

Teacher Attrition in South Africa: Trends, Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT Teacher attrition is a universal challenge and has a negative impact on global policies. A growing body of research around the world shows that most countries are experiencing a substantial decline in meeting their teacher demand. In this article, I argue that teacher attrition has far-reaching implications for the quality of teaching and learning and for the achievement of Education For All (EFA) and Universal Primary Education (UPE) targets and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Drawing from the incentive theory of motivation and teacher attrition literature, this article (1) explores the emerging trends in teacher attrition and the challenges it presents; (2) critically analyses the South African teacher retention policies; (3) investigates the implications of teacher attrition on the quality of teaching and learning; (4) explores different avenues to reduce teacher attrition rate; (5) proposes a framework of rethinking teacher attraction and retention policies.

INTRODUCTION

Policy makers and scholars have long been interested in the issue of teacher attrition, particularly in government schools. On one hand, teachers with certain attributes may be more likely to leave than other teachers. On the other hand, working conditions in a school might also affect teacher mobility. However, there is a common thread that runs across the teacher attrition patterns in different countries. According to the Tanzania Education Network (2008), low salaries and poor conditions of service are the main cause of brain-drain. The low salaries and terrible conditions of service have contributed to a general decline in the status of the teaching profession. In Africa, despite impressive achievements, especially in education and political transformation, many challenges and gaps exist. In South Africa, teacher demand and supply have become matters of national concern. For several years, Faculties of Education in various universities have had difficulty in recruiting students for their introductory teacher education programmes, and this has had a severe impact on their capacity to provide these programmes (Department of Education 2005). This is because, in general, teaching has become a “stopgap” profession, or profession of “last resort”.

Regardless of progress made towards Education for All (EFA), Universal Primary Education (UPE) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), most countries are still ex-

periencing a substantial decline in their teacher supply. For example, severe teaching gaps are experienced by at least ten countries in the Arab States, East Asia and the Pacific, as well as South and West Asia. More than two-thirds of the world's countries with severe teacher gaps are in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2009). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2009), a global total of 10,3 million teachers should be recruited between 2007 and 2015. Looking at classrooms in 96 countries, between 2007 and 2015 at least 1,9 million more teachers will be needed to provide UPE of good quality. In addition, to fulfil the EFA commitment, sub-Saharan Africa has by far the greatest need for additional teachers.

The global community's concern regarding teacher attrition has been reiterated at a series of international conferences, starting with the World Conference on EFA in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. Notwithstanding the shortage of trained teachers, countries around the world have committed themselves to reaching the UPE goal by 2015. To achieve this, they need to ensure that sufficient school places are provided, enough teachers are employed to provide quality instruction, and school systems function effectively. In this article, the researcher argue that the teacher shortage has far-reaching implications for EFA and UPE policies. Central to this article is the assumption that some kinds of attrition may be reduced by changes in policy and practices, to fulfil the EFA and UPE commitments. Current

and emerging trends in teacher attrition call for a review of and changes to the teacher attraction and retention policy in theory and practice, through an incentive theory of motivation framework. Drawing from the teacher attrition literature, this article (1) investigates reasons for teacher attrition, (2) explores the emerging trends in teacher attrition and the challenges it presents, (3) critically analyses the South African teacher retention policies, (4) investigates the effect of teacher attrition on the quality of teaching and learning, and (5) proposes a framework for re-thinking teacher attraction and retention policies through the lens of an incentive theory of motivation.

Why Do We Have Teacher Attrition?

South Africa is nearing the end of the second decade since its first democratic election. In spite of great progress in education and political transformation, its education system faces serious objective difficulties, which have presented significant challenges in meeting the high expectations of the population – and those of the poor and disadvantaged in particular. Literature (Department of Education 2009 Gordon 2009) suggests that South Africa will need between 20 000 and 30 000 new teachers every year for the next decade. However, the number of graduates from the initial teacher education system is far lower. In recent years, the rate of teachers leaving teaching owing to retirement, medical incapacity and death has increased steadily. One reason is the HIV and AIDS pandemic, where low socio-economic status and living in rural areas may expose teachers, and particularly women, to the risk of infection (Gordon 2009).

The current teacher attraction and retention policies and mechanisms do not seem to address attrition issues effectively or adequately. Within this context, the questions “*Why do teachers quit the system?*” and “*What are the effects of teacher attrition on the quality of teaching and learning?*” become critical. Research on attrition and retention shows that conditions in the work environment affect teachers’ job satisfaction and subsequent career decisions (Billingsley 2003; Utah Foundation 2007). The majority of attrition studies focus on the effects of province and school working conditions, work assignment factors and teachers’ affective reac-

tions to their work. Work environment factors associated with staying include: (1) higher salaries (2) positive school climate (3) adequate support systems, particularly principal and central office support (4) opportunities for professional development (5) reasonable role demand, and (6) manageable case loads.

Teacher attrition has always been a problem in the education systems around the world, because there have never been enough teachers to meet the demands of the ever-increasing number of students (Hannah et al. 2011: 108). The theoretical explanation of why teachers leave their jobs or why teacher attrition occurs, proposes that teachers leave in a predictable U-shaped curve, which reflects their life cycle and career stages (Grissmer and Kirby as cited by Hannah et al. 2011: 108). Furthermore, the highest rate of attrition occurs early in the teacher’s career (job changes, further education and childbirth) and at the end of one’s career (retirement, illness and death). Grissmer and Kirby (as cited by Hannah et al. 2011: 108) also add that deciding to stay in teaching depends on six interdependent variables, namely: (a) the degree of transparency present during the hiring process, (b) the degree of human capital acquired to do a specific job in a specific location, (c) previous work experience when hired, (d) change in family status (marriage, divorce, spouse moving to another job and childbirth), (e) compensation and working conditions, and (f) job opportunities in and outside teaching. Other factors fostering attrition include lack of facilities for teaching, overcrowding of schools and classrooms, inadequate incentives, poor parental participation, policy overload, role conflict, favouritism and nepotism (OECD 2008).

The more generic human capital people acquire, the higher the possibility of their leaving for other jobs, because they can transfer their acquired skills to other job situations. As noted by Hannah et al. (2011: 108), the more specific human capital people acquire, the less likely they are to leave that job. In other words, teachers who acquire generic human capital are more likely to leave teaching for other jobs, while those who acquire a high level of specific human capital tend to stay in the teaching profession, since their skill is specific to teaching only. Research (Gonzalez 1995) signifies that certain aspects of the school environment encourage teachers to leave their jobs. These include lack of adminis-

trative support, lack of collegial and parental support and insufficient involvement in decision making. Several disposition and work environment elements combine to influence teacher attrition. The dispositional factors that were most common among teachers who left were youth, being female, high scores in teacher examination(s), middle to upper social economic status (SES), lack of experience, low level of commitment to teaching and ineffective strategies. The environmental factors that motivate teachers to leave their jobs are high school teaching assignments, large class size or caseload or both, unsupportive administrator, excessive article work, ambiguous or conflicting role demands, few job rewards and lack of decision-making opportunities. Also, people will definitely go for jobs that give them the highest monetary benefit, and financially teaching may be their last option.

Emerging Trends and Challenges in Teacher Attrition

Teacher attrition is a global challenge and very complex in nature. It is frequently positioned as either a problem for work force planning and resources, or as an indicator of the relatively poor quality of schooling and teacher morale. Although some countries, such as South Korea or Canada, may currently experience a teacher surplus, far more struggle with teacher attrition and shortages in specific areas, especially in science, mathematics, foreign languages and special education (The International Alliance of Leading Institutes (IALEI 2008: 44). Suell and Piotrowski (2007) note that in the United States, about a third of all teachers leave the profession, half of them within five years. Special education, mathematics and science experience the highest attrition rates – 20% annually in each field. In hard-to-staff schools such as high-poverty urban schools, 22% of their teachers are lost annually, while low-poverty schools experience a turnover rate of 12.8% (IALEI 2008: 44).

Literature indicates that teachers hold approximately 3.8 million or about 4% of the available jobs in the United States. During the 2004 to 2005 school year, 621 000 teachers or almost 17% moved on and slightly less than half of those teachers transferred to a different school. That represents a rate of almost 1000 teachers

per day who quit teaching and 1000 teachers per day who transfer to new schools across the US. When schools with high poverty are considered separately, the percentage jumps from 17% to 21%. Ingersoll's (2008) research into teacher attrition and mobility suggests that the shortage of good teachers is a skewed perception. He frequently cites the high turnover of new teachers; nearly a third in their first three years of teaching and half by the fifth year. Labour statistics also show that nearly 18% of new appointments are new teachers, or within their first three to five years of teaching. Ingersoll's empirical research suggests that the ones who remain are dedicated to stay long term, thus skewing the data, which appear to show a large number of retiring teachers, when only around 2% of teachers leave for retirement (Ingersoll 2008).

While there is no doubt that many countries face challenges regarding teacher supply, there are equally serious challenges of teacher deployment. In many countries there are qualified teachers in urban areas who are unemployed, while rural areas have unfilled posts. This pattern of simultaneous surplus and shortage is strong evidence that the problem of teachers for rural schools will not be solved simply by providing more teachers. It is disturbing to note that each year thousands of new teachers enter the profession, only to leave a few years later. Though some teachers stay until retirement, others leave earlier for many reasons, including the teaching environment and personal reasons. Ingersoll (2008) notes that contemporary teacher attrition rates vary between 5% and 30% and could be attributed to a significant number of variables. The causes of teacher attrition vary greatly from one individual teacher to the other. The decision to leave the profession may be influenced by a variety of factors. Among other things, it includes the following: experience of tension, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression resulting from work, school violence, low salaries and strenuous working conditions.

High-poverty public schools have far higher turnover rates than do more affluent public schools. In a study conducted in South Africa by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) for the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) in 2005, it was found that 55% of teachers would leave teaching if they could (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2008: 299). The reasons cited include workload stress, low salaries, lack of dis-

cipline in schools and lack of career advancement. In addition, attrition rates seem to be highest among younger teachers; employment options and pension considerations act as a holding force for many older teachers. The loss of young blood is, of course, a drain on the vitality of the teaching force. According to the Trends in Education Macro Indicators Report (2009: 71), South Africa's attrition rate of 5.9% in 2002/03 is fairly low when compared to that of other countries. Comparatively, the attrition rate of teachers in Botswana amounted to 14% in 2001, in Swaziland it was 12% in 2002, and in the United Kingdom it was 15.3% in 2000. International research indicates that teacher attrition rates for various countries range between 5% and 30%.

While teacher demand has increased and many South African schools have had hiring difficulties, schools face an alarming phenomenon – teachers are leaving schools at a startling rate. Paulse's (2005) research found that 55% of teachers have considered leaving the profession due to inadequate remuneration, increased

workload, lack of career development, lack of professional recognition, dissatisfaction with work policies or job insecurity. In addition, the average number of teachers in the system has declined over the last 8 years – from 386 735 to 368 548 between 2003 and 2004. Attrition (total loss) in the teacher workforce fluctuated, declining from 9.3% in 1997/1998 to 5.5% in 2000/2001, before rising again to 5.9% in 2002/2003. The proportion of attrition due to mortality (all causes) increased from 7.0% in 1997/1998 to 17.7% in 2003/2004. The proportion of attrition due to medical reasons grew from 4.6% to 8.7% over the same period.

The number to quit is higher than the number of teachers trained each year. The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, revealed that 24 750 teachers left the profession between 2005 and 2008 as a result of resignation, death, dismissal and early retirement due to ill-health. The statistics show that the largest number of teachers quitting was in Gauteng with 5 614 leaving between 2005 and 2008, followed by KZN (5

Table 1: Total terminations by Province and ethnic group during the past four years

<i>Province</i>	<i>Financial year</i>	<i>African</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Coloured</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Total</i>
Eastern Cape	2005/2006	1379	12	122	135	1648
	2006/2007	1229	17	120	145	1511
	2007/2008	1316	10	118	160	1604
Free State	2005/2006	417	0	33	197	647
	2006/2007	407	1	20	208	636
	2007/2008	507	0	27	162	696
Gauteng	2005/2006	616	88	112	823	1639
	2006/2007	667	109	135	966	1877
	2007/2008	845	89	143	1021	2098
Kwa-Zulu Natal	2005/2006	1228	197	31	175	1631
	2006/2007	1289	190	52	227	1758
	2007/2008	1315	168	30	203	1716
Limpopo	2005/2006	707	3	0	50	760
	2006/2007	718	3	1	82	804
	2007/2008	677	4	2	70	753
Mpumalanga	2005/2006	416	7	2	146	571
	2006/2007	433	6	7	115	561
	2007/2008	410	5	4	135	554
North West	2005/2006	386	7	7	106	506
	2006/2007	505	5	8	135	653
	2007/2008	359	6	12	122	499
Northern Cape	2005/2006	32	0	99	64	195
	2006/2007	43	1	87	61	192
	2007/2008	75	0	94	55	224
Western Cape	2005/2006	144	5	601	310	1060
	2006/2007	127	5	478	316	926
	2007/2008	126	4	575	326	1031
Grand Total	2005/2006	5325	319	1007	2006	8657
	2006/2007	5418	337	908	2255	8918
	2007/2008	5630	286	1005	2254	9175

Source: Department of Education (2012)

005), Eastern Cape (4 763), Western Cape (3 017), Limpopo (2 317), Free State (1 979), Mpumalanga (1 686), North West (1 658) and the Northern Cape with 611. On the other hand, the Report of the Teacher Education Policy Forum for sub-Saharan Africa (2007) notes that attrition is likely to rise in most countries, as current attrition is kept artificially low by the large number of relatively young teachers recruited during the recent expansion. It also suggests that mortality related attrition rose from 7% in 1997 to 17.7% in early 2000, as a percentage of overall teacher attrition in South Africa. The table below illustrates the total terminations by province and ethnic group during the past four years.

South African Teacher Retention Policies: A Critical Analysis

Teachers are the largest single occupational group and profession in the country, numbering close to 390 000 in public and private schools. They work in extremely complex conditions, largely due to the pervasive legacies of apartheid, but also as a result of the new policies needed to bring about change in education (Department of Education 2006). In 2006 there were 386 595 teachers employed by the Departments of Education of whom 19 407 (or 5%) were in independent schools. Of those in public institutions, 173 850 were in primary schools, 111 865 in secondary schools, and 53 988 in combined, intermediate or middle schools. In addition, there were 15 954 Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) teachers, 7 392 teachers working in special schools and 7 363 in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres, 24 118 teachers in public schools (or 7%) were employed by school governing bodies (Department of Education 2006). The latest available statistics from the Department of Basic Education show that in 2010 South Africa had 439 394 teachers (Department of Education 2012). The broad goal of this policy is to achieve a dynamic balance between the number of teachers entering and leaving teaching each year (Department of Education 2006). The more precise goal is to ensure that appropriately qualified teachers fill all vacancies in all schools. Many variables affect both the demand for and supply of teachers

Most research studies indicate an impending shortage of teachers in the country, although its exact magnitude and timing are a matter of

debate. *The Educator Supply and Demand* report (Department of Education 2006) projected a shortfall of around 15 000 teachers by 2008, with certain assumptions about enrolment trends and learner-teacher ratios. There is clearly a lack of fit between overall demand and supply, and also between demand and supply for particular skills in particular schools. There is an oversupply in some subject areas, and an undersupply in others, and also imbalances in the deployment of teachers. Rural schools are particularly badly affected. Shortages are experienced in scarce skills areas such as mathematics, science and technology, in languages and arts, and in the economic and management Sciences. Shortages are also reported for the Foundation and Intermediate Phases of the system (Department of Education 2006).

In response to teacher shortage and recruitment, the Department of Education (2006) asserts that the Ministry of Education will ensure that: (1) a national electronic database and information service on teacher demand and supply is established in collaboration with Provincial Departments of Education, universities and the ELRC, capable of tracking and projecting teacher attrition, requirements and recruitment by learning area and subject, phase and district, with sensitivity to gender imbalances; (2) a national government-sponsored service contract programme is established, to encourage recruitment into initial teacher education; (3) Initial Professional Education of Teachers (IPET) qualification routes are appropriate to meet numerical and professional needs; (4) systems are developed for the induction and mentoring of new teachers; (5) conditions of service are adjusted to respond to challenges of recruitment, including financial incentives to recruit and retain teachers in scarce skills areas, for top performing teachers, and for teachers in rural areas; and (6) serving teachers are provided with skills to enhance their competence and develop their knowledge in learning areas or subjects and phases where there is scarcity.

Notwithstanding the improved qualification profile of the teaching force, most reports on South African education indicate that the majority of teachers have not yet been sufficiently equipped to meet the education needs of a growing democracy in a 21st century global environment (Department of Education 2006). There has been a significant decline in the enrolment of

student teachers over the past decade, although this trend reversed in 2005 to 2006, with over 6 000 new teachers expected to graduate at the end of 2006 (Department of Education 2006). The perceived causes of diminishing interest in the profession are the poor public image of the profession and its status, particularly among young people, uncertainty about where new teachers would be placed after qualification, a competitive employment market, challenging working conditions, and changes with respect to the award of service linked bursaries to student teachers. The result has been especially evident in the low enrolment of African student teachers. The situation is especially serious in the Foundation phase where learners require teachers with mother-tongue competence. Of the 6 000 new teachers expected to graduate in 2006, fewer than 500 would be competent to teach in African languages in the Foundation Phase.

In the light of the above, poor teacher motivation and inadequate incentives have far-reaching adverse impacts on the behaviour and overall performance of primary school teachers and, thus, learning outcomes. Emerging trends in the teacher incentives framework and/or models highlight that the policies for teacher attraction and retention need to take into consideration a range of issues that led to the *status quo*. In addition, teacher retention policies should have incentives that increase the attractiveness of teaching as a career, reward teachers for effective performance, and encourage and maintain high levels of enthusiasm for the teaching process. Such policies should be informed and guided by the teacher incentive framework that is compatible with the emergent paradigm.

The challenge of teacher attrition is a policy imperative. It forms part of a complex of teacher policy issues, which need to be considered by policy-makers – it imposes additional costs on education systems and has a damaging impact on the quality of schooling. Many of these problems are interconnected and should not be seen as separate issues – they have perverse effects on the South African education system. A survey of teachers, conducted as part of the study, identified the following factors, among others:

- ♦ Disintegration of discipline (thus causing unfavourable working conditions);
- ♦ Lack of facilities for teaching – especially subjects such as science and technology;
- ♦ Severe overcrowding of schools and classrooms;

- ♦ Lack of adequate incentives;
- ♦ Poor parental participation at all levels: school governance and the disciplining of children;
- ♦ Policy overload, leading to dissatisfaction with time allocation, and making working conditions unbearable through the increase in administrative work; and
- ♦ Role conflict.

Teacher attraction and retention are of central importance to the achievement of the 2015 EFA goals and MDGs, more specifically in South African schools. Within this context, teacher attraction and retention play a pivotal role in the achievement of government's *Action PLAN TO 2014: TOWARDS THE REALISATION OF SCHOOLING 2025, Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT POLICY STATEMENTS (CAPS)*. Only three years away from 2015, there are large gaps in the provision of teachers. The International Task Force on Teachers for EFA (2010) indicates that 1,9 million additional teacher posts should be created to attain the EFA goals by 2015. In addition to that, approximately one million teachers have to be replaced every year to balance teacher attrition. It further notes that not all countries are prepared and in a position to raise the number of their teachers accordingly, which puts them at risk of not being able to achieve the goals. But the teacher gap is not only an issue of quantity – it is “qualified” and “motivated” teachers that are needed.

Implications of Teacher Attrition on Quality of Teaching and Learning

High teacher attrition can cause problems of educational quality, equity and efficiency. Utah Foundation (2007) notes that by contributing to teacher shortages and the number of inexperienced teachers in classrooms, teacher attrition negatively impacts teacher quality and limits children's access to a high-quality education. In addition, teacher attrition also tends to contribute to the unequal distribution of teacher quality across student populations. Typically, the most disadvantaged students attend schools

with the highest teacher attrition rates and the lowest quality teachers. Additionally, the broad consensus among educational researchers is that teacher quality has a larger impact on student achievement than any other school-related factor, and that the quality of individual teachers varies widely. Because of the large impact of teachers on student achievement, unequal teacher quality conflicts with the governments' democratic commitment to equal educational opportunity. Finally, high teacher attrition is costly. High teacher attrition forces schools to spend greater amounts of school resources on recruiting, hiring and inducting new teachers. Many schools scramble each year to fill the positions left vacant by departing teachers (Utah Foundation 2007).

Teachers are crucial for student success. Yet many of them leave their schools and the profession every year, particularly in poorer, lower-performing schools (Alliance For Excellent Education 2008). Levels of teacher attrition and retention have severe implications for the quality of teaching (IALEI 2008: 44). In addition, limited teacher supply increases the need and likelihood for out-of-field teaching, where teachers teach subjects they have not been prepared for, or certified to teach. This obviously leads to poor teaching, handicapping students who may wish to specialise in these subjects. Teacher morale is affected and there is likely to be a loss of public confidence in these teachers and teachers in general. According to Rasmussen (2008), in Denmark a higher probability of out-of-field teaching is foreseen due to teacher shortages in the areas of natural sciences and foreign languages, which could also be the result of the way teacher preparation is organised.

It is widely believed that shortfalls of teachers resulting primarily from two converging demographic trends—increasing student enrolments and increasing teacher retirements—are leading to problems staffing schools with qualified teachers and will, in turn, lower educational performance. Increasing teacher attrition rate in South African public schools places the education system at risk of lower teacher quality, greater inequity in student opportunities, and increased inefficiency as more funds are diverted to recruiting and training new teachers. As Paule (2005) puts it, the high teacher attrition rate affects the quality of education received by learners with emotional and behavioural disorders,

whose behaviour demands more skilled and reliable support.

Adequate workforce and resource planning for teacher supply requires a deep understanding of teacher attrition. Teacher attrition takes a certain pattern. For example, the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA (2010) suggests that attrition of secondary teachers is higher than that of primary teachers, because their higher qualifications lead to greater labour market opportunities. A plethora of literature suggests that special education, mathematics and science teachers are found to leave at a higher rate than teachers of other subjects, because they have more career options than other teachers. On the other hand, the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA (2010) indicates that there is a high attrition within the ranks of teachers with the highest qualifications. There is also an unusually high attrition of teachers without formal qualifications. This suggests that secondary teachers have more alternative labour market opportunities. Given the complexity of the teacher attrition patterns, it is important that data be collected in a systematic and reliable manner for inclusion in policy development on teacher attraction and retention.

Rethinking Teacher Attraction and Retention Policies through the Lens of the Incentive Theory of Motivation

The challenges facing the South African education system are considerable. To meet these challenges, policy planners need to understand the expected trajectory of teacher attrition. Only then will they be able to target problem areas with specific interventions that have been tailored effectively to meet the educational needs of the teacher population. On the other hand, policymakers can develop teacher attraction and retention policies underpinned by incentive theories. A significant number of theories has been proposed to explain motivation. However, incentive theories suggest that behaviour is motivated by external rewards. The basic premise of this theory is that humans focus on external or environmental cues instead of internal drives to motivate behaviour; and, therefore, it holds that people are motivated to work by the potential rewards of money, security and recognition. The literature indicates that incentives can be used as external stimuli for behaviour: (1) individuals

are attracted to behaviours associated with positive incentives and discouraged from those behaviours that they associate with negative outcomes; and (2) the value of an incentive is influenced by both cognitive and biological factors. Therefore, drug-taking behaviour might be motivated by both biological addiction (craving) and cognitive evaluations (taking the drug in the past has made the person feel relaxed and happy).

Most teachers see teaching as a *stepping stone* to careers that they feel are more respected and are better paying than teaching (Bennell and Akyeampong 2007). This section draws from the 12 country case studies on Teacher Motivation in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia by Bennell and Akyeampong (2007). The literature on teacher motivation and incentives in developed countries has many themes in common with the far more limited literature on this subject in low-income developing countries (Bennell and Akyeampong 2007). In addition, it is widely contended that the status of teachers in most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries has declined appreciably during the last 50 years, teacher autonomy and creativity has been curtailed by more control and regulation, and that teachers are expected to do more with less. Teachers also complain about the lack of variety and role differentiation in their careers, the limited incentives for them to improve their practice and develop as professionals, and the limited linkages between their performance, teacher compensation and teacher development (Bennell and Akyeampong 2007).

Bennell and Akyeampong's research (2007) suggests that teachers' salaries in most countries do not cover basic household expenditure. This is particularly the case for teachers at urban schools who have to cope with high accommodation and transport costs. The cost of living is generally much lower in rural areas. Teachers who work at schools in their home areas are generally better off because of lower accommodation costs and access to productive assets, in particular land and animals (Bennell and Akyeampong 2007). In addition, although teachers are very poorly paid, in most countries, their basic salaries usually compare favourably with equivalent occupations (for example, nurses, accounts clerks and agricultural extension workers) in the civil service. In a number of countries (including

Bangladesh and Malawi) income differentials between qualified and unqualified teachers have also become seriously compressed over time. The research indicates that teachers at private schools earn considerably more than those at government schools.

Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) indicate that three major issues emerge from the country case studies with regard to allowances. While allowances continue to account for a sizeable proportion of the overall remuneration package for teachers in a few countries (notably India and Bangladesh), the trend elsewhere, and especially in Africa, is for allowances to be phased out, in some cases, almost altogether. This is in line with reforms of public sector salaries, which are central to the economic reform agendas of the IMF and World Bank. Teachers are often not entitled to the same allowances as other civil servants (particularly housing and car loans). Remote area allowances are paid in many countries, but they do not appear to have a major impact in rectifying staffing imbalances between rural and urban schools. This is mainly because they are not usually large enough (typically 20-30% of basic pay) to compensate teachers for the net disadvantages of rural life. In some countries, such as Sierra Leone, remote area allowances have been agreed on, but owing to lack of funding they have not been operationalised (Bennell and Akyeampong 2007).

Late payment also has a share in attrition. Not only are pay levels very low but, in many countries, they are not paid on time either (Bennell and Akyeampong 2007). Late payment of salaries is very common, especially in low-income African countries, where fiscal crises are most acute. This can have a devastating impact on teacher morale. In Sierra Leone, for example, "late payment of salaries makes teachers dissatisfied with their jobs" (Harding and Mansaray, as cited by Bennell and Akyeampong 2007). Typically, teachers who have not been paid do not come to school on time and are hungry. In some countries, newly recruited teachers also have to wait a year to be put on the payroll.

In developed countries, policy-makers and scholars have long been interested in the issue of teacher attrition, particularly in urban schools. For example, in the United States, which faces a high attrition rate for beginner teachers, *induction* has been regarded as an important device to retain teachers (IALEI 2008: 63). Furthermore,

in Shanghai, Japan and France, where pre-service education focuses on subject-specific content mastery, with very limited exposure to actual classroom experience (such as a very brief teaching practicum), *induction* has become an important tool for supporting beginner teachers in learning how to become effective classroom teachers.

Against this backdrop, lessons, experiences and practices from other countries can be used in rethinking the South Africa teacher attraction and retention policies. The South African teacher attrition statistics are shocking. Education policies, if any, on the attraction and retention of teachers seem to be silent on and incompatible with the incentive theory of motivation. Teachers quit teaching for a number of reasons. A popular belief is that many who leave teaching do so for better pay or other career opportunities. If teacher attrition is not reduced, South Africa will experience increasingly severe teacher shortages. This article proposes that by rethinking attraction and retention policies through the lens of incentive theory of motivation, a number of public policy changes can be pursued to reduce teacher attrition and avoid its impacts. The four most promising options suggested by literature on the incentive theory of motivation are as follows:

1. **Higher Salaries** – This alternative would involve an across-the-board salary increase for all teachers. This policy initiative makes teaching more attractive by increasing the compensation that teachers receive.
2. **Differentiated Salaries** – Under this policy initiative, teachers who accept positions in designated shortage areas would receive additional compensation. Shortages could be defined according to subject area (for example mathematics, special education), geography (for example isolated rural areas), or student population (for example low-achieving, high-poverty). This policy introduces market elements into the single salary schedule by allowing compensation to reflect differences in supply and demand across various teaching positions. The aim is to improve the attractiveness of particular teaching positions to alleviate chronic shortages.
3. **Smaller Class Sizes** – This alternative would be favoured by many teachers, more

specifically in overcrowded schools. This policy-initiative has the potential of making teaching a more attractive activity by improving the working conditions of teaching.

4. **Mentoring** – This alternative would make teaching more attractive to teachers by improving working conditions and personal satisfaction. Mentoring programmes improve working conditions by providing support, advice and encouragement to new and inexperienced teachers. New teachers' access to additional resources through mentoring also increases the likelihood that they will feel successful and personally satisfied with their career choice. This policy aims to decrease the very high rate of attrition among teachers in their first five years of teaching.

CONCLUSION

To summarise, some countries have attempted to make working in rural areas more attractive through the use of incentives. Although the causes of the special teacher shortage problem are complex, the retention of teachers is critical. The problem will not be resolved by recruiting thousands of new people into teaching if many leave after a few years. It is critical to know how many teachers are leaving and what they do upon leaving. In some cases there may be financial incentives that could be introduced, in the form of a hardship allowance, travel allowance or subsidised housing. In other areas the incentives may be non-monetary, including, for example, special study leave or better training opportunities. Research suggests that there are a number of school-level non-financial interventions that could encourage teacher retention, including (1) *Mentoring and induction*: Schools providing mentoring programmes for new teachers, and particularly those that provided mentoring by colleagues in the school, appear to have lower rates of staff turnover; (2) *Autonomy*: Schools that allow teachers more autonomy in planning and delivering the curriculum, are found to have lower rates of attrition; and (3) *Support for professional development*: Schools that encourage and support staff's professional development are likely to see improved retention.

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