, teacher turnover in the private schools also becomes more defined. The two operate in direct proportionality.

#### **2. Reasons of Teacher Turnover**

The number one reason of teacher turnover in the private schools is the fact that most teachers wanted a greener pasture. Greener pasture could be translated to salary, job security, and benefits. It also means improvement from their present conditions characterized by lesser salary and more work, and more benefits and incentives.

### 3. Impact of Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover is not without negative result in the school. It affects the students, parents, teachers, and administrators. When a teacher leaves most especially in the middle of the school year, students need to adjust to their new teacher. When parents are aware of the massive turnover, their trust in the capacity of school is diminished.

Administrators are very much affected especially when a tenured teacher leaves the school. They have difficulty in replacing him/her with someone who is equally or more efficient and effective. Such difficulty is exacerbated when the turnover happens in the middle of the school year because it will affect the already existing system of delivering instruction.

The administrators also need to exert more time, effort, and resources in training the new teachers most especially those who are novice in the profession. Training is done to make sure that the quality of teaching is sustained even in the absence of some tenured teachers. Furthermore, such trainings also entail financial cost. So, when the administrators train over and over again because of regular turnover, schools' monetary resources will eventually be depleted.

### 4. Strategies in the Management of Teacher Turnover

Administrators try their best to manage any concerns brought about by teacher turnover. They employ various strategies based on the function of a manager as stipulated in the Administrative Management Theory. As planners, administrators take the responsibility of making sure everything will be in place. To minimize teacher turnover in an unexpected time, administrators draft a contract stipulating liquidated damages should the teacher leave before the contract expires. On the other hand, administrators also prepare for the worst-case scenarios and, that is, to have a backup plan to ensure continuity of quality service. This is done by distributing the load of the teacher leaving the school to continue its service of instructional delivery when replacement is not possible.

Administrators make sure that staffing will be effective and growth or at least maintaining the standard is sustained. Each new teacher shall undergo a well-planned professional development to make sure that the quality of teaching will not be compromised. They also strengthen the relationship of every member of the workforce to synchronize effort towards excellence and to make everyone fulfilled and contented with his/her accomplishment. Administrators also provided career advising to make sure that everyone is onboard, and sailing will be smooth. In the event teacher turnover happens, replenishing the workforce is done effectively and efficiently.

Administrators are responsible in directing the operation including the workers. They constantly monitor and motivate their staff. This is done by making sure that a safe and secure working environment is provided.

Administrators strive to make sure that the school operates like a well-oiled machine. They see to it that all teachers work at their best. They (administrators) did this by reducing workload to obtain higher effectivity and efficiency. To be always relevant to the needs of time, administrators also benchmark in order to adopt best practices of other schools.

To motivate tenured teachers to stay and eventually maintain and improve the quality of service, administrators give incentives or benefits without compromising its future operability. Doing it begins by providing feedback which can be done by giving recognition to individuals who have done excellent job or recognize everyone by focusing on his/her strengths.

#### 5. Effectiveness of Management Strategies

Administrators employ a number of strategies to manage teacher turnover, but these did not stop teachers from leaving their respective schools. To some degree, it is effective particularly in reducing teacher turnover in the middle of the school year which primarily can be associated with the monetary factor in which most of the administrators say they can only pay much.

It appears that letting the teacher feel they belong and recognizing good efforts are effective.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher turnover in the private schools is inevitable. Administrators cannot keep the teachers who aspire to look for teaching employment that provides bigger pay. When the demand for additional teachers in the public schools is on the rise, teacher turnover is expected.

The teacher turnover has affected the operation of the private schools. It has negatively affected the school's instructional quality, finances, and relationships, among others. It has disrupted what has been seamless operation of the organizational system and personal routine. Because of the adverse effect of teacher turnover, administrators exert effort to manage the phenomenon.

Monetary concerns are the primary reason of the teacher turnover in the private schools. Although, administrators try to raise the salary and benefits of the teachers they can only do as much because their resources are limited for the school primarily survive through students' fees.

Most of the private schools cannot compete with the benefit package and salary scheme which public school offer. However, by implementing strategies that arouse the affective aspect of the teacher, the possibility to stay in the private schools is more possible than not. Strengthening relationships with colleagues and administrator, providing a conducive working environment, recognizing efforts, giving incentives and intentions and making the teachers feel fulfillment in mentoring students can be put in place among others.

## Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions of this case study, the following are recommended by the researcher:

First, it is suggested that the Department of Education, Commission of Higher Education, and the private schools agree and sign a memorandum of understanding when to hire teachers in the public school. As much as possible hiring of teachers from the private school should not be within the school year to avoid disruption. If possible private schools should be included in the professional development of teachers in the public schools especially the novice teachers to mitigate the financial constraints

Second, private schools may require the faculty to sign a contract at the end of each school year to indicate their desire to teach in the succeeding school year in the school of work. Such contract shall serve as assurance to the school. Failure to follow the contract, the teacher shall pay liquidated damages.

Third, teacher turnover and its management may be made part of the private schools' annual plan and make a scheme for an attractive package for teachers to stay. The package shall be comprehensive and should not only focus on monetary value.

Finally, private schools strengthen working relationship and provide programs for personal development of faculty as these are the reasons why some teachers opt to stay.

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