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Professional Development Opportunities as a determinant of Turnover Intention: A case of teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract. The study sought to establish whether the availability or non-availability of professional development opportunities determine the turnover intention of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. Descriptive survey design, where both qualitative and quantitative paradigms were employed. The study population comprised of 2582 secondary school teachers and principals in 367 public secondary schools. Stratified proportionate sampling and simple random sampling methods were used to pick 518 participants who included 503 secondary school teachers and 15 secondary school principals. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers while interview schedules were used to collect qualitative data from the sampled principals. The hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and chi-square goodness of fit. Computer software SPSS Version 21 aided in data analysis. An analysis of the Pearson product-moment correlation showed a negative correlation between professional development opportunities and the turn-over intention of teachers in secondary schools in Meru County. Equally, Chi-square results corroborated indicating a strong and significant association of professional development opportunities and turn-over intention of teachers in secondary schools in Meru County. The study concluded that a lack of professional development opportunities leads to low morale, low motivation, and high turnover intention of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County. The study recommended that the education stakeholders including the schools' Boards of Management, the Ministry of Education, and the Teachers Service Commission among others motivate teachers by regularly offering them professional development. This would enhance their pedagogical skills thus reducing turnover intention among teachers.

Keywords. Professional development opportunities, turnover intention, motivation, Job satisfaction

1. 1. Introduction

Motivation is the direction and persistence action and is a drive that makes people choose a certain action and not others and why they continue with a chosen action over a long period even when faced with difficulties and problems (Mullins, 2010; Luthans, 2011). According to Mba & Ikemefuna (2011), employee turnover usually occurs due to management's failure to motivate them. Researchers (Gatsinzi, Jesse, & Makewa, 2014) asserted that a large number of teachers in sub-Saharan Africa are poorly motivated by the existence of poor working conditions and unavailability of incentives such as opportunities for on-job training and

development which leads to low job satisfaction hence poor quality teaching. This position was also held by Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) who concluded that, this poor motivation leads to teachers' motivation crisis brought about by problems of poor remuneration, inadequate opportunities for on- job training, and development among other issues.

Bennell (2007) Further, argued that the inadequate motivation of teachers results in poor accountability in teaching and low satisfaction with their work, hence turnover intention. Mary (2010), agrees by concluding that many teachers in Africa have low motivation derived from poor working conditions and unavailability of incentives such as on-job training and professional development opportunities. This scenario leads to disgruntlement and disappointment of the concerned teachers which would most likely trigger an eventual quitting of the teaching profession. Other studies also show that when motivation is low, a teacher's work performance reduces. For example, Ingersoll (2001), concluded that inadequate opportunities for professional development among other factors led to low motivation, poor performance as well as job dissatisfaction among teachers hence high turnover intention.

Glewwe, Hamishek, Humpane, and Ravina (2011), compare schools to factories that produce learning on the process of schooling and teaching (inputs). They assert that an education system producing high inputs(teachers) leads to quality outputs(students). This is only possible through making the teaching profession enjoyable and attractive by motivating teachers and raising their job satisfaction by offering opportunities for continuous learning and professional development. This position was also taken by Aslami, (2013) by positing that when teachers are appreciated by being given opportunities for on job training and development, they be more settled in their current job and a reduced turnover intention will be noticed.

1.2 Objective

The objective of this study was to establish whether there was any relationship between professional development opportunities and turnover intention of teachers in a public secondary school in Meru County, Kenya.

1.3 Hypothesis

Ho1: Professional development opportunities have no significant relationship with the turnover intention of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County.

1.4 Significance

The findings of this study were intended to inform the major stakeholders in the education fraternity including the Ministry of Education, Teachers Service Commission, and administrators of educational institutions on the need to reduce teacher turnover intention through increasing teacher motivation and organizational commitment by offering teachers opportunities for on job learning and development.

2. Literature Review

Professional development includes several activities that help to raise workers' skills, knowledge, expertise, and other performance characteristics(OECD,2009). These activities help to raise workers' promotional prospects within their current job hierarchy while at the same time raising their employability in other organizations (Meyer & Smith, 2003). Training on the other hand entails acquiring skills and knowledge to enable one to perform specific tasks as well as changing one's attitude towards work(Werner,2009).

Origo and Nzonzo, (2011), on the other hand posits that staff development aims at long term preparation of employees for more responsibilities and enhancing their capacity to perform their

work better. According to Echard and Berge(2008), and Huang (2011), effective training and development lead to the creation of a culture of continuous performance improvement in schools hence high-quality education. Gary (2011) agrees by postulating that combining staff development with real-life experiences as well as higher education programs may lead to acquiring a license or a certificate which could increase achievement in employees' professional growth in or out of the organization.

Meanwhile, a teacher's success can be enhanced by the school's guidance and mentoring by assigning duties and responsibilities leading to an increment of their knowledge and skills at the school level. This leads to a reduction in turnover intentions. Literature available(Bergiel et al, 2009; Mello, 2009; Armstrong, 2010; Cunningham & Cordiero, 2007; Gupta, 2008; Kipkebut, 2010; Ngethe, 2013) conclude that staff development opportunities lead to attraction and retention of employees in an organization(school) because it enhances employee motivation. Further, such employees' (teachers) job satisfaction is enhanced hence more productivity.

Muthama (2013) concluded that when employees'(teachers) are recognized and appreciated through being given opportunities for on job learning and development, the turnover intention of such employees reduces drastically. The study's results indicate that 60% of the respondents would remain in their current job if an opportunity for learning and development is given by their organizations. Kwenin (2013) conducted a study on the relationship between career development opportunities and employee retention in Vodafone Ghana. The study results concluded that there existed a positive and linear correlation between career development opportunities and employee retention ($r=0.387$, $p=000$).

Scholars (Deal & Peterson, 2009; McKenzie, et al, 2005) emphasize the importance of teacher professional development by arguing that it creates a forum that reduces teaching burden by improving their performance as well as on-job through the facilitation of learning and increasing collegiality on their job. Cha (2008) agrees by suggesting that offering teachers a chance for professional development, enhances their personal as well as professional growth raising their performance capacity and effectiveness in teaching. Further, it provides opportunities for interaction with their colleagues hence enabling them to get a fresh vision in teaching and learning new teaching methods, new ways of assessment, new classroom management skills, and use of modern technology in teaching.

Leah (2014) in a study of job satisfaction and motivation of teachers in Kiharu

Sub-County found that for peoples' potential to develop, their self-esteem requires to be raised through being appreciated at work by being offered on job training and development. Nelson and Catherine (2015), Kadiresan et al (2015), and Jehanzeb et al (2013) also found that lack of on-job training and career development opportunities limited employees(teachers) promotional prospects and career advancement opportunities. This scenario eventually motivates such employees(teachers) not to think of quitting their current job. Meanwhile, Nguni, Slegers, and Denessen (2010) expressed a different opinion by asserting that regular on-job training and development opportunities for employees(teachers) increase employee's skills. This, therefore, raises their market value which in turn increase their chances of mobility by seeking transfers to other organizations, being employed in other organizations in higher positions, or sometimes resigning from teaching for employment in other more lucrative areas.

3. Methodology

Descriptive survey design with both quantitative and qualitative methods in data collection and analysis were employed. The researcher found this method useful because as proposed by Orodho, Khatete, and Mugiraneza (2016) survey is used to collect information that describes,

explore and help a researcher to understand social life as such surveys attempt to quantify social phenomena mainly issues, conditions as well as problems that usually affect or are prevalent in society. This method was also found to be less costly and time-saving because it enabled the researcher to make use of questionnaires to collect a large amount of data from the sampled population in a wide geographical area involving the entire Meru County. The utilization of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in data collection helped in the eradication of biases. This is because the two approaches help to check one another whereby the subjectivity associated with qualitative research is minimized by the objectivity of the quantitative approach (Saunders, 2016).

The population of the study comprised 2582 teachers including principals in 367 public secondary schools in Meru County. A stratified proportionate sampling technique was employed to pick twenty percent of the schools in each of the 8 sub-counties based on the number of schools in each sub-county. According to Gay, Mills, & Airasian (2009), and Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) social researchers recommend that 10 percent to 30 percent of the accessible population is enough. Therefore, 73 secondary schools (55 days and 18 boardings) representing 20 percent of the total number of schools were picked for the study. Using the same method 516 teachers teaching in public secondary schools from a total population of 2,582 teachers in Meru County were randomly sampled to participate in the study. Closed-ended questionnaires structured in the form of a 5-point Likert scale from 1-strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree were used to collect quantitative data from teachers. Qualitative data from selected principals of secondary schools were collected using a well-prepared interview schedule. Interviews with the secondary school principals helped the researcher to get more information and clarification on the turnover intention of teachers within their areas of jurisdiction This is because the school principals are the custodians of most of the teachers' records and therefore a lot of information. Questions included in the interview schedules were aligned to the research objective which enabled the researcher to get the right information.

Questionnaires were validated through expert judgment. Two experts read through copies of questionnaires and gave their input. A rigorous review of related literature also helped to improve on content validity by identifying various items that were used to measure similar concepts like the one in this study.

A pilot study was done by issuing questionnaires to 51 secondary school teachers in the county who were not included in the main study. The 51 teachers used in the pilot study formed ten percent of the sampled population of 516 teachers for the actual study. This is in line with Connelly (2008) who suggested that for a pilot study, 10% of the sampled population for the main study should be used. Reliability (internal consistency) of the questionnaires was then determined using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient method through the help of computer-generated SPSS version 21. The Cronbach's Alpha value, (α), obtained was 0.939 which the researcher concluded to be significantly reliable for this study. The reliability of qualitative data was ensured through creating a good rapport and confidentiality with the principals by explaining the purpose of the study.

4.0 Results and discussion

Out of a sample of 516 teachers used in this study, 503 returned the questionnaires representing a highly significant response rate of 97.48%. This was in tandem with Mugenda and Mugenda(2003) who suggested that in social research, a 50% response rate is adequate, a 60% response rate is good while a 70% and above response rate is very good. Meanwhile, all the fifteen sampled secondary school principals participated in the interviews as scheduled leading to a 100% percent response rate.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The objective of this study was to establish whether the existence or non-existence of professional development opportunities determines the turnover intention of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. To achieve this objective, three items based on a 1 to 5 Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree were used as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship between professional development opportunities and turnover intention of secondary school teachers

	Mean	SDev.	N	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
The school invests in staff development opportunities for teachers which motivates me to continue teaching in this school	2.47	1.277	502	4.8	25.0	11.7	29.0	29.4
Teachers go through staff development programs every academic year which motivates me to continue teaching	2.30	1.236	502	3.4	21.5	10.9	30.2	34.0
Staff development opportunities provided by this school motivates me to stay in teaching longer	2.16	1.172	502	2.8	16.7	10.6	33.1	36.9

As shown in table 1, the results indicate that the responses were inclined to disagree and strongly disagree with all the study items. For example, 58.4 percent of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that the school invests in staff development opportunities which motivate them to stay in the school. The item had a mean rating of 2.47 and a standard deviation of 1,277. For the item on teachers go through professional development programs every academic year which motivates them to stay, 64.2 percent of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with a mean of 2.30 and a standard deviation of 1.236. Lastly, on the item, staff development opportunities provided by this school motivate to stay in teaching longer, 70 percent of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with a mean of 2.16 and a standard deviation of 1.172. Therefore the results show that majority of secondary school teachers in Meru County have no opportunities to attend any professional development due to their schools' inability or lack of prioritization leading to dissatisfaction which could lead to turnover intention.

The interviews with the school principals corroborate by showing that when teachers are offered opportunities for professional development, they are happy and motivated because their skills and capacity as teachers is upraised. This leads to a reduced turnover intention. This is as expressed by one of the principals of a newly established public day secondary school about staff development opportunities;

Teachers in some of the new day secondary schools are not happy. This is because such schools have limited resources to sponsor them for on-job training and professional development learning. This is in comparison to teachers teaching in bigger, well-endowed schools. Such teachers are lowly motivated and therefore are always looking for a way out of these schools either through seeking for transfers to other better schools, seeking for alternative jobs and some going for further studies to boost their employability elsewhere.

These findings were in tandem with the reviewed literature. For example, Ingersoll (2001), OECD (2009), Kwenin,(2013) among others who concluded that professional development among other factors as the main reasons for low teacher motivation, job dissatisfaction, and high levels of turnover intention among teachers.

4.2 Inferential statistics

To test the stated null hypothesis; Professional development opportunities have no significant relationship with turnover intentions of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County; Pearson Product- Moment Correlation Coefficient and Chi-square goodness of fit at 95 percent level of significance and 5 percent level of precision were used. Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to test the strength and direction of a relationship between the independent variable (professional development opportunities) and the dependent variable (turnover intention) while Chi-square was used to determine the significant level of relationship between the two variables, the independent and the dependent variable.

4.2.1 Pearson correlation between professional development opportunities and teacher turnover intention

The correlation analysis results in table 2 indicate a linear correlation albeit negative ($r=-0.371$, $p<0.001$) between the independent variable (professional development opportunities) and the dependent variable (turnover intention) of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County. This means that, an increase in offering teachers development opportunities reduces the chances of the turnover intention of such teachers and vice versa. These results agreed with the reviewed literature that professional development opportunities have an impact on employee retention because it constitutes an important part of organizations contract with employees which deepen attachment of employees to an organization hence a reduced turnover intention (Bergiel et al, 2009; Mello, 2009; Boyd et al, 2009; McKenzie et al, 2005). The results also, corroborate with Kwenin (2013) who found a strong correlation between career development opportunities and employee retention ($r=0.387$, $p=000$).

Table 2. Pearson Correlation between professional development opportunities and teacher turnover intentions.

		SDO	ITL
SDO – Pearson Correlation		1	-.371
	Fig (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	502	502
ITL	Pearson Correlation	-.371	1
	Fig (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	502	502

4.2.2 Test of hypothesis, Chi-Square goodness of fit

Table 3 shows the results of chi-square analysis between professional development opportunities and turnover intention of secondary school teachers in Meru County. The results indicate a Pearson Chi-Square of 36.398 with 4 degrees of freedom and associated p-value (Asymptotic significance) was 0.000. This is very highly significant at $p < 0.005$. The analyzed results, therefore, contradict the stated null hypothesis, hence it was rejected. Therefore, a conclusion was made that professional development opportunities have a significant relationship with the turnover intention of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County. This implies that an increase in professional development opportunities for public secondary school teachers in Meru County leads to higher job satisfaction resulting in a reduced intention to quit teaching and the reverse is true. This agrees with the findings of Yula (2014) that providing a room for career development for teachers increases chances for such to remain in the teaching profession.

Table 3. Chi-Square results for professional development opportunities and turnover intention

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	36.398 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	34.829	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	35.117	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	502		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.29.

5. Summary and Conclusions

The objective of this study was to establish whether there was any relationship between professional development opportunities and the turnover intention of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County, Kenya. The descriptive results indicated that teachers in Meru County are not allowed to attend on-job learning and development because of the inability of their schools to offer such professional development programs. This was corroborated by qualitative results from interviews with secondary school principals in the county who explained the unhappiness of many secondary school teachers with their schools. This is due to the inability of such schools to provide or sponsor them for hence would be willing to move to schools that are capable of offering such programs.

The results of the analysis of Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation showed a negative correlation between professional development opportunities and the turnover intention of public secondary school teachers in Meru County implying that higher provision of professional development opportunities leads to an equivalent reduction turnover intention and vice versa. Chi-square analysis corroborates by concluding that a significant association existed between staff development opportunities and turnover intention of teachers in public secondary schools in Meru County. The findings, therefore, indicate that offering teachers opportunities for learning and development reduces turnover intention and improves teacher retention in secondary schools. Most of the reviewed literature agrees with the findings of this study that lack of opportunities for job training and development are major causes of the turnover intention of public secondary school teachers among other employees in other organizations.

6. Recommendations

The study recommended that education stakeholders such as the schools' Boards of Management, the Ministry of Education, and the Teachers Service Commission among others motivate teachers by regularly offering them professional development. This is through sponsoring them to attend courses and workshops at institutions like Kenya Education Management Institute and the Kenya School of Government among others. This would enhance their pedagogical skills, increase job satisfaction and motivation eventually reducing turnover intention, therefore increasing retention.

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