Attrition of Private and Public School Teachers: A Comparative Analysis

Ruth A. Ortega-Dela Cruz*

Institute of Governance and Rural Development, College of Public Affairs and Development, University of the Philippines, Los Baños, Philippines-4031

*Corresponding author: rodelacruz@uplb.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

The study focused on the factors that influence teacher attrition decision in comparison between public and private institution. The study used descriptive research design. A total of 30 teachers participated in answering the survey questionnaires based from Herzberg Hygiene Theory. Descriptive analysis shows slight difference in the extent of how each factor influences teacher's attrition decision. T-Test revealed a significant difference in the attrition between private and public school teachers (p = .000 < 0.05). This further implies that factors that influence attrition decision of the movers are different from those who came from private and public institution. Truly, teacher attrition burdens educational institutions with added recruiting and hiring costs. Concern over student and school performance also pushes this issue forward. Thus, a strategic response is needed and efforts to stem teacher attrition must center on the school site and on the factors that support good teaching. For where the good teaching environment is, there will also be a better learning environment that fosters educational success.

Keywords: Attrition, comparative analysis, public, private, school teachers

The teacher workforce has experienced many teachers leaving (leavers), entering, and moving within the profession to other schools (movers). This movement affects the composition of teachers at these campuses and the institutional stability of these campuses and also the demographics and qualifications of the teacher workforce as a whole (Provasnik & Dorfman 2005). One type of turnover (retirement) is inevitable and expected (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook 1997). Another type of turnover, which results in teachers leaving the profession (leavers), is teacher attrition, which sends a powerful and harmful message to students, parents, and other faculty members (Joftus & Maddox-Dolan 2002).

Teachers who move to other schools or districts (migration or movers) represent a third type of turnover. Because employee turnover is expensive, many districts and schools consider employee turnover as a serious problem. According to Ingersoll and Smith (2003), "Employee turnover has especially serious consequences in workplaces that require extensive interaction among participants and that depend on commitment, continuity, and cohesion among employees". Therefore, teacher turnover in schools not only causes staffing problems, but also impacts student achievement and the school atmosphere.

The effectiveness of education depends on retaining teachers. The attrition of novice teachers from the teaching profession is a concern. To clarify, attrition refers to the decision of teachers who came from public and private schools to move into another educational institution as a result of job dissatisfaction influenced by the attrition factors as defined by Herzberg in his Hygiene Theory.

There are several factors that contribute to the teacher attrition rate. The study reported in this paper determined the factors that explain teacher's decision to move out of previous educational institution, and compared the factors that influence teacher attrition decision from private and public educational institution.

METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive research design. A total of 30 teachers participated in answering the survey questionnaires based from Herzberg Hygiene Theory. This survey questionnaire determines the

factors that influence private and public teacher attrition decision. It contains six (6) items which represent the attrition factors and to indicate how important each of six factors was in their decision to move out of their previous teaching position, a five-point Scale ranging from "unimportant" (1) to "critical" (5) was used. The researcher identified 11 movers from public and 19 from private school. The researcher also had informal interview with some of the respondents who were willing to discuss their viewpoints about the attrition factors that were critical to them. Descriptive statistics/analysis was also used to compute the means. Comparative analysis was done using the t-test to determine the significant difference in the factors that explain attrition of the public and private school teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collection of data on the factors that influence teacher's decision to move out of previous educational institution was done through survey questionnaires distributed to the respondents considered in the study. For better understanding, the data are presented in tabular form and generalizations were developed to determine the factors that influence teacher attrition decision in comparison between public and private institution. Attrition factors are the hygiene factors including the school administration and policy, interpersonal relations, job security, pay and benefits, work assignments, and work conditions that influence teacher's decision to move out of previous institution using a five-point scale ranging from unimportant (1) to critical (5).

Table 1: Factors that explain attrition in private and public schools

Attrition Factors	Mean Scores		
	Private	Public	Overall
School Administration & Policy	3.58	4.73	4.00
Pay and Benefits	3.95	3.36	3.73
Job Security	4.42	2.09	3.57
Interpersonal Relations	3.37	3.73	3.50
Work Conditions	2.53	4.45	3.23
Work Assignment	3.00	2.73	2.90

Range: 4.45-5.00 –Critical; 3.45- 4.44 – Very Important; 2.45-3.44- Important;1.45-2.44- Slightly Important; 1.00-1.44- Unimportant

Comparison between the two groups of movers shows slight difference in the extent of how each factor influences their attrition decision. Based from the results only the factors related to Job Security (X_3) and Work Conditions (X_6) in which the attrition decision of movers varies and the rest, these two groups have almost the same with regard to the factors that influence them**.** The fact that the probability for permanency or job security is higher in public than in private institution, thus this factor is very important for private teachers/movers. In contrast to the factor related to work condition which is slightly important to private teachers but very important to those teachers who decided to move out of public institution. This indicates the inadequacy of public educational institution in terms of teaching facilities and school resources.

Result of t-Test revealed a significant difference in the attrition between private and public school teachers ($p = .000 < 0.05$). This further implies that factors that influence attrition decision of the movers are different from those who came from private and public institution. One explanation of this is that, movers differ in terms of the hygiene/employment factors that influence their attrition decision. This means that problems encountered by movers from private institution are different from those experienced by movers from public institution regarding low level of administrative competence, style and policy (X_1), as well as the administrative support, interaction and relationship with colleagues and students (X_2); low level of pay and benefits (X_4), likewise problems associated with work assignments (X_5).

Table 2: t-Test of attrition between private and public schools

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Private	24.826	18	.000	3.42947	3.1393	3.7197
Public	25.631	10	.000	3.45545	3.1551	3.7558

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore concluded hygiene/employment factors including incompetence of the administration, poor administrative style and policy, low probability for permanency in the teaching position as well as unreasonable number of work assignments such as

teaching load, paper works and role problems can lead to negative affective reactions, e.g., high levels of stress as well as low levels of job satisfaction and commitment. These negative reactions can lead to withdrawal and eventually attrition. Because when these teachers decided that successful teaching and continuous growth were not possible in their original schools, they moved out for new sites. The original schools and their students suffered as a result.

Although private and public teachers expressed a deep commitment to teaching and a desire to do it well, their experience in other careers had taught them that workplaces differ and that the environment is crucial in fostering satisfaction and success. When they had their first teaching jobs, most had simply expected their new schools provide basic resources and functioning. They had counted on having colleagues to mentor and collaborate with them, and had assumed that administrators would be respectful, accessible, and involved in the life of the school. When they did not find their schools wanting nor they found that the school wide norms could either support or undermine their efforts, they looked for different environments. The movers had not given up on teaching. Instead they looked for schools that made good teaching possible. The conditions they sought were straightforward and consistent. These movers wanted more than workable teaching situations; they also wanted opportunities to interact with other professionals and hone their skills. They left schools in which they felt isolated or philosophically out of sync with colleagues and searched for more sustaining professional cultures. When explaining their decisions to move out of their previous educational institution, most movers cited dissatisfaction with school administration more often than any other factor. Some found the administrators dictatorial or inept.

Similar to the findings of Ingersoll and Smith (2003) who stated that the working conditions identified by teachers as factors in their decision to leave teaching—lack of administrative and collegial support, poor student discipline and relationship with students —may offer a more effective focus for improvement efforts. Administrative leadership—or lack of leadership often influences whether teachers are satisfied with their work and workplace (Johnson, Harrison-Berg & Donaldson 2005). Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2004) commented that teachers

are influenced by the conditions of their teaching as they decide to move to other schools. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) described the extent the administration can impact a teacher's decision to stay, leave, or move to another school, as well as its impact on a teacher's perception of his or her success as a teacher. New teachers, who had a supportive administration felt encouraged along the way, understood they would continually improve in their career, desired to remain in their school, and were content with their decision to do so. In contrast, teachers who experienced inconsistent, unsupportive, abusive, or neglectful administrators left their schools either to pursue another career or to teach at another school.

Furthermore, Brock and Grady (2000) in their book, From First-Year to First-Rate: Principals Guiding Beginning Teachers noted that beginning teachers want both interaction and affirmation from their principals. The relationship between teacher and principal is one of major importance in a teacher's work life. For beginning teachers, the climate created by the principal will be a factor in their success or failure" (Brock & Grady 2000). This indicates how administrative leadership/support influences commitment, when administrators communicate clear expectations, provide fair evaluations, and provide assistance and support, teachers experience greater professional commitment (Singh & Billingsley 1998). Therefore, administrators who support teacher learning promote a positive school climate. On the other hand, lack of administrators support can create an environment of helplessness, frustration, and attrition. Administrative support seems to be important to teachers' well-being.

Working conditions play an important role in teachers' decisions to move to another school or district or to leave the profession (Darling-Hammond 1997). Accordingly, teacher attrition will never end and that quality teaching will not be achieved for every student until change in the conditions that are driving teachers out of too many of the schools.

CONCLUSION

An implication of the findings is that teacher attrition burdens educational institutions with added recruiting and hiring costs. Concern over student and school performance also pushes this issue forward. High rates of teacher attrition are disruptive

to program continuity and planning. High levels of teacher attrition create significant decreases in student performance. Higher rates of teacher attrition also may indicate underlying problems and disrupt the effectiveness of schools in a way that schools are having difficulty finding substitute teachers to fill in for teacher absences.

The findings of this study also suggest that efforts to stem teacher attrition must center on the school site and on the factors that support good teaching. The schools that these teachers chose provided them with balanced and appropriate assignments, good curriculums with sufficient resources, colleagues who generously shared their ideas and encouragement, school wide policies and practices that kept students focused on learning, and fair-minded school leaders/administrators who were actively engaged in the life of the school. Surely all schools, regardless of the wealth of their communities or the demographic composition of their students, should achieve these conditions. Although policymakers can mandate and fund recruitment and induction programs, only school leaders can foster the full range of supports that teachers need. Teachers will choose to stay at schools where sustained and consistent supports are in place, where they can do their day-to-day jobs with confidence, and where they can grow in their profession over time.

REFERENCES

Abdallah, J. 2009. Lowering Teacher Attrition Rates through Collegiality. 7 (1) from http://www.academicleadership.org/emprical_research.

Australian Government 2006. Attitudes to Teaching as A Career. A Synthesis of Attitudinal Research Surveys and Workforce Analysis Section. Department of Education, Science and Training from http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/Synthesis of DESTattitudinal.

Buckley, J., Schneider, M. and Shang, Yi. 2004. *Teacher Attrition* Rate and School Facility: Literature Review from http://www.edfacilities.org/pubs/teacher.

Carter, J. 2009. Improving Working Conditions; The Role of the Administrator in Teacher Retention; and Induction and Mentoring Programs that Work. Investigating Critical & Contemporary Issues in Education/Attrition & Status http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Investigating_Critical_&_Contemporary_Issues_in_Education/Attrition_&_Status.

Croasmun, J., Hampton, D. and Herrmann, S. 2006. Teacher Attrition: Is Time Running Out? Educational Leadership Program School of Education The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from http://horizon.unc.edu/projects/issues/papers/Hampton.

Feng, Li. 2005. Hire Today, Gone Tomorrow: The Determinants of Attrition among Public School Teachers. (MPRA) Munich Personal RePEc Archive. Florida State University from http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de

Garcia, C and Slate, J. 2008. Teacher Turnover: A Conceptual Analysis. From http://cnx.org/content/m18916.

Gawel, J. 2009. Herzberg's Theory of Motivation and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs from http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/files/herzberg.html.

Gonzalez, P. 1995. Factors That Influence Teacher Attrition. National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Alexandria, VA from http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails/detailmini.jsp.

Ingersoll, R. 2001. Teacher Turnover and Teacher Shortages: An Organizational Analysis. University of Pennsylvania. *American Educational Research Journal*, **38**(3): 499-534.

Marshall, I. and Marshall, R. 2003. Recruitment, Retention, and Renewal: Eliminating Teacher Shortage from http://www.hiceducation.org/edu_proceedings.