

The Influence of Teacher Attrition on the Growth of Secondary Schools. Implications for Managers of Secondary Schools Education in Benue South Senatorial District

By

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Abstract: Abstract This paper assessed the Influence of Teacher Attrition on the Growth of Secondary Schools. Implications. Implications for Managers of Secondary Schools Education in Benue South Senatorial District. The study employed a mixed research design, which included naturalistic and descriptive survey designs. The target population comprised all public secondary school teachers in Benue South Senatorial District Education officials, teachers who had left teaching and form 3 and 4 students. Data collection instruments included Questionnaires for teachers and students, interview schedule for Benue South Education officials and document analysis guides. Analysis of data has been through use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that there existed a positive correlation between teacher attrition and performance secondary school managers in the study area, which was statistically significant. It was also established that attrition has a negative effect on students' academic achievement as it increases educational managers and teachers' workload, shortages, curriculum implementation, creates poor image on teaching as a profession and denies students' future career. The study therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Service commission in Benue South Senatorial District should employ more teachers. The school principals should therefore make fair decisions and promote open discussions when dealing with teacher issues in order to use the feedback from teachers to improve any strained relationship.

Keywords: ICT, Teacher, Attrition, Growth, Secondary Schools, Managers of Secondary education.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamental to socio-economic development of a country as it imparts skills and knowledge in learners and prepares them to take up roles in national development (Darling Hammond, 2010). Craig (2014) established that shortage of well qualified teachers in schools is an important aspect in students' learning processes in both developed and developing countries. According to Ndoye, Imig and Parker (2010), teachers who are effective in teaching are significant to the contribution of quality student accomplishment. However, it has become increasingly difficult to retain them in classrooms due to resignation and migration to other professions an issue that affects performance in the Education. In particular, secondary schools around the world continue to experience, teacher attrition and shortages an issue that has become critical and of great concern for policymakers and school administrators.

Globally, there is growing concern on teacher attrition in secondary schools in various countries. In the United States of America, the teaching profession has the highest number of members. The number outweighs that of registered nurses and five times that of lawyers (Darling-Hammond, 2016). Coming to Asia, UNESCO report (2011), established that in Pakistan teacher attrition surfaced as a significant problem, which affected school performances. In Namibia, UNESCO (2016) established that a total number of teacher attrition rate was of 11.7%, while other reports from the World Bank indicated that between 2006 and 2007 attrition ranged from 2% to 10% (Mulkeen, 2010). In Ghana, the report by the World Bank (2012) found increase of 60% in teacher attrition rates of secondary school teachers and gradually the proportion dropped to 53% from 72% in 2013. Oyaró (2008) indicated that 600 teachers had left the profession in

Kenya between January and June 2008 which was approximated to three teachers leaving the service every day for greener pastures. UNESCO (2012) report placed the teacher shortage in Kenya at 61,235 for both primary and secondary schools. County, 2017). From the report in the year 2012, 10% left the profession, in 2013 and 2014 13%, while in 2015 and 2016 combined the figure was 12%. This is an indication that public secondary schools in the County are in dire critical situation need of teachers. This shows that there exists a problem of teacher attrition in secondary schools in the country. This paper makes further attempts to determine the influence of teacher attrition on the growth of secondary schools in Benue South, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

With the increased rate of teacher attrition in schools in the country for the past years, academic performance of public secondary schools students in WAEC, NECO and NABTEB examinations has been on a decreasing rate in Benue South Senatorial District. It was not known whether the decreased academic performance by students could be as a result of teacher attrition. This study therefore analysed the influence of teacher attrition on the growth of secondary schools in Benue South Senatorial District, Nigeria.

Objective of the Paper

The main objective of this paper is to determine the influence of teacher attrition on the growth of secondary schools in Benue South, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher attrition does not simply mean a numerical loss but represents the loss of experienced teachers from the system (Mulkeen, 2010). This is particularly in cases where those who are leaving the profession are the most successful or qualified teachers. As Xaba (2003) states that teacher turnover and attrition translated amongst other things, into shortage in educator supply, costs in recruitment, training and mentoring, poor learner achievement due to disruption of planning programs and continuity, as well as overcrowded classes. This to him poses a major challenge to the education sector in managing and retaining teachers. Several approaches have also been used to address the concept of performance, as an assessment on a students' academic failure. Some of the approaches have negative connotations on the learners themselves and the school at large. However, according to Ingersoll (2012) there are different measures that could determine success or failure in the learners' academic achievement.

Grissmer (2006) describes students' academic performance as any performance that falls below or above the desired standard. According to Grissmer, apart from the presence of a teacher the class size creates student – teacher bonding which seems to have a positive effect on student success. A World Bank Report (2010) on school and classroom influence on student learning in Thailand reported schools with the support of all stake holders perform better than where there are wrangles within the system. In the education arena, the ability, hard work and commitment of teacher contributes to quality of teaching and learning in schools. If a teacher detaches self from the current rapid scientific technology and educational developments becomes redundant, inefficient and ineffective in the arena (Salifu, 2014). A teacher's professional advancement entails achievement of new skills and expertise for career advancement and personal fulfilment.

In a research study carried in US by Ingersoll, Merrill and May (2014), found out that high rate of teacher mobility had a negative impact on the efforts schools put on improvement of quality of teaching and learning in the education system as it disrupted the stability and continuity of teaching. The report further revealed that teacher mobility, which involves teacher transfer, was strongly associated with teacher turnover in schools. This was of great concern in the United States and needed urgent address. The study reported that America was spending over a billion dollars on teacher retention. In another survey study by Craig (2014) in the United States, whether teacher turnover affects students' academic performance in the United States found out those schools with the highest rate of teacher turnover responded to the shortage by employing ineffective teachers at the prevailing wage to fill the vacant positions.

Koeh (2011) postulates that there is consensus among scholars that organizations which experience employee turnover either benefit or suffer the cost depending on various factors that influence the turnover. In most cases, these factors are very disruptive and costly when their effects are not identified and really maintained to a minimum. However, if maintained, the quantity of teachers will assist improve the learners' academic achievement and subsequently enhance productivity in the organization. Armstrong (2009) argues that a high turnover in an organization is a sign of a problem in that organization and brings about negative publicity to the organization creating dissatisfaction amongst employees. However, employee turnover is a common organizational problem facing both the public and the private sectors but in recent years, this phenomenon has increasingly become important in debates about the teaching profession. He observes the reason is that turnover reduces the quantity of teachers available in many schools, and hence aggravating professional teacher shortages. At the same time, it affects the quality of teachers, especially if the best teachers are the most likely to leave.

In a survey study carried out on Teacher Attrition and Mobility in the United States by Goldring and Riddles (2014) revealed that levels of teacher attrition had unyielding implications on the quality of teaching. In addition to all this, a limited supply of teachers increases the need and likelihood for out-of-field teaching, where teachers teach subjects in which they are neither prepared in nor qualified to teach. This obviously leads to poor academic performance and creates redundancy in students who want to specialize in certain professional careers and creates a detrimental effect on the teachers' morale and, indeed, leads to a loss of public confidence in the teaching profession generally. In the United States, NCTAF (2007) established that due to high teacher attrition, high-need of teachers in both urban and rural schools were staffed frequently with inequitable under-prepared, inexperienced teachers who are left to labour on their own to meet the needs of their learners. This isolation had an effect on the new teachers who felt overwhelmed by the challenges they faced. They also in turn left after few years of working under a frustrating environment with lack of mentoring. These teachers either moved to better schools that had induction programmes, but in most occasions, abandoned the teaching profession altogether. However, after leaving, the gap took long to be filled and a host of problems encountered by the enthusiastic young teachers assigned to take over the positions, which ultimately affected the academic performance of the institution.

In Pakistan, Noor (2015) assessed how teacher transfer influenced students; academic performance, found that high rate of teacher transfers influenced students' academic performance an issue that threatened the education system of Pakistan. The study further established that transfers of natural science teachers were higher than of social sciences. This created an assumption that science subjects are more complicated and demanding than social science subjects, which can be taught by less skilled personnel. Thus, lack of natural science teachers dilutes the performance and which makes the recruitment for the science teachers insufficient and does not fulfil the students' career development. In contrast, Ingersoll (2012) argues that some teacher turnovers (attrition) are good for schools that do not help students achieve their academic goals should leave the classroom. Unfortunately, ineffective teachers are not the only ones who exit through the teaching's revolving door, but high quality teachers who struggle to improve the students' academic achievement are among those that mostly leave. Seen from the perspective of systems theory, an increase in the attrition of the teaching staff in sub-Saharan African public schools, which are subsystems of an open system, places the education system at risk of lower teacher quality. The greater inequity in student opportunities, an increased inefficiency as more funds are diverted to recruiting and training new teachers.

In South Africa, Pitsoe (2013) alluded that high teacher attrition can cause problems on educational quality, equity and efficiency. Utah Foundation (2007) contributing to the same issue attributes that the high number of inexperienced teachers in the classrooms is contributed by teacher attrition. In addition, attrition contributes to unequal distribution of quality teachers across learning institutions. Ingersoll (2012) observes that the most disadvantaged students attend schools with the highest number of teacher turnover are replaced with the lowest quality teachers. The observation seems to support Meyer and Furlong (2010) who articulates that the quality of a teacher has a lot of influence on the academic achievement of a learner than any other school-related factor. Mulkeen and Crowe Taft (2010) established that schools find it hard to replace teachers who have left the profession and forced to operate at least for a period, with a reduced number of staff before the gap is filled. The scale of the disruption caused by attrition is enormous. IEQ (2009) carried out a study in Malawi on the effect of teacher migration on students' quality of learning. The study found that, of the 188 teachers who began the school year, almost 50 percent were not teaching the same class nine months later. Some had moved to other schools or left the profession; others were no longer in their classrooms due to illness or other temporary absences. These finding clearly shows a disruptive effect on the academic performance and the damaging effect on the student-teacher relationship as well as class planning and other activities. Buchanan (2012) argues that the departing teachers carry along with them a considerable knowledge, skills and experience.

Ingersoll and Perda (2010) in their study found that teacher attrition is a major problem on students' performance but it is often an overlooked factor behind shortages of mathematics and science teachers. It was an observation made, that due to the deployment patterns, some schools, especially those in undesired areas suffer shortage of teachers for significantly longer period given the delays in looking for a replacement. Ingersoll and May (2012) expounds that some teacher turnover issues are inevitable and even beneficial to the institution, since some teachers join the teaching profession as step gate for greener pastures. In this case, such teachers are ineffective and eventually discover that teaching is not a right profession for them; others leave to pursue administrative posts in banks or other education related roles elsewhere. National Commission on Teaching and America's future, (2013) established that excessive teacher turnover is costly and detrimental to institutional cohesion in schools as it is not free. As such, to ensure that qualified teachers, specifically in the main subjects where all learners are involved, retention is an important concern.

In Kenya, Kizito, Chumba and Kindiki (2010) carried out a study on the trends and effects of teacher attrition on secondary school education in Kenya: A case

of Kisumu City. The findings revealed that a teacher who stayed in one school for a reasonably longer period was more efficient, productive and enthusiastic than those who changed schools frequently. A research on factors contributing to poor performance in the Kenya Certificate of secondary Education examinations in public Day secondary schools in Mwimbi Division by Reche, Bundi and Nthia (2012), established that teacher transfer, be it classroom or administrative had a great influence on learners' achievement in terms of team work, cohesion in the teaching processes. It also revealed that when a school principal's work becomes exceptionally regulated, a host of inadvertent negative performance occurred which resulted to job dissatisfaction, burnout, and loss of self-esteem. A study by Ruto, Kapkiai and Kiprop (2016) on the effect of head teacher's turnover on teacher performance in public primary schools in Turbo Division. The study was guided by the Hertzberg's motivation-hygiene theory of job satisfaction. It adopted descriptive survey design and targeted 684 teachers and 85 head teachers. The study found out that there was a statistically significant relationship between head teacher's turnover and teacher performance in primary schools. The review of literature studies show existence of research gap on how teacher attrition influence academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed methods research design. The quantitative and

qualitative methods complement each other, and provide for the triangulation of findings, hence greater validity of the emerging inferences. The research was carried out in Benue South which is one of the senatorial districts in the state. This study targeted 16 public secondary schools, 732 form 3 and 4 students, 792 teachers, 66 principals and 6 Educational managers in Benue South. The researcher chose to involve 30 teachers who had left the teaching profession for other reasons different from natural attrition and normal retirement. To determine the sample size for principals, 10% of the total population was used to act as a sample size. Data was collected using a questionnaire, interview schedule and document checklist. Data from the field was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics for all quantitative data. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions and the data from the interview schedule were analyzed thematically and used the grounded theory procedures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher sought further information from the sampled principals and teachers on the number of teachers who had left their schools in the last two years (2021 and 2022). The summary is on Table 1.

Table 1: Number of teachers who have left school in 2015 and 2016

	N	Min	Max	Mean	STD
Number of teachers who have left	218	1.00	14.00	3.2890	2.14325
Valid N (List wise)	218				

Source: Field Data (2023)

The mean score was calculated using SPSS. To the higher value, 218 out of 273 of the teachers as shown on the table reported between 1 to 14 teachers had left their schools in the two years 2021 and 2022. The accumulative mean average was at (M= 3.28 and SD=2.14,) as reported by the respondents. This shows that on average the Benue South loses 80% teachers annually. This was in consistent with the observation from the teachers who had left teaching and the secondary data collected from the Educational manager's office, which showed the shortage number of teachers in the district. In an interview session, one of the Educational

official expressed concern over the current situation of teacher shortages and the rate of attrition in the district.

Influence of Teacher Attrition on the Growth of Secondary Schools

In order to find out the influence of attrition on the growth of secondary schools, the students, teachers, sampled principals and the education officials were asked to indicate whether attrition had any effect on the

students' academic performance and educational managers' roles. This was to be indicated as; strongly

Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree, strongly Agree. The findings are in Figure 1.

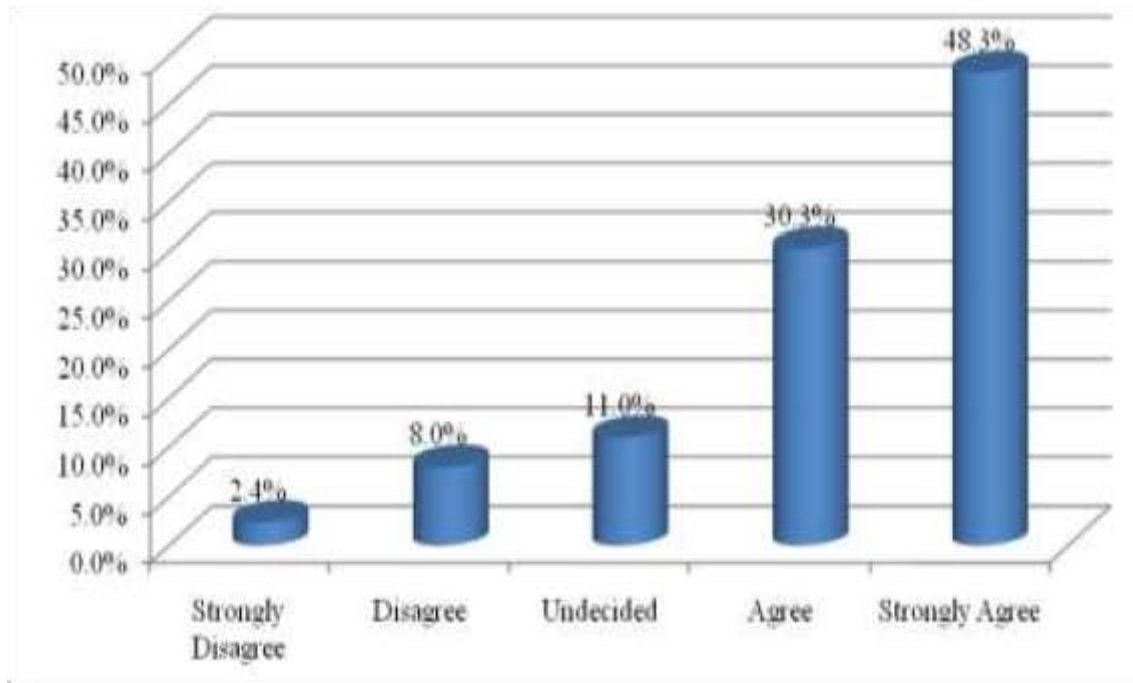


Figure 1: Influence of Attrition on the Growth of Secondary Schools

The findings indicated on average majority 79% of the students agreed that teacher attrition affected their academic performance and that of school managers; a considerable number 32% disagreed while only 11% were undecided. This was in line with what the teachers, sampled principals and Education officials agreed on, that attrition does not just affect the work of managers of education, students' academic performance but also the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Most of the key informants observed that if the attrition issues are not maintained, then Benue South and Nigeria at large might not attain vision 2030 effectively as the Education sector is in danger in public schools.

Extent on how Teacher Attrition affected Students' Academic Performance

Studies have shown that teachers play an important role in the students' academic performance in the education system (Rivkin, Stephen, Ertik & John, 2000). A study by Chumba (2014) on principals' mobility in Kenya revealed that teachers are an important resource in the teaching/learning process and their training and utilization therefore requires critical consideration. Owing to the importance of teachers'

participation in learners' academic performance, the researcher sought to examine the extent at which attrition affected students' academic performance. The findings are in the following sub-topics. The teachers on duty were asked to indicate their views' on the extend teacher attrition affected students' academic performance. The answers were rated as; highly likely (5), likely (4), undecided (3), less likely (2) and Not likely (1). The results of the analysis are in Table 2.

Table 2: Views of Teachers on the Effect of Attrition on Academic Programmes in Schools

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Ratings
Leads to heavy workload	273	3.1612	1.57754	Highly Likely
Creates teacher shortage	273	3.3956	1.54738	
Leads to lack of syllabus completion	273	1.53657	3.8205	
Interferes with the school reforms	273	3.3480	3.0549	
Affects curriculum implementation in schools	273	3.3004	3.3333	
Creates negative attitudes towards the profession	273	3.285	3.0476	
Interferes with teacher balancing	273			
Leads to poor academic performance	273	2.9927	2.9704	
Contributes to lack of cohesion in teaching	273	1.42959	1.51699	Likely
Remaining teachers are de-motivated	273	1.50511	1.49591	
Inadequate preparation due to workload	273	1.49960	1.47527	Less likely
Denies other teachers the opportunity for progression	273	1.47201	1.42248	
Quality of learning is compromised	273	3.0183	1.41279	Not likely
Quality of teaching is compromised	273	2.9963	1.36527	
Valid N (List wise)	273	3.2096	1.49665	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The range of the mean in Table 2 shows (M=3.8 and SD=1.57), where teachers reported that it was highly likely that teacher attrition increased the workload, lead to poor academic performance and incompleteness of the syllabus. This indicates that when teachers leave schools, students' ratio increases. In cases where teachers leave without any record of work covered, the syllabus may not be completed and therefore leads to poor academic performance. The least ranked item was that quality of teaching and learning would be compromised (M=2.97 and SD=1.42), Average statistics shows that majority of the teachers were undecided (M=3.20 and SD=1.49) on whether attrition lead to inadequate preparations and denied others opportunities for career progression. The findings were in line with the students, Teachers who had left the profession, Principals and the Education officials. The effects could be either negative or positive. However, there were some teachers, principals and education officials who disagreed and argued the syllabus could only be affected depending on the commitment of the teacher who leaves.

Another number 78% of the teachers indicated that attrition contributed to work stress when the few teachers left are forced to combine classes, which made students' evaluation difficult.

The observation from the respondents indicated that the classes were very uncomfortable for a learning

environment as it was even difficult for students to write. The findings were in line with what majority 87% of the students reported. The students however observed that it was difficult to interact with their teachers on personal class problems. On the syllabus coverage, some principals and Education officials gave various responses on the effects of attrition. Never the less, most of the observation was in line with that of students and teachers who had left the profession observed. There were few keen observations made by some key informants. For instance, one of the Education officials had this to say.

The findings as gathered from the sentiments show that there are situations when a teacher decides to quit abruptly without handing over the record of work covered and when a new teacher reports, spends a lot of students' time in preparation. On such situation, the Teachers' Service commission also finds it difficult to replace a new within that particular period more so if it is in the middle of the term. The learners at such stay long without learning and this interferes with the syllabus coverage. Success of a school depends on the syllabus as it gives both teachers and students ample time to revise. Another excerpt from the Education officials:

Based on the sentiment, the implication is that teachers have varied teaching approaches and therefore once a new teacher joins a school, students would take more time to adjust in order to understand the new

teachers' approaches. This hinders the smooth students' academic progression. On a general basis, all the education officials interviewed observed that the continual loss of teachers from schools in the county had a negative effect on the momentum of tutoring in schools. This was a manifestation that when teachers quit schools particularly if they are those experienced and effective and could have been mentoring the students, the students are discouraged. The findings implicate that attrition has serious effect on the students' academic achievement particularly on learners who receive remedial assistant from certain teachers who leave, are automatically affected. This also gives an impression that there are teachers in the profession who enjoy teaching as a profession and could wish their learners a bright future but because of various reasons have to quit. It is also an indication that students have preference on the pedagogy of teachers who teach them. The study findings seem to accept the contribution by Daft (2010) established that a teacher is a key figure in the students' academic achievement and could turn average students in schools to success. The principals' results present a more nuance picture on why teacher attrition is a problem to students' academic performance in public secondary schools in the County. However, there were those principals' who indicated that teacher attrition had no effect on the learners' academic progression with various observations. The sentiment shows that some schools are overstaffed in the study area while others whether they had shortages, had put in place mechanisms to fill the gap. The findings also show staff imbalance and lack of equal distribution of teachers in schools. Majority of the interviewed principals had similar sentiments but principals whose schools had consistently produced good results in the national examinations observed that there was much more needed to be addressed in order to improve teacher retention; Besides, there should be emphasis on the strategies that each school has put in place.

The principals' views indicate that the schools that try to address attrition have put certain strategies that motivated teachers to work in an environment where their ability and skills were valued and recognized. These sentiments came from most of the sampled principals, which is an indication that schools in Benue South had factored in programs that attract teacher retention. On the issue of distractive and disruptive activities, teachers were of the observation that in the absence of enough teachers in schools, student leaders run most of the affairs in the system. In the process, some student leaders usurp the responsibilities of principals in exercising power, and even possess immense power than the administrators of schools. The teachers attributed the rising cases of indiscipline in schools to certain student leaders who plan and execute bad behaviour knowing that they have the support of majority of students who are able to inflict havoc and cause serious damage.

In line with the findings, there is a clear indication that the government did not carry out enough consultation before the implementation of the prefects' system in selecting leaders. It could also imply that most of the teacher attrition in schools is influenced by students' behaviour.

Correlation of Teacher Attrition and Performance of Educational Managers and Students

The researcher sought to determine the relationship between the level of teacher attrition and performance of Educational Managers. The researcher used document guide to collect data from the director's statistics department and the sampled school principals, for a period of five years 2019-2022. The study used the results obtained from BSME school mean score as tool to measure students' academic performance. The results are presented in Figure 2.

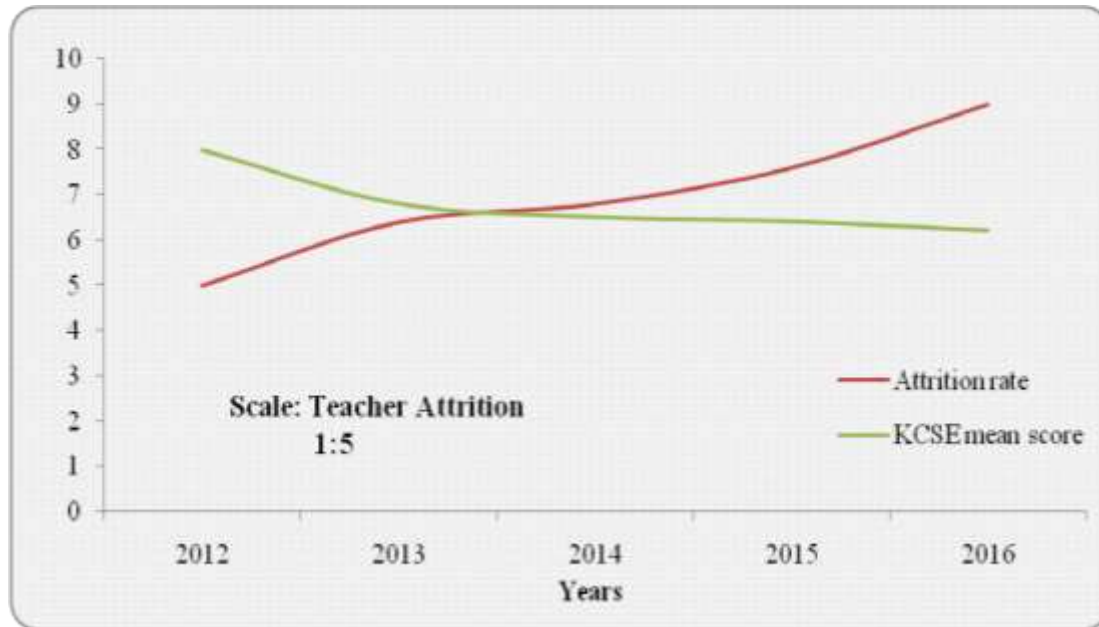


Figure 2: Graphic Analysis of Teacher Attrition Rate and BSME Performance

The results show that the analysis trend of performance in the thirty (30) sampled schools on the downward trend while teacher attrition trend is on the uphill. The academic performance in schools in the year 2019 was very high but reduced by a significant margin mean score in the year 2022. The attrition rates increased over the study period 2019 to 2022 as indicated by a rising smooth curve from twenty-five (25) teachers in 2019 to forty five (45) in 2022. The academic performance on the other hand, shows a falling trend in the mean score of the selected schools from eight (8) to a mean score of six point two (6.2). This score is important to the study in that it indicates the effect of teacher attrition National examination results of the sampled schools. This shows that the relationship between teacher attrition and students' academic performance is converse related. The graph shows that as the attrition rates increases, the students' academic performance decreases. This is an implication that attrition has a direct effect on students' academic performance. These results agree with the Teachers' Service Commission report (2010) which indicates that the 10,000 teachers lost annually hindered service delivery, syllabi completion, and disrupted teaching and negatively affected the students' academic performance in most public schools in Benue South. The report further established that most schools with less qualified teachers tend to lack basic skills in certain subjects and are likely to lag behind academically. According to Beatty (2013), schools that have high teacher attrition rates tend to achieve poor results and in the process employ less experienced teachers in order to fill gaps and cater for large class sizes which have a negative impact on learners.

CONCLUSION

On the effect of attrition on the growth of secondary schools and students' academic performance, Majority of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that the syllabus completion was affected and students lose hope in their future career. The findings further revealed that in the absence of teachers there is instability, destruction and disruption of school properties and activities are observed. Another considerable number indicated that learners took time to adjust and adapt to the techniques and methods employed by the new teacher, turnover increased the teachers' workload which in turn affected curriculum implementation and assessment of students' progress. However, the study also found out a minimal number of teachers did not agree on this issue that students' academic performance in the national examinations were affected except for students who used to receive remedial assistance from the teachers who had left. On the teacher front, some principals indicated that majority of the teachers who had left were highly qualified and experienced and their replacement could not match the aptitude and charisma that they had left. On students' discipline and behaviour, the study revealed that it depended on individual teacher relationship with the learners. However, majority of the principals were of the observation that the prefects' system of election was to blame for school strikes and students' indiscipline. Furthermore, migration of students to other schools was not an effect of teacher attrition while the effect on a negative image of the school management was a factor that contributed to inefficient and ineffective flow of school activities. Correlation statistics also showed that there

existed a significant negative at ($r=-0.296$ and $p<0.01$) correlation between attrition and academic performance of students in schools. This is a strong indication that an increment in attrition resulted to reduction in academic performance of schools. In general, teacher attrition significantly affected academic performance of students in public schools in various aspects as discussed in chapter four of this study. The school principals should therefore make fair decisions and promote open discussions when dealing with teacher issues in order to use the feedback from teachers to improve any strained relationship. The study therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Service commission should employ more teachers.

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