

Teacher Attrition: Why do Public Teachers Leave?

*Yangchen C Rinzin**

Abstract

In last six years, more than 300 Bhutanese public teachers left the profession annually on average. Teacher attrition has often been assumed as leaving the profession for better opportunities. Teachers leaving jobs has been discussed several times but never tried to understand the factors leading to attrition. This study explores the possible factors leading to teacher attrition from former teachers' perspectives, who left the profession voluntarily. The study also aims to get views on what could be the ultimate solution to keep teachers in the field. A mix mode method of qualitative and quantitative research was adopted. A quantitative method was used with the objective to get the true perspectives from respondents regarding teacher attrition. The study was conducted in Bhutan in December 2021. The study determined heavy workload, unsatisfied with the job, lack of career mobility, poor leadership, and poor working conditions were major reasons for attrition. Contradicting what many assumed salaries as a major reason, respondents responded otherwise. The paper concludes that until there is job motivation or better working conditions along with the good incentives or remunerations, a mere increase in the salary is not going to make teaching profession attractive.

Keywords: teachers, attrition, profession, schools, education, former teachers

Introduction

Teachers across the globe have the responsibility of preparing future generations, our youth, whom our nation's future lie. They are in the hands of teachers. This is why education plays

* Chief of Bureau, Kuensel Corporation Ltd. Email: yrinzin4@gmail.com

a vital role where effective teachers and quality of education is important for that matter.

However, one of the biggest challenges for both developed and developing countries is teacher attrition where the attrition has increased every year globally. Considered as a concern, many researchers over the world have described the trend as worrying.

Teaching is, in its essence, about relationships - understanding students' needs, fostering their passions, and figuring out what makes them tick. "To give up that work, for many, would be a deep loss" (Education Week Organisation, 2021).

Developing country like Bhutan is not left behind on teacher attrition. Retaining and maintaining trained and experienced teachers has become a mammoth task for both the government and the ministry concerned, the education ministry.

Teacher attrition is frequently positioned as an indicator of the relatively poor quality of school life and teacher morale. A counter perspective is that teacher attrition is not necessarily a problem in those low levels of teacher attrition may lead to stagnation of the profession and schooling (Macdonald, 1999).

Bhutan has lost a total of 1,872 teachers from 2016-2021, of which, 1,374 were public school teachers alone (Ministry of Education , 2021). The Ministry of Education recorded that a total of 353 experienced teachers left the system in 2021, including those who were superannuated or whose contract terms expired.

However, 224 teachers of the total (353) had voluntarily resigned (Ministry of Education , 2021) meaning experienced teachers left the education system. There are no specific reasons mentioned for voluntary resignation (refer Table 1).

Table 1. *Teacher attrition*

Year	Voluntary Resignation	Compulsory Resignation	Super-annuation	Expiry of Contract	Others	Total
2016	200	6	42	31	11	290
2017	260	4	56	9	16	345
2018	263	7	60	10	15	355
2019	277	8	57	103	35	480
2020	112	3	27	6	15	163
2021	224	3	54	49	23	353

Source: Ministry of Education, 2021

Currently, Bhutan’s teacher attrition rate stands at 3.8 percent at the primary level while it stands at 3.4 percent at secondary level. This is despite seeing a slight dip in 2020 at 1.9 percent. Today, there are more than 500 schools (Pre-Primary to XII) with about 9,000 teachers in both primary and secondary schools in Bhutan (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Although the attrition rate of 3.8 percent might be considered normal across the civil service, there are lot of risk when we talk about losing teachers. This is because losing teacher means losing a trained teacher which is a loss to the education system.

This is a concern because replacing seasoned teachers will be challenging. The study discovered heavy workload, unsatisfied with the job, lack of career mobility, poor leadership, and poor working condition were major reasons for attrition. Contradicting what many assumed salaries as a major reason, respondents responded otherwise.

The study’s data vividly shows that Bhutan is losing more experienced teachers because a majority of teachers, who left the profession were between 31 and 40 years old indicating that these teachers, who left the profession, were in their mid-career level. The attrition from the profession in this study refers to the exit of teachers from teaching in primary and secondary education in Bhutan.

This trend is worrisome for Bhutan as recruiting and training involve time and resources such as infrastructure, human, and finance (Wangchuk & Dorji, 2020).

As of 2021, Bhutan has a total of 1,980 teachers who completed Master, 1,680 with Post Graduate Diplomas, 7,358 with Bachelor, and 617 teachers with Diploma Certificate across Primary and Secondary education.

Several factors have often contributed to teacher attrition in different context according to available literatures. However, in Bhutan, there are limited research conducted or studied to understand teacher attrition especially from former teachers who left the profession.

This is why this research has tried to delve into possible factors that influence teachers' attrition and explored various factors that led to teachers leaving the profession.

The paper concludes that comprehensive research on teacher attrition with detailed database of teaching professionals and well-designed research is required. Well-designed research would give a clear picture of how attrition is designed and investigated in the education ministry. The annual education statistics also need a reform, whereby, the ministry could focus on detailed information on the attrition. It must include teachers' performance and job satisfaction instead of only indicating the number of teachers leaving the profession.

Objective of the study

1. To understand reasons for leaving the profession from former teachers' perspectives
2. To find out probable factors attributing to attrition
3. Is teacher attrition a concern compared to other professions leaving the job?

Literature Review

Deciding to leave any profession can never be easy and for teachers, leaving the classroom could be heartbreaking. At the level of the profession, attrition refers to the departure of teachers from teaching altogether (Presley, 2007).

It is often argued that teachers leaving the profession will leave opportunities for new teachers to enter the system. However, there is a lot to be desired when the argument is argued on the teacher attrition rate as lower than other professions.

This is because globally, many research on teacher attrition have often suggested/concluded that salary levels, supportive leadership, better working facilities, including class size and availability of textbooks, and their relationship with principals are some of the factors that attributes to teachers' attrition.

This is exactly why it is vital to discuss teachers' attrition to change the system since there is not one factor responsible and discussion to look at the workload would be worth the while.

Extensive literatures have shown that there is a link between the conditions of teaching and teachers' continuation with their work in the occupation when it comes to teachers leaving the profession (Macdonald, 1999).

For some years now, and in most discussions of new teacher attrition, there has been a general belief that half of all new teachers flee the profession within five years. (Presley, 2007) Many teachers simply can't afford to lose their pay and benefits; some older teachers will decide they're close enough to a pension to hang on (Education Week Organisation, 2021).

Policymakers and practitioners are concerned about this apparent "crisis" in the teaching profession because they hear that teachers' skills improve during their first two to three years of practice, and it seems a waste to lose so many entrants early in their careers (Presley, 2007).

Many researchers have also opined that accurate information and a proper understanding of the attrition problem are vital to have any successful policies that would aim in lowering teacher attrition.

The literature also has it that the poorest and highest minority schools uniformly are more likely to have a high turnover of new teachers.¹ The production pipeline from teacher preparation programs is grossly inefficient in meeting the supply needs of schools. (Presley, 2007) At the school level, attrition includes not only the departure of teachers from the profession², but also the departure of teachers for teaching positions in other schools within or outside of the district and for non-teaching positions (Presley, 2007).

Feeling comfortable in their teaching location is important to teachers' satisfaction. Teachers tend to leave positions where: living conditions are extremely poor, harsh or overly expensive, or they do not feel comfortable with local ethnicity, customs or language (Macdonald, 1999). The dissatisfaction over the rural/urban divides and teachers' ill health have also attributed to significant teacher attrition in developed and developing countries.

The rapid growth in education like increasing schools, student enrolment and the increasing number of staff has also added to the complex nature of educational organizations in general and the school system in particular. Wushishi, Fooi, Basri, & Baki (2014) said this requires effective and committed teaching staff who will handle the situation.

However, in some studies, it was concluded that declining enrolments have also been attributed to attrition because teachers compete for the same number of promotion positions. This has often caused frustration because of a lack of career advancement. Although teachers could have high expectations

¹ Presley, 2007

² Ibid.

of their profession, there is poor recognition from communities and governments of teachers' work.

Socio-economic and political factors underpin the conditions which affect service and, in turn, the conditions of service. In most countries, there is a strong sense that conditions within schooling and those shaping schooling have deteriorated and consequently are causing increasing levels of teacher dissatisfaction and stress, if not attrition (Macdonald, 1999).

A major challenge in schools today is for all children to receive a quality education from "highly-qualified" teachers. However, over the past decade, education researchers and district leaders have increasingly called attention to the growing problem of a teacher shortage in schools since massive teachers leave education system to pursue other opportunities (Balow, 2021). With dire shortages and constant turnover, Balow (2021) opined that school systems across the country are grappling with the challenge of building and maintaining a high-quality teacher workforce to meet the needs of all their students.

Bhutan is no different when it comes to shortage of teacher or attrition rate increasing annually. Today, the attrition rate stands at 3.8 percent at the primary level and 3.4 percent at secondary level. This study was able to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary attrition where Bhutan saw 1,872 teachers leave the system between 2016 to 2021. From the total, 1,336 teachers had resigned voluntarily.

When the first five-year plan was launched in 1961, Bhutan accorded education as the highest priority as the engine of growth to meet the country's social, cultural and economic goals. Six decades later, we are still complaining about a lack of quality education. We cannot expect quality education when students do not have access to basic education needs. Without trained and passionate teachers, children will never have a good foundation (Kuensel, 2021).

In every organisation there must be a leader who will pilot the affairs of that organisation towards the achievement of their goals. In secondary schools, it is the principal (Wangchuk & Dorji, 2020). Working with the principal as a team can achieve what an individual cannot achieve when he operates alone. This is an indication that the administration of the school can be affected when a principal forms his administrative team and, in the process, the team breaks as a result of attrition.³

Globally, it has become difficult to address or reduce overall teacher attrition despite several research and recommendations.

Many research points that from economics posit, usually, individuals make decisions about whether to enter, stay, or leave an occupation (or position) based on pecuniary and non-pecuniary advantages available to that person.

In Presley (2007), study says that pecuniary benefits include monetary-based rewards, such as salary, retirement and health benefits, opportunities for promotion, and job security, whereas non-pecuniary benefits include such things as working conditions, work schedule, and the availability of job-related resources.

Research has also found that higher academic qualifications are more likely to leave their first schools especially if one has served in remote schools and attrition is expected to increase until the working condition improves for these teachers.

Through the research, the Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies has tried to analyse the factors that would have probably forced teachers to leave the profession. Bhutan does not have much research done on this specific issue of teacher attrition. So, my research was to first identify the factors that are leading to attrition. Poor working conditions and poor leadership stands out as a major reason for the attrition.

³ Wushishi, Fooi, Basri , & Baki (2014)

Teachers and researchers say educators want a bigger voice in school policies and plans (NPR, 2016). Many feel they are left out of the key discussions.

Methodology

Study Design

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative based on the secondary data obtained from education ministry. The primary data was collected using online survey through Google form. The secondary data was used in validating the attrition rate in the country and types categorised against teachers leaving. It was also to supplement the primary data on teachers leaving the profession.

Various works of literature were also referred to understand different factors that have attributed to teachers' attrition, globally. This study made use of various factors reflected in different literature to frame a survey questionnaire to put into the Bhutanese teachers' context.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected from 84 former teachers residing in Bhutan and abroad. The primary data was collected through multiple questions using five Linkert scale and open-ended questionnaire through Google Form. They were interviewed through open and close-ended questions to get the best result. Open-ended questions were asked to obtain insights that close-ended questions may not otherwise have provided.

Both structured and semi-structured questions were asked, in which, respondents were asked to rate through five Linkert scales against each factor they agree/disagree.

The questionnaire form was spread using the snowball method. The survey form was shared through a small former group of teachers through email and then the group shared among their peers, both inside and outside Bhutan.

Interviews were also done through written responses, including one in-depth face-face interview with a former teacher. The online survey was kept open for two weeks. The survey also kept open-ended questions to learn other factors that could probably be the reason for leaving and, not necessarily covered in the structured questions.

Statistics were analysed for the last five years from the annual education statistics to study the patterns of teachers' attrition. It also studied types of resignation mainly voluntary resignation, compulsory resignation, death and other reasons. Primary data was analysed/processed using Microsoft Excel through Pivot Table and cross-tabulation.

Limitation

With limited time, the paper could not carry out sample size method to represent the population size of 1,872 former teachers who left since 2016. Considering the number of respondents (n=84), the study's findings may not, necessarily be generalised. However, following an online sample size collection - Qualtric.com - given a 90 percent confidence level and a margin of error of 10 percent, the sample size required was 64.

Results

1. Demographic Information

1.1 Respondents

Table 2. Total respondents and age

Age	Female	Male	Grand Total
21 to 30	6	8	14
31 to 40	16	29	45
41 to 50	4	17	21
Above 50		4	4
Grand Total	26	58	84

Table 2 shows a total of 84 teachers who responded the survey questionnaire, distributed through various sources. Of the total respondents, 26 were female and 58 were male teachers. The figure above shows majority of teachers, who left the profession were between 31 to 40 years old. This, could possibly also indicate that these teachers, who left the profession, were in their mid-career level.

1.2 Respondents and number of years served

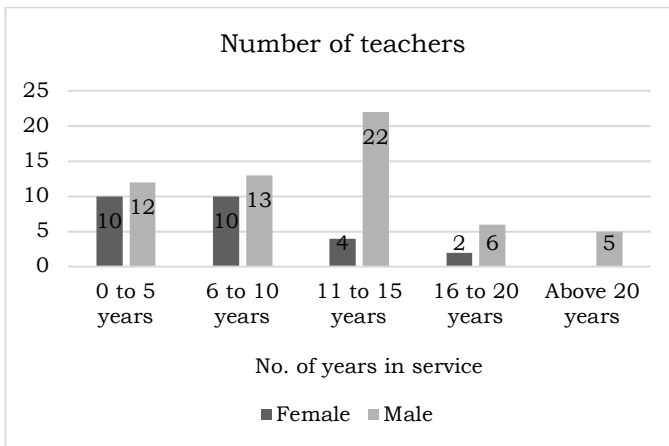


Figure 1. Numbers of years served in the teaching

The research, purposefully, asked the respondents to fill in the number of years served in the teaching profession, in the profile section of respondents. This was aimed to see, if those, who left the profession were experienced teachers. It showed that 31 percent teachers (n=26) of the total respondents had served between 11 to 15 years, clearly indicating that the education system lost mid-career professionals who had more than 10 years of preprofessional experience (a global definition).

However, it is also important to note that 53 percent of teachers (n=45) who left the profession had only served between zero to 10 years. Of these, 26 percent (n=22) were young and new in the profession that had barely served five years. This could, possibly, also mean many new teachers leave the job during their early career stage, which leaves a lot to desire.

1.3 Teaching profession a choice

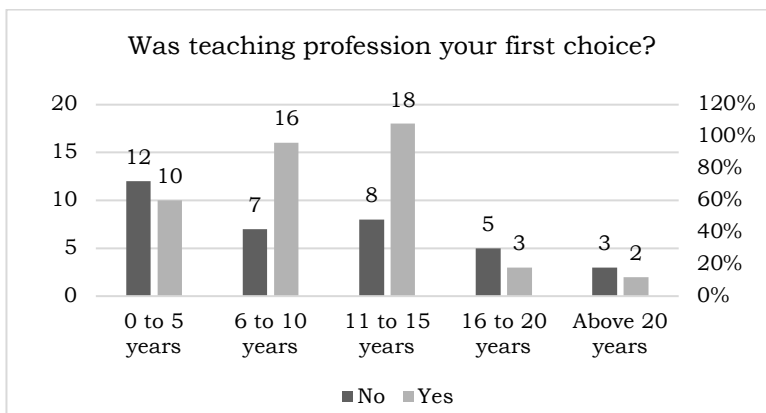


Figure 2. If teaching profession was their first choice

Figure 2 indicates if teaching was their first choice. From the data, a total of 49 teachers responded 'Yes' while rest of the 35 teachers said 'No.' A total of 34 teachers who said 'Yes' had served between six to 15 years in the teaching profession. This, could indicate that various factors, over the years, would have forced them to leave the profession despite they had preferred the profession while joining the service.

However, if we observe the data closely, it also revealed that a total of 12 teachers who had served between 0 to five years had never preferred the profession, including three teachers who had served more than 20 years also said 'No.'

This possibly means that they left the job when they got better prospects or the profession of their choice.

1.4 Last place served before resigning

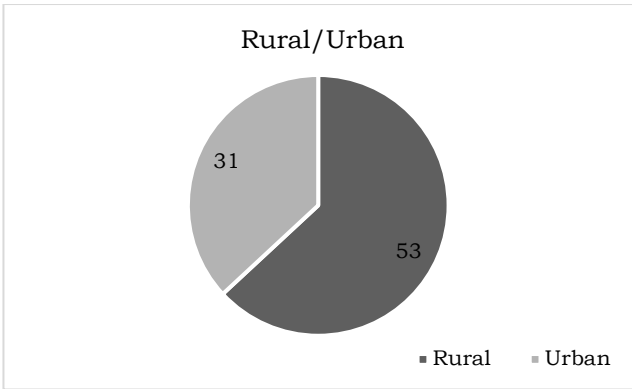


Figure 3. Place teachers last served

Respondents were asked to mention last two schools they served before resigning. Going by the response and data, it showed that 63 percent (n=53) teachers had served in rural before resigning. This is against 37 percent (n=31) teachers who served in urban. However, it must be noted that of the two schools that teachers mentioned, the survey considered the last school they served. This means those who served in the rural might have served in urban or semi-urban before being transferred to rural schools.

Current Profession and Location

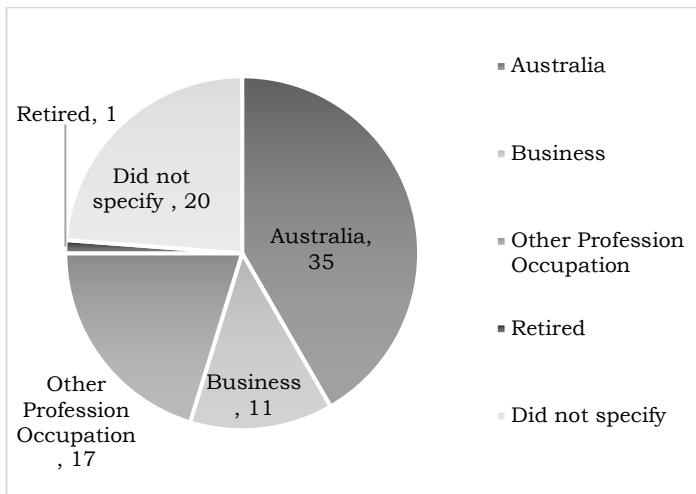


Figure 4. Current profession they opted after resigning

The questionnaire also required them to specify their current location and profession. This question was to mainly identify and see if former teachers left for better opportunities or abroad especially Australia, a cliché. Going by the data reflected in the Figure 4, it shows that 42 percent (n=35) of teachers are currently in Australia working or either studying followed by 20 percent (n=17) teachers who left for other professionals working in various ministries or agencies. A total of 11 respondents responded they were into business. However, a total of 20 teachers did not specify their location or profession.

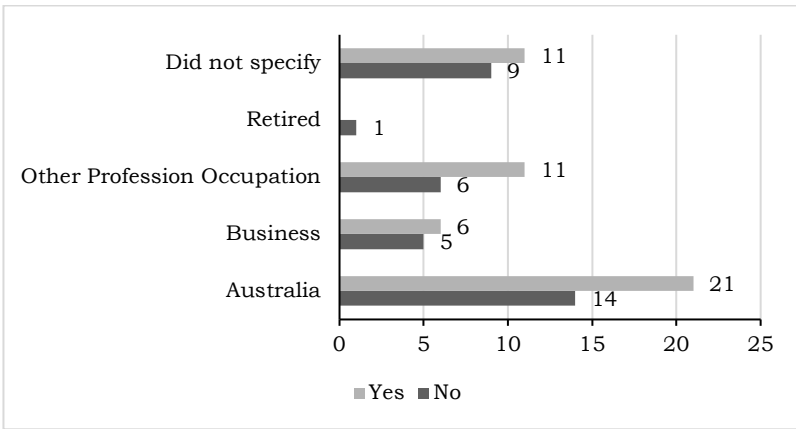


Figure 5. Was teaching your first choice?

In Figure 5, the data reveals 21 teachers who left for Australia had preferred teaching profession as a first choice, yet they left the profession. But significantly, 40 percent (n=14) said teaching was never their first choice. However, surprisingly, teaching was never a first choice for one retiree.

2. Factors that influence teacher attrition

Table 3. Teachers asked to rate against the factors for resigning

Factors	A	D	N	SA	SD
Heavy Workload	20	13	14	25	12
Unsatisfied job without motivation	25	9	11	29	10
Lack of career mobility	28	12	7	31	6
Lack of professional development	28	16	18	19	3
Inadequate salary/remuneration	10	25	26	12	11
Better opportunity over teaching	33	11	10	24	6
Poor working conditions/facilities	23	11	12	33	5
Monotony of job (teaching the same curriculum)	24	19	17	14	10
Transfer issue (Rural to Urban)	30	9	10	23	12

Note: A-Agree, D-Disagree, N-Neutral, SA-Strongly Agree, SD-Strongly Disagree

Table 3 shows that more than 50 percent (n=45) either strongly agreed or agreed that they left the profession because of a heavy workload followed by an unsatisfied job without

motivation, lack of career mobility, and poor working conditions/facilities (n=56). However, 14 teachers (17%) remained neutral which could indicate that heavy workload was not solely the reason for their resignation.

More than 50 teachers also indicated they left the system because of the transfer issue (especially from rural to urban), although, 21 teachers disagreed with the transfer issue. Better opportunity over teaching also saw 57 teachers who agreed was the factor to leave teaching.

A total of 47 teachers (56%) agreed with the lack of professional development as a reason for leaving the profession. While 18 teachers decided to neither agree nor disagree, the rest of the 19 teachers disagreed with the statement.

However, surprisingly, 43% (n=36) of teachers strongly disagreed/disagreed that inadequate salary or remuneration was a factor in leaving the job. While 26 percent (n=22) of the teachers agreed with the statement, 26 teachers decided to neither disagree nor agree.

The monotony of the job (teaching over the same curriculum) was also agreed as one of the factors for leaving the job (refer Table 3).

Discussion

Heavy workload, lack of professional development, poor working conditions, and lack of career mobility are some of the reasons that prompt our teachers to leave. In doing so, Bhutan education system is also losing experienced teachers who are in their mid-career profession. Majority of teachers who left were between the age of 31 to 40 years old and those who have served more than 11 years. Globally, according to many researchers, a mid-career professional often develops expertise in one or more areas. These professionals often look for promotional opportunities or a new career alternative, including work-life balance.

It is a concern that although more than 50 percent of teachers agreed teaching profession was their first choice, they left the profession. This strongly depicts those other factors that forced them to leave, including better prospects/alternatives they availed over teaching.

Going to Australia or joining other agencies topped the reasons. More than 50 teachers agreed to have left the profession because of unsatisfactory jobs. Losing experienced teachers has its own cost implication where the education ministry invests to recruit and train teachers to replace those who left the education system. Recruiting or training would also mean getting less qualified teachers.

One of the respondents wrote: "I didn't quit teaching but the system that was rigid and uncompromising where teachers are only expected to bear the burden of providing quality education without even providing a proper textbook." Other respondents added teaching was becoming an ordeal because of the intense work pressure without any recognition or incentives to forget about getting any ex-country tours and trips.

The results, which were analysed based on themes that emerged from the data collected through an open-ended survey, revealed three major gaps that could be attributed to teachers' attrition, as indicated below.

Working Conditions

It is often said that a teacher's job is rewarding. Rewarding does not necessarily mean economic advantages but job satisfaction (Sugino, 2010).

Workloads, not only in teaching profession but in many other professions have only obligated professionals to do more but achieve less. Many schools looked aimless with teachers involved in other non-academic activity besides normal teaching workload and planning everyday lessons. Teachers in remote are faced with challenges of poor infrastructures. These could have substantially influenced teachers to leave teaching.

The teacher shortage has aggravated the working conditions of teachers especially in rural schools (Yezer, 2020). The rural teachers are overburdened and felt neglected. They felt that incentives and training opportunities go to urban teachers (Yezer, 2020).

As one of the respondents wrote; “We are expected to give good education to students, but we’re often pulled in a committee meeting, teachers meetings, class meetings, parents meetings, implement policy decision that we were never part of it, endless meetings that could have been an email, including administration works. But when we want to teach students out of box, everyone has a problem that teachers are not doing their job.”

Others’ research has often pointed out that working conditions often influence teachers’ decisions to continue the profession or not. The working condition includes class size, facilities, availability of textbooks, relationship with principals, and teacher support. Today, teachers work in over-populated classrooms with 1:40 and in some cases, more than 40 students.

Although Individual Work Plan (IWP) started with good intentions, this has often resulted in overburden for teachers than before, as (Kuensel, 2018) reported teachers have to keep records of other activities besides the daily lesson planning, book correction and preparation of teaching learning materials.

To reduce teacher workload, (Wangchuk & Dorji, 2020) in their study also recommended that the education ministry may develop a policy that delegates non-academic work to non-teaching staff so that teachers could focus only on teaching.

This study, also suggests there is a need to conduct a working conditions survey that could gather teachers’ views on the school environment. Fixing working conditions are less expensive than the costs of teachers’ dissatisfaction, loss, and retention.

Research has also found that teachers are likely to leave their first schools especially if one has served in the remote schools. Attrition is expected to increase until the working condition improves for these teachers. This could be true in the Bhutanese attrition rate where 63 percent of respondents in this study, indicated they were stationed in rural for more than 10 years in some cases, while some also confirmed teachers left the profession following rural-to-urban transfer issues. Inadequate teachers in rural also force teachers in service to leave when an increased workload falls on them.

One of the female respondents said, “It’s not because I hate teaching but I decided to leave since I did not get a transfer despite requesting several times. I was in remote schools for years and leaving separately from my husband who was serving in an urban area.

Lack of professional development as one of the factors for attrition should be a concern. This is because when too much is expected from teachers to meet education quality, we are also talking about the quality of teachers that could be enhanced through pedagogy development, among many. It includes workshops and long/short term training. A total of 64 percent (n=54) of respondents clearly responded that they rarely (once a year) got an opportunity to attend pedagogy development to enhance their career or be part of other important education consultations. Another 18 teachers claimed never to have got the opportunity (Figure 6).

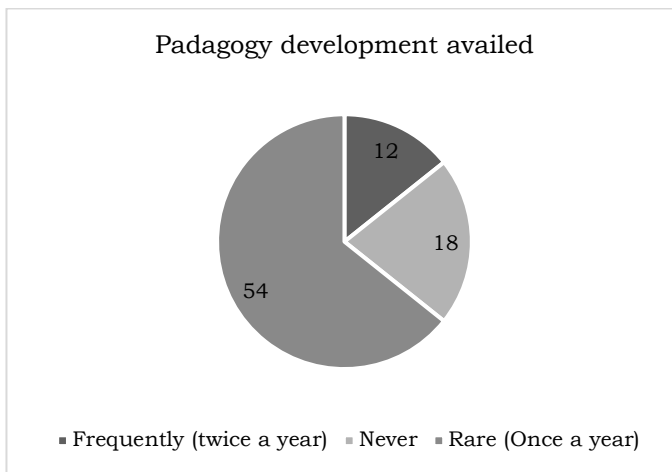


Figure 6. How often teacher attended padagogy development?

One respondent stated that every activity is trickled down to schools and teachers when it comes to large scale implementation of any policy decision. For instance, waste management initiatives are initiated by others, education ministry’s programme officers attend the training and then teachers are asked to implement in the school. The respondent also shared that teacher were made to implement new normal curriculum at ad-hoc without any training or letting teachers involved in the formulation of curriculum.

Such differences have often left teachers unsatisfied with their job where they have to teach same curriculum over the years without any clear goals. Feeling demotivated was also confirmed as a factor for leaving the profession in this study and not because they were unhappy with their job. A demotivated person can be identified as someone who was initially motivated but because of negative external influences, has lost it (Sugino, 2010).

This forced teachers to look for better working conditions that includes greener pastures and better opportunities abroad or in the private school. This must change.

Leadership

It is often said that good leaders will not only influence the dynamics of the school functions, but their leadership will also inspire and motivate teachers. What happens when a leader or the leadership style fails? It leads to frustration, disappointment and demotivation among teachers and despite good relationship with subordinates, it leaves teachers with no choice, but to leave teaching job for other job.

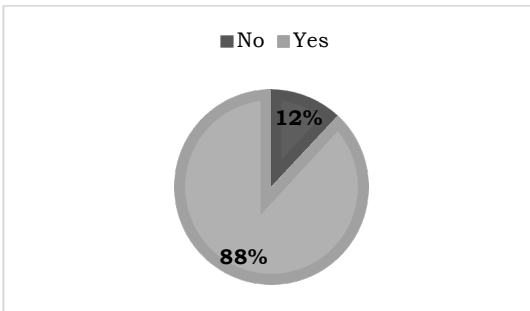


Figure 7. Leadership contributes to teacher attrition

Leaders have the potential to stagnate, corrupt, or transform the spirit of professionalism among its staff (Wangchuk & Dorji, 2020). Confirming leadership contributes to attrition in this study, 88 percent of respondents, who were adversely affected by the leadership style during their tenure in teaching profession, said 'Yes' when asked if the leadership is also one of the factors. This means poor leadership also forced them to leave the profession in one way or the other way. Majority of teachers in the open-ended questions cited "biased, fixed mindset and unappreciative" leaders as the reasons.

Given the data that indicated leadership is one major factor, it is important that there is a requirement for radical change in the leadership selection procedures. Many researches have also proven that there is a requirement to have a competent, motivating, visionary, diligent person as principal or for that matter, vice principal too if attrition is to be taken seriously.

As one respondent is quoted, “The leader should be the main source of support and encourage enthusiastic and experienced teachers to return but this is not happening. This is why there is a need to look into how a leader which could be a principal or education officer is appointed.”

A respondent from an in-depth interview stated, you try to be creative in your teaching, the leader questions if that will work and bars you from exploring your own idea. “How can one grow under a leader with a rigid rule and system? After several tries when I failed, I decided to leave the system sacrificing my teaching passion.”

Salary - not always the factor

When teachers continued to leave in scores, the government decided to increase the salary of teaching profession in 2019. It was to make teaching profession attractive, as government claimed. The teaching profession became the highest-paid civil servant. Yet, the education system continued to see teachers leaving the profession. In last three years (2019 to 2021), a total of 613 voluntarily resigned from the system. This indicates that salary raise had not much of an impact.

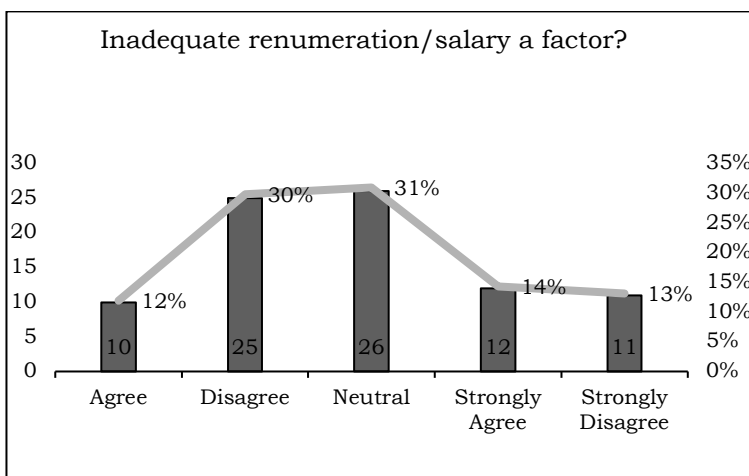


Figure 8. Inadequate remuneration/salary a factor?

In this study, Figure 8 shows that only 12 percent and 14 percent agreed that inadequate remuneration/salary was the factor for leaving the profession. But 30 percent disagreed and 13 percent strongly disagreed. However, 31 percent of teachers chose neutral meaning neither they agreed nor disagreed when asked if inadequate salary/remuneration was the reason.

There are also little evidences where researches prove that salary raise and other monetary incentives alone can have long-term impact on attrition. For instance, despite the increase in teaching allowance almost 55 percent of teachers continued to leave, especially, teachers serving in remote, as we saw in this study.

One of the respondents was quoted as: “I resigned and joined a non-profit organisation because I wanted to continue working with youth. But I wanted to be involved and help youth outside the education system. I am happy today even if I am earning almost 20 percent less”.

Chapman & Johson (1994) in their study has also said that it is difficult to effectively define the behaviours which are being rewarded so, increase in the salary could also have less impact.

As much as remuneration/salary increase can be a factor, it may not be everything for teachers because what teachers also look for is recognition and acknowledgement for their hard work. Instead, it is important that apart from increasing salary, certain strategies should be adopted that could reward teachers above their salary. Teacher support, reducing class size, increased participation in educational decisions, recognition and teacher support could be possible strategies.

Until there is job motivation or better working conditions along with good incentives or remuneration, a mere increase in the salary is not going to make the teaching profession attractive.

Conclusion

Teachers are leaving the profession every year but not because they are unhappy with their job. It is often said that teachers are leaving to avail better opportunities be it in Bhutan or abroad, and in some cases, to join private schools. This is what needs to change because no one factor is responsible for the attrition. We must look beyond salary and it would be a worthwhile to understand the workload and morale of teachers.

Heavy workload, lack of professional development, poor working conditions, and lack of career mobility are some of the reasons that prompt our teachers to leave. Poor leadership is also attributed to teacher attrition. These are important factors we ought to be concerned about given the number of teachers leaving every year. It is a concern that although more than 50 percent of teachers agreed teaching profession was their first choice, they left the profession. This strongly depicts that other factors forced them to leave, including better perspectives/alternatives they availed over teaching.

Salary, however, did not stand as a major gap according to this study.

Teachers must be given equal opportunities for professional growth. The study concludes that high proportions of teachers are poorly motivated because of either low morale, being overburdened with ad-hoc plans and activities, or a rigid education system that does not allow teachers to grow individually. The majority were remote teachers who left the profession and they explained the workload was further added with large class sizes and lack of facilities. They also expressed getting fewer opportunities for professional development, which added to the transfer issue.

While the number of teachers leaving is increasing, there is a low rate of teachers being replaced. Teachers leaving also leads to high-cost implications, apart from losing a seasoned teacher because the education ministry needs to recruit and train new

teachers. This adds burden to teachers in service with over workload and ultimately forces them to also quit one day.

Therefore, it has become all the more important to give importance to remote teachers, recognise and acknowledge teachers' work to motivate them, improve working conditions, and increase the responsibility of being involved in the policy decision related to education.

Above all, teachers have to be motivated by making their working conditions conducive and providing equal short/long-term training or professional growth. Since salary is not the only way to upgrade their status or make teaching an attractive job for young teachers.

Recommendations

Teachers will continue to leave if teaching is not made an attractive profession and teachers' morale will continue to agonise. This is why we must focus on teachers first for our education to succeed.

Education reform must also include building teachers' morale and answering factors that are forcing teachers to leave the profession.

This study recommends the government improve working conditions of teachers which will reduce the workload. It must also include providing equal training/workshop opportunities to teachers both in remote and urban.

A fundamental change in the leadership selection process is important to have a competent leader so that the leader could motivate teachers through his/her leadership.

Teaching materials could be updated because teachers strongly indicated they left because of monotonous jobs requiring them to teach the same curriculum over years.

Overhaul recruitment and deployment are also recommended.

References

- Balow, C. (2021). *Teacher Attrition: A Critical Problem For America's Schools*. Lafayette, LA : SchoolMint, Inc. doi:800.396.1615
- Chapman, G. B., & Johson, E. J. (1994). The Limits of Anchoring. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, Vol. 7,223-242 (I 994)*.
- Education Week Organisation. (2021, May 4). *educationweek*. Retrieved from www.edweek.org: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/why-teachers-leave-or-dont-a-look-at-the-numbers/2021/05>
- Kuensel. (2018, May 17). *Kuenselonline*. Retrieved from www.kuenselonline.com: <https://kuenselonline.com/pm-orders-a-review-of-iwp-for-teachers/>
- Kuensel. (2021, May 21). *kuenselonline*. Retrieved from www.kuenselonline.com: <https://kuenselonline.com/no-quality-education-without-teachers/>
- Macdonald, D. (1999). Teaching and Teacher Education. *Teacher attrition: a review of literature*, 835.
- Ministry of Education . (2021). *Annual Education Statistics 2021*. Thimphu: Policy and Planning Division, MoE.
- NPR. (2016, October 24). *NPR*. Retrieved from www.npr.org: <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/10/24/495186021/what-are-the-main-reasons-teachers-call-it-quits>
- Presley, K. J. (2007). *Leaving Schools or Leaving the Profession: Setting Illinois' Record Straight*. Illinois: Illinois Education Research Council.
- Sugino, T. (2010). Teacher demotivational factors in the Japanese . *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 3 (2010) 216-226*, 1-218.
- Wangchuk , C., & Dorji, J. (2020). Teacher Attrition: The Former Teachers'. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 33-34.
- Wushishi, A. A., Fooi, F. S., Basri , R., & Baki , R. (2014, January). A Qualitative Study on the Effects of Teacher

Attrition. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 15. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1149700.pdf>

Yezer. (2020). Educators and Education at a Crossroad in Bh. *Contemporary Education and Teaching Resea*, 12-22.