Full Length Research paper

Factors Influencing Secondary School Teacher Transfer Requests in Suba District, Kenya: Analytical Assessment

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High rate of teacher mobility impacts negatively on school improvement efforts for it disrupts the stability and continuity of teaching. Therefore, the Kenya government is committed to staffing all public schools with teachers and reducing teacher transfers by offering enhanced salaries and allowances. Suba district is one of those districts where hardship allowances are offered to teachers. A bonding policy which restricts newly recruited teachers from transferring before the end of five years has also been put in place since 2001. Despite these measures, secondary school teacher transfer requests in Suba District had been the highest at about 16.5% while national average teacher transfer requests were estimated at 10.9%. For instance, out of the 38 newly recruited secondary school teachers since 2001 whose bonding period had not elapsed, 26% of them had already applied for transfers by December 2005. These figures were high and above the national annual average of 5% (2,000 out of 40,000 post-primary teachers) transfer requests. Therefore, this study investigated the factors that influenced secondary school teacher transfer requests in Suba District. The study employed a descriptive survey design. The socioeconomic and environmental factors linked to teacher transfer requests included accessibility, location of schools, availability of opportunities for further studies, electricity as well as housing. Teacher-related variables included teachers' family ties, teachers' background, and teachers' age. Factors associated with students included students' rural catchment area, class sizes and students' socio-economic backgrounds. Management factors encompassed availability of opportunities for teacher promotion due to less professional contact and support, opportunities for teacher recognition, collegial treatment and availability of induction or mentoring programs. The findings of the study are significant in that they exposed the problems that hindered teacher retention in Suba District secondary schools.

Keywords: Factors, teacher, transfer, requests, secondary schools, Suba District, Kenya.

INTRODUCTION

Whereas high-performing schools are distinguished by stability and continuity of teaching, studies show that teaching traditionally has been characterized as an occupation with high levels of transfers (Bryk et al., 1990). Ingersoll (2001) and Feng (2005) contend that since teacher transfer does not contribute to a net loss in the total supply of public school teachers in a country, most empirical research have assumed that it is less significant. On the other hand, Caillods (1989) maintains that because the art of teaching is a developmental process, it involves a complex set of skills, many of which can only be well polished on uninterrupted job experience, makes the impact of teacher transfer on learning process to be the same as attrition. In Kenya, given that the government had frozen supply-driven teacher recruitment in 1997 and resorted to replacing

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only those lost under natural attrition in 2001, teacher shortage has worsened with increase in student enrolment as a result of the Free Primary Education (UNESCO, 2003). Therefore, it has been essential to safeguard the exit of the few existing teachers by the school managements, for in general, getting a chance to recruit teachers under this approach is a long, expensive and uncertain process at school level (Republic of Kenya, 2003a). Amongst the twelve districts of Nyanza Province in Kenya, Suba district teachers have been leading in the number of transfer requests (Ariko, 2009). Ingersoll (2001) contends that high levels of employee transfers or desire to leave are both cause and effect of dysfunction and low performance in organizations. Teacher transfer requests raise questions about the professional satisfaction of teachers and have potential implications for school overall performance. It is necessary to find solutions on how teacher transfer request can be minimized. Therefore purpose of the study was to investigate the how teacher transfer requests can be minimized. A study by North Central Regional Education Laboratory (2001) in its seven-state region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) conducted amongst the 3,506 superintendents, shows that across all the states, there are school districts and schools that appear to be implementing effective strategies for minimizing teachers transfers. Some of them which have been received include teacher incentives, induction and mentoring as well as instituting a retention bonus. Studies show that some countries have attempted to minimize teacher transfers through the use of incentives. Craig et al (1998) observe that financial incentives, in the form of a hardship allowance, travel allowance, or subsidized housing, in addition to non-monetary incentives such as special study leave or better training opportunities have had positive impact on teacher retention. Mulkeen (2005) found out that a number of countries in Africa have employed this strategy: Mozambique for example employs a system of financial bonuses for teachers who locate in rural areas and teachers who teach two shifts. Two shift schools are found more frequently in the areas of a high population density. In Lesotho, a flat bonus of 275 Maloti (47 USD) is paid per month to teachers who locate in the mountainous hardship zones. Similarly, in 2001, the Uganda government introduced a hardship allowance of 20% of basic salary for 'hard-to-reach' areas (Mulkeen, 2005).

A study by the Council of the City of New York (2004) underscores the importance of improvement of school safety and discipline in minimizing teacher transfer requests. They noted that it is vital that teachers feel safe when they enter a school to improve teacher retention. Feelings that schools are unsafe are pervasive among teachers and one of their main sources of dissatisfaction. Teachers and students deserve comprehensive school safety plan that addresses safety issues at every school.

The school safety might also be contingent upon the student discipline and the culture of surrounding community. The North Central Regional Education Laboratory (2001) survey supports the notion that when districts restructure their schools to make them smaller, more high-quality teachers stay in those districts. Research indicates that restructuring schools to make them smaller may result in an improved environment for teaching (Bryk, 1994). For example, in the Chicago Public Schools system, an effort to improve student achievement spurred a movement to create smaller schools within big schools. In addition to improved achievement, this urban school system has found that the new, smaller schools created out of large schools have increased cooperation among teachers and have involved teachers more in the process of educational reform (Joravsky, 2000). A study by Ingersoll (2001), notes that provision of retention bonuses has been successful in minimizing teacher transfer requests. Retention bonuses involve rewarding a teacher who successfully completes a period of service in a region designated as hard-to-staff. A study by Texas Centre for Educational Research (1999) on teacher retention revealed that the legislature authorizes the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to provide assistance to qualified teachers to repay their student loans. In addition, under the Loan Deferment and Cancellation Programs, Texas Education Agency provides a number of opportunities for teachers to defer or cancel federal student loans if they teach in a designated shortage area. Individuals with loans under the Stafford Loan program may cancel up to $5,000 of a federal loan by teaching for five years in hard to staff areas. Survey results cited by Hare and Heap (2001) indicate that teacher induction programs are very effective in minimizing teacher transfers. According to the North Central Regional Education Laboratory (2001) survey, adoption of teacher induction and support programmes proved successful in keeping high-quality teachers in the seven North Central Regional Education Laboratory districts. For example, in the state of Michigan the law formally requires that new teachers receive "intensive" professional development or additional training within 15 days of the first three years of teaching. Whereas there is a there is a one year of support as part of the teacher-licensing system in Indiana, other states like Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin provide some funding to encourage districts or groups of districts to develop support programs. A majority of districts providing teacher support and induction reported that transfers had been reduced by 50 percent or more (North Central Regional Education Laboratory, 2001). Similarly, Spuhler and Zetler's (1995) three-year evaluation of the Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program found that retention rates were higher for those who participated in the mentoring programs.

Hedges (2002) study reveals that in Ghana, a policy that involved posting newly qualified teachers in pairs
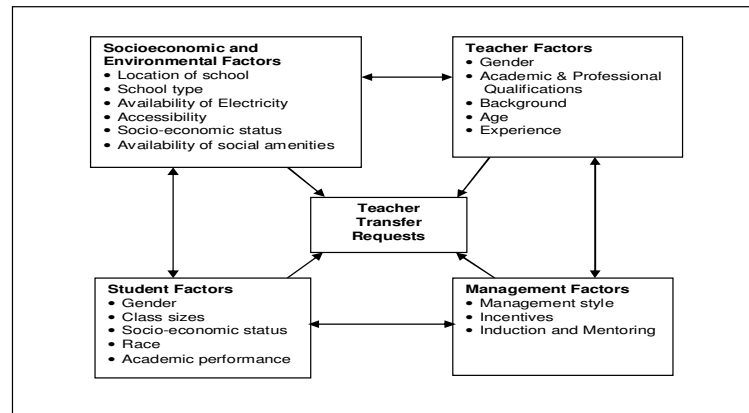
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework showing Factors that Influence Teacher Transfer Requests

seems to work well. Those posted with another teacher, seemed to draw strength from the ready-made friendship, especially in hostile communities, even if they had not known each other beforehand. Another strategy in Ghana involved linking rural deployment with a teacher education outreach program, with the aim of helping female teachers to feel safe and have a greater sense of control over their deployment (Hedges, 2000). The Education Management Information System) data in Malawi reveals a strong association between the availability of housing in an area and the retention of teachers in schools and more so female teachers (Mulkeen, 2005). Similarly in Uganda, a study on Primary School Teachers Attrition considered provision of housing to be a key factor in ensuring teacher retention especially in rural areas, while in Mozambique, the same study reveals that the Ministry puts up a director's house in some schools. In addition, some Non Governmental Organizations and even local communities, have constructed teacher housing in an attempt to make rural locations more attractive. In Lesotho too, teacher housing is not normally provided, but some Non Governmental Organizations and community groups have provided accommodation (Mulkeen, 2005), with some observable success on retaining teachers. Another strategy that has been found to be successful in minimizing teacher transfer requests is to recruit teachers from the community they belong. North Central Regional Education Laboratory (2001) study revealed that states like Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin have seemed to make the most use of these mechanisms. Under this alternative the rationale is that it is easier to retain people who have deep roots in the community. Craig et. al, (1998) argue that the assumption in teacher recruitment from the community is that, when student teachers from within each region are recruited, then it is hoped that personal history and family connections will entice them to return to teach in their home area after they attain their teacher certification This study therefore investigated the

extent to which the strategies employed in the USA, Uganda, Ghana and Lesotho like provision of incentives, improvement of school safety and student discipline, restructuring of the schools to make them smaller, instituting retention bonus, adoption of induction and support programs, provision of housing and target teacher recruitment from the community would also work in Suba District to minimize transfer requests of teachers in secondary schools. In addition, the study investigated the extent to which the improvement of physical and social amenities would reduce teacher transfer requests.

Research Question

What are the socioeconomic and environmental, teacher, student and management factors that influence teacher transfer requests?

Conceptual Framework

Stable organizations are characterised by low turnover of employees and their ability to keep customers. This is attainable if the organizational roles and entire process of leadership are based on job enrichment built on what satisfies employees (Koontz and Weihlrich, 1990). Therefore, if the reduction of frequent teacher transfer is an objective to be realized, then the factors contingent upon teachers' work should be motivational to achieve this goal. From the literature review (Sargent, 2003; Feng, 2005; Ingersoll, 2001), it is apparent that the factors that may encourage teacher transfer requests include socioeconomic and environmental factors, management, teacher and student factors.

It was conceptualized that factors that influence teacher transfer requests are interdependent and they may influence teacher transfer requests as indicated in Figure 1. Sargent (2003) observes that young teachers, female

teachers, and more qualified teachers are all likely to request for transfers, while teachers who have more ties to the local community are not likely to request for transfers.

Teacher factors such as attitude as well as socioeconomic and environmental factors, which include living and working conditions, terms of employment and career prospects of teachers, can be improved due to the management style, activities and incentives provided by the school stakeholders (UNESCO, 2005). The management of human and financial resources determines the state of security, availability of social amenities and infra-structure in the school. Teacher's health and qualifications through in-service training can be improved if the administration provides incentives. Training has the ability to alter the teacher's attitude towards student, socioeconomic and environmental factors, and his own characteristics that may influence his or her desire to continue teaching in a given school.

The management style of the administration depends on the school type and size as influenced by prevailing socioeconomic factors, student enrolment and availability of qualified, disciplined and healthy experienced teachers to whom management duties can be delegated. Feng (2005) adds that availability and quality of teachers affects discipline, enrolment and students' academic performance. The students' gender and socio-economic status may impact on the teachers' desire to leave as a matter of attitudinal prejudices. These attitudinal prejudices may vary with gender, age, training and experience of the teacher. The student's economic background determines his/her ability to pay school fees thereby impacting on the financial strength of the school to provide teacher incentives, housing and improving the institutional buildings. Sargent (2003) argues that the socioeconomic and environmental factors such as the, availability of housing, social amenities and infra-structure, location and type of school have varying impact on teacher transfer requests depending on gender, marital status, health and background of the teacher. Higher levels of teacher job satisfaction can be found in schools where there are more resources for teaching, teacher and student welfare; where teachers have higher levels of remuneration and salaries are paid on time; where there are higher levels of management support for teaching; and where there are fewer discipline problems. Teachers in villages that are poorer and more remote have lower levels of satisfaction leading to transfer requests, Sargent (2003) adds. Therefore this conceptual framework assisted in focusing on the socioeconomic and environmental, teacher, student and management factors that influence teacher transfer requests.

METHODOLOGY

The study used descriptive survey design to explore

teachers', head teachers' and staffing officer's knowledge and feelings on how teacher transfer requests could be minimized in Suba district. The population of the study consisted of 16 head teachers and 126 teachers of the 16 public secondary schools as well as the provincial staffing officer. The sample was selected by saturated sampling technique after 3 head teachers in 3 schools out of 16 and their 28 teachers out of 126 had been involved in the pilot study. The 3 schools for pilot study were identified by stratified sampling by location of schools. The 3 strata were rural location, urban location and the school located on the Islands, which had diverse working conditions. The studies consisted of 98 teachers, 13 head teachers in 13 secondary public schools, and one provincial staffing officer. Essentially, the whole population was involved in the study except those who were involved in the pilot study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and head teachers while in-depth interview helped in collecting information from the provincial staffing officer who approves teacher transfers. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequency counts and percentages. Data from the open–ended sections of the questionnaires were analyzed qualitatively by arranging the responses thematically, after which the main themes and patterns in the responses were identified and analyzed to determine the factors that influence teacher transfer requests. Responses from in-depth interview with the Staffing Officer were audio taped, transcribed and analyzed in an on-going process according to themes, categories, and sub-categories that emerged and then tallied and presented in quoted words and phrases. To shed light on the factors influencing teacher transfer requests in Suba district, the factors were stratified as socioeconomic and environmental, teacher, student and management factors. Respondents who included teachers and head teachers were asked in both closed and open ended questions to indicate the factors that influenced their desire to request for transfers from their schools. There were also interview guides for the staffing officer on factors that influenced teacher transfer requests in Suba District. To examine the socioeconomic and environmental that influenced teacher transfer requests, teachers were asked to indicate whether they agreed, were undecided or disagreed that the listed socioeconomic and environmental factors influenced teacher transfer requests.

RESULTS

Research Question

What are the socioeconomic and environmental, teacher, student and management factors that influence teacher transfer requests?

The responses to this research question were as

Table 1: Teachers' Responses to the Socioeconomic and Environmental Factors Influencing Transfer Requests (n = 98)

Socioeconomic and Environmental Factors	Teachers Response		
	Agreef (%)	Undecidedf (%)	Disagree f (%)
Location of school (rural)	73 (74.5)	0 (0.0)	25 (25.5)
Type of school (girls, boarding)	23 (23.5)	2 (2.0)	74 (75.5)
Quality of institutional buildings	38 (39.8)	0 (0.0)	60 (61.2)
Availability of instructional materials	36 (36.7)	0 (0.0)	62 (63.3)
Availability of electricity	85 (86.7)	0 (0.0)	13 (13.3)
Accessibility to schools	88 (89.8)	0 (0.0)	10 (10.2)
Availability of water supply	52 (53.1)	0 (0.0)	48 (49.0)
Availability of health facilities	65 (66.3)	0 (0.0)	33 (33.7)
Neighbourhood security	11 (11.2)	0 (0.0)	87 (88.8)
Availability of housing for teachers	70 (71.4)	0 (0.0)	28 (28.6)
Availability of means of communication	81 (82.7)	0 (0.0)	17 (17.3)
Availability of opportunities for further studies	84 (85.7)	0 (0.0)	14 (14.3)
Cost of living	19 (19.4)	4 (4.1)	75 (76.5)
Availability of recreational facilities	67 (68.4)	12 (12.2)	19 (19.4)

Key: f – Frequency, %- Percentage

Table 2: Head Teachers' Responses to the Socioeconomic and Environmental factors Influencing Transfer Requests (n = 13)

Socioeconomic and Environmental Factors	Head Teachers Response		
	Agree f (%)	Undecided f (%)	Disagreef (%)
Location of School (rural)	9 (69.2)	0 (0.0)	4 (30.8)
Type of school (girls, boarding)	5 (38.5)	0 (0.0)	8 (61.5)
Quality of institutional buildings	5 (38.5)	2 (15.4)	6 (46.2)
Availability of Instructional materials	4 (30.8)	1 (7.7)	8 (61.5)
Availability of Electricity	10 (76.9)	0 (0.0)	3 (23.1)
Accessibility to schools	12 (92.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (7.7)
Availability of water supply	5 (38.5)	0 (0.0)	8 (61.5)
Availability of health facilities	8 (61.5)	0 (0.0)	5 (38.5)
Neighbourhood security	3 (23.1)	1 (7.7)	9 (69.2)
Availability of Housing for teachers	10 (76.9)	0 (0.0)	3 (23.1)
Availability of means of communication	11 (84.6)	0 (0.0)	2 (15.4)
Availability of opportunities for further studies	11 (84.6)	1 (7.7)	1 (7.7)
Cost of Living	5 (38.5)	3 (23.1)	5 (38.5)
Availability of recreational facilities	9 (69.2)	1 (7.7)	3 (23.1)

Key: f – Frequency, %- Percentage

shown in Tables 1 to 8.

When asked under the open ended questions if anything would have induced them to continue working in their present schools, over two-fifths of the teachers intimated "Nothing!". Of those who might have been encouraged to stay, mentioned that a good neighbourhood security and affordable cost of living, thus further confirmed the good state of security in Suba District.

However, further teacher responses to open ended questions revealed that accessibility was a major factor in teacher transfer requests. Specifically, 88 (89.8%) of the teachers confessed that accessibility to their schools was poor. Consequently, 56 (63.6%) of these teachers attributed the poor accessibility to poor roads while 32 (36.4%) of teachers blamed it on location of the schools within the Islands. Besides, 71 (72.4%) respondents complained about lack of electricity being the main reason why the teachers did not like to continue working

in their present schools. The staffing officer observed that: "The physical remoteness of the school encourages teacher transfer requests. The need to travel to collect pay from banks located in towns and to buy commodities at the end of each month was a major factor of teacher dissatisfaction. A visit to see a doctor that would take a day in an urban area, could involve an absence of three or four days for a teacher in a rural school".

In addition, analysis of the open ended questions in the teacher questionnaires revealed that 78 (79.5%) teachers admitted that location of their schools while 64 (65.3%) teachers agreed that lack of opportunities for further studies were the other socioeconomic and environmental factor that had an influence on their desire to request for transfers. The head teachers were similarly asked to indicate whether they agreed, undecided or disagreed that the listed socioeconomic and environmental factors influenced their teachers to request for transfers. Their responses were summarized in Table 2.

Table 3: Teachers' responses to the teacher factors influencing transfer requests (n = 98)

Teacher Factors	Teachers Response		
	Agree f (%)	Undecided f (%)	Disagree f (%)
Gender	51 (52.0)	8 (8.2)	39 (39.8)
Age or Experience	55 (56.1)	7 (7.1)	36 (36.7)
Health	32 (32.7)	0 (0.0)	66 (67.3)
Disability	26 (26.5)	6 (6.1)	66 (67.3)
Family Ties	70 (71.4)	0 (0.0)	28 (28.6)
Academic Qualifications	30 (30.6)	8 (8.2)	60 (61.2)
School Responsibilities	36 (36.7)	0 (0.0)	62 (63.3)
Professional Qualifications	46 (46.9)	0 (0.0)	52 (53.1)
Background e.g. Native to Suba District	60 (61.2)	3 (3.1)	35 (35.7)
Teacher Discipline	25 (25.5)	0 (0.0)	73 (74.5)

Key: f – Frequency, **%** Percentage

Table 4: Head Teachers' Responses to the Teacher Factors Influencing Transfer Requests (n = 13)

Teacher factors	Head Teachers' Response		
	Agree f (%)	Undecided f (%)	Disagree f (%)
Gender	5 (38.5)	3 (23.1)	5 (38.5)
Age or experience	8 (61.5)	1 (7.7)	4 (30.8)
Health	9 (69.2)	0 (0.0)	4 (30.8)
Disability	3 (23.1)	0 (0.0)	10 (76.9)
Family Ties	10 (76.9)	1 (7.7)	2 (15.4)
Academic Qualifications	5 (38.5)	2 (15.4)	6 (46.2)
School Responsibilities	4 (30.8)	1 (7.7)	8 (61.5)
Professional Qualifications	6 (46.2)	0 (0.0)	7 (53.8)
Background e.g. Native to Suba District	7 (53.8)	2 (15.4)	4 (30.8)
Teacher Discipline	5 (38.5)	2 (15.4)	6 (46.2)

Key: f – Frequency, **%** Percentage

The findings obtained from head teachers' responses shown in Table 2 confirms similarly that accessibility to schools, availability of electricity, opportunities for further studies and housing were the main items of socioeconomic and environmental factors that influenced teacher transfer requests.

Teacher Factors

To investigate the teacher factors that influenced the teacher transfer request, Table 3 illustrates the teachers' responses on teacher factors that influenced teacher transfer requests. According to the teachers, family ties, background and age or experience were the leading teacher factors that had great influence on teachers' transfer requests. However a closer analysis of Table 3 reveal that less emphasis was placed on teacher qualification, discipline, health, gender and disability as the teacher factors that influenced teacher transfer requests. In an interview with the staffing officer, he said that: "Majority of the teachers who request for transfers are young. Most of young teachers are not yet tied down to responsibilities of heading departments and family obligations".

The results from open ended questions suggested important insights, that 65 (66.3%) teachers were born and brought up in Suba District and 48 (73.9%) of these teachers expressed no desire to request for transfers. Out of the 33 (33.7%) teachers who were not native of Suba District, 22 (66.7%) of them acknowledged their willingness to ask for transfer. Similarly this view was evident when the staffing officer said that: "Some teachers do take teaching jobs in their rural homes because they have searched for jobs elsewhere for a long time in vain. Otherwise they would not like to work in their rural village". On the other hand Table 4 which has results on head teachers' responses to the teacher factors influencing transfer request reveals that the head teachers acknowledged that most of the teacher transfer requests in Suba District were influenced mainly by teacher health related issues, family ties and age.

The staffing officer had a general overview on factors that influenced teacher transfer requests. He observed that: "Some teachers opt for transfers due to their own disciplinary issues and personal problems. Others do seek for transfers on grounds of personal security and health related issues, while others do get pressurized by the community to ultimately look for transfers. Some teachers request for transfers to pursue business

Table 5: Teachers' Responses to the Student Factors Influencing Transfer Requests (n = 98)

Student Factors	Teachers' Response		
	Agree f (%)	Undecided f (%)	Disagree f (%)
Students' Socio-Economic Backgrounds	52 (53.1)	11 (11.2)	35 (35.7)
KCSE Results	39 (39.8)	21 (21.4)	38 (38.8)
Class Sizes	64 (65.3)	0 (0.0)	34 (34.7)
Student Gender	27 (27.6)	14 (14.3)	57 (58.2)
Students Discipline	22 (22.4)	0 (0.0)	76 (77.6)
Catchment Area	62 (63.3)	6 (6.1)	30 (30.6)

Key: f – Frequency, %- Percentage

Table 6: Head Teachers' Response to the Student Factors Influencing Transfer Requests(n = 13)

Student Factors	Head teachers' Response		
	Agree f (%)	Undecided f (%)	Disagree f (%)
Students' Socio-Economic Backgrounds	9 (69.2)	1 (7.7)	3 (23.1)
KCSE Results	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	8 (61.5)
Class Sizes	7 (53.8)	0 (0.0)	6 (46.2)
Student Gender	4 (30.8)	3 (23.1)	6 (46.2)
Students' Discipline	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)	12 (92.3)
Catchment Area	9 (69.2)	0 (0.0)	4 (30.8)

Key: f – Frequency, %- Percentage

interests, or to go to areas in close proximity to college, while some teachers normally feel that the environment in which they are teaching is not conducive for their personal development yet there are those who want to run away from responsibilities and perceived frustrations. However, a few teachers seek transfers to avoid problematic spouses or to be close to family to guard their marital interests citing aging parents and schooling children".

Student Factors

Teachers were further asked to identify their students' factors that influenced their request for transfer. The responses were summarized in Table 5.

As indicated in Table 5, amongst the student factors, teachers' responses indicated that students' catchment area and class size influenced teacher transfer request the most in Suba District. Data from the open ended questions showed that, 78 (79.6%) teachers admitted that the state of student discipline had a positive influence on teacher desire to continue teaching in Suba district schools. They attributed this to good student discipline. In addition, further responses on open ended questions showed that 64 (65.3%) teachers divulged that increase in student enrolment had negatively appealed to their desire to continue working in their schools. Similarly the head teachers were asked to identify their students' factors that influenced their teachers to request for transfer. The responses were summarized in Table 6.

The results obtained shown in Table 6 revealed that the

head teachers on the other hand agreed that socio-economic background, the student catchments area and class sizes influenced teacher transfer request the most. The head teachers however put less emphasis on student performance as depicted by KCSE results, student gender and student discipline as student factors that influenced teacher transfer requests.

Management Factors

To explore the management factors which influenced teacher transfer requests in Suba District, teachers' responses were recorded as shown in Tables 7.

The obtained results in Table 7 show that availability of opportunities for promotion, mentoring and induction programs, teacher recognition and availability of collegial treatment were the leading factors amongst the management issues that influenced teacher transfer requests. Teachers were asked at the open ended questions section of the questionnaire to comment on the how influential had the head teachers been on teacher transfer requests. In response, 51 (52.0%) teachers were categorical that they requested for transfers due to their head teachers' management style. The findings of the study also established that 63 (64.3%) of the teachers did not like the way their administrators treated them and carried duty.

The staffing officer stressed that: "The powers to teacher retention are within the grasp of the head teacher. The head teacher is the manager and all the school resources are within his/her reach. As a human

Table 7: Teachers' Response to the Management Factors Influencing Transfer Requests (n = 98)

Management Factors	Teachers Response		
	Agree f (%)	Undecided f (%)	Disagree f (%)
B.O.G and sponsors Involvement	24 (24.5)	18 (18.4)	57 (58.2)
Availability of Collegial Treatment	63 (64.3)	15 (15.3)	20 (20.6)
Frequency of Supervision	26 (26.5)	10 (10.2)	62 (63.3)
Leadership Style	41 (41.8)	0 (0.0)	57 (58.2)
Mentoring and Induction programs	65 (66.3)	4 (4.1)	29 (29.6)
Availability of Teacher Allowance	30 (30.6)	0 (0.0)	68 (69.4)
Availability of opportunities for Promotion	76 (77.6)	4 (4.1)	18 (18.3)
Teacher Recognition	58 (59.2)	16 (16.3)	25 (25.5)

Key: f – Frequency, %- Percentage

Table 8: Head Teachers' Responses to the Management Factors Influencing Transfer Requests (n = 13)

Management Factors	Head Teachers' Response		
	Agree f (%)	Undecided f (%)	Disagree f (%)
B.O.G and sponsors Involvement	3 (23.1)	0 (0.0)	10 (76.9)
Availability of Collegial Treatment	5 (38.5)	3 (23.1)	5 (38.5)
Frequency of Supervision	5 (38.5)	1 (7.7)	7 (53.8)
Leadership Style	2 (15.4)	3 (23.1)	8 (61.5)
Availability of Teacher Allowance	4 (30.8)	0 (0.0)	9 (69.2)
Mentoring and Induction	7 (53.8)	1 (7.7)	5 (38.5)
Availability of opportunities for Promotion	8 (61.5)	0 (0.0)	5 (38.5)
Teacher Recognition	2 (15.4)	4 (30.8)	7 (53.8)

Key: **f** – Frequency, **%** Percentage

resource manager, his/her management style influences all structures and procedures that contributed to a high sense of efficacy that could impact on teachers' desire to request for transfer or not, albeit the unfavourable school, teacher and student factors".

Further analysis of Table 8 reveals the teachers disagreed that frequency of supervision influenced teacher transfer requests. Similarly the head teachers were asked to identify the management factors that influenced their teachers to request for transfer. The head teachers' responses recorded in Table 8 show that a considerable number of head teachers show availability of opportunities for teacher promotion to be the leading management factor that influenced teacher transfer requests.

In addition, availability of mentoring and induction programs featured as the other main factor that influenced teacher transfer request among the management factors (Table 8). However, contrary to the teachers, the head teachers disagreed that leadership style and teacher recognition influenced teacher transfer requests.

DISCUSSION

Factors that influenced teacher transfer requests in Suba District were a manifestation of a rural set up.

Specifically, schools which were located in the rural set up had greater influence on teacher transfer requests. The probable reasons for the influence of the rural location of schools on teacher transfer requests are poverty, lack of physical amenities and poor accessibility. Equally, the study revealed that availability of electricity and accessibility influenced teacher transfer requests. Sargent (2003) observed that levels of village income are paramount in the influence on teacher transfer requests, suggesting that wealthier villages had higher incomes due to the presence of industry, private enterprise and private tuition which could translate into a wider range of part time jobs for teachers. Therefore it was probable that teacher transfer request could have been accentuated by lack of part time jobs for teachers in Suba District Schools in view of its rural set up. Rural schools could have appeared to be in isolation and geographically separated from communities to which teachers felt akin or from the amenities and services which they were accustomed. Considering that accessibility was found to be the other factor that influenced teacher transfer requests, this isolation could have had more impact on teachers' decision to request for transfers. Generally, limited economic activities in rural locations tend to limit the number of higher educational institutions of learning in an area. This may explain why Suba District teachers expressed that availability of opportunities for further studies influenced the teachers' request for transfers as

well.

The other factors which were found to underpin the influence of teachers' transfer request due to isolated rural set up of their school were availability of housing and electricity. Both data in Tables 1 and 2 concur with the finding of Matovu (2001) that availability of housing and electricity in a school has an influence on teacher transfer requests. Lack of housing next to the schools may have forced teachers to live far away from their schools. It then meant that they could spend more time and money travelling daily to schools, which the study revealed, had poor accessibility. In the same way, lack of electricity incapacitates several aspects of a teacher's life that could consequently lead to teacher dissatisfaction. Modern effective communication and information gadgets, entertainment and learning resources require electricity. Therefore, lack of electricity could have incapacitated means of communication, compromised information channels and limited ways of entertainment leading to teacher dissatisfaction. On the other hand, though schools in major urban centres may be associated with enhanced house allowance, good housing and other amenities typical in town which are absent in rural schools; teachers in town schools would have to contend with high house rent and commuter expenses.   The results regarding teacher age or experience, background and family ties indicated in Table 4 were very consistent with findings elsewhere in the literature on teacher satisfaction that would lead to transfer requests. Research by Imazeki, (2001) and Ingersoll, (2004) show that teacher transfer requests tend to be more pronounced among younger and newly recruited teachers with no background and family ties around their schools. The human capital approach offers some reasons for teacher transfer requests related to age and experience. Transfer requests tended to be higher during the early part of a teaching career because the teacher accumulates less specific capital (knowledge specific to occupation and that which is non-transferable), but these diminished later in the career because more specific capital exists. In addition it was found that newly recruited, young and novice teachers could have often received little or no support which ill-prepared them for the realities of teaching in Suba District, thereby requesting for transfers.

The findings of this study also underscored the importance of teacher's background as a predictor of teacher transfer request, just as Craig et al (1998) findings did. Teachers with ties to the local community may become established within their own community and gain extra benefits from the proximity of relatives, which may help to ensure long term stability. Consequently it is probable to argue that the school based teacher recruitment exercise could have tended to target the willing candidates from the locality to fill the vacancies, thereby succeeding to place them in schools where they are more satisfied. On the other hand, teachers may not

want to work in their own village because there would be too many demands on them from the family. Rust and Dalin's (1990) work reveals that educated members of disadvantaged minority groups viewed their education as a means of social mobility, and had no desire to remain in their local community once qualified. The impact of class sizes and student catchment area on teacher transfer requests was also quite striking. While, low pupil teacher ratio is regarded as a measure of quality that enhances better chance of contact between pupils and teachers, large class sizes leaves teachers with little time to prepare and evaluate students effectively. Ideally, class size should have been 35 students per class while the Curriculum Based Establishment which required an assistant teacher to take 27 lessons per week sufficed in secondary schools. On the contrary, the study revealed that in Suba District, the student population ranged from 40 to 65 per class with teachers taking up to 35 lessons per week, a situation which 63 (64.3%) of the interviewed teachers were not happy with, thereby probably influencing teacher transfer requests. However, as much as teachers may ask for transfer due to large student enrolment in Suba District, they are also enticed to stay due to good student discipline. Presumably well-behaved students are easier and more enjoyable to teach and thus would decrease the likelihood that a teacher would request for a transfer.

Among the most important findings in this study was the influence of catchment area of the students on teacher transfer requests. The study revealed that Suba District had 13 (81.25%) district schools against 3 (18.75%) provincial schools which were largely day school. This implied that the main students' catchment area was within the district which was mostly rural. Besides, the findings aforementioned revealed that the teacher transfer requests are also influenced by rural location of Suba District schools. Two arguments could support the reason behind the influence of teacher transfer request by the rural catchment area of students. First, rural children may be considered more difficult to teach since they have less parental encouragement to go to school and more alternative demands on their time, such as helping with agricultural tasks. Secondly, they may find the curriculum less relevant to their lives (Mulkeen, 2005). Another interesting finding is the little influence of student academic achievement on teacher transfer requests. This is contrary to Mont and Rees (1996) study which revealed that teachers with higher achieving students are not likely to request for transfers. In Suba District, though students' academic achievement had not been exemplary, as gauged by the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education results, the teachers, and more so head teachers, did not consider it as a factor that would cause transfer requests. Feng (2005), however, emphasized that other factors such as teacher pay, student discipline and teacher ability should be controlled for in order for students' academic achieve-

ment to be responsive to teacher transfer request. Probably the evidence of good student discipline and hardship allowance could have mitigated the influence of poor student performance on teacher transfer requests in Suba district.

The findings on management factors that influenced teacher transfer request in Suba District were similar to the findings of Feng (2005). Lack of collegial interaction among members of the school community and teacher recognition by the school management have greater influence on teacher transfer requests. Essentially, the teacher is the customer of school management and therefore, as Total Quality Management advocates, the teachers' services can only be delivered with satisfaction if there is good customer relationships, empowerment, recognition and active participation in decision making by teachers. Participation of teachers in decision-making and their recognition increases the teachers' sense of control and belonging over their work setting. Given that teacher recognition and availability of collegial treatment were the leading management factors that influenced teacher transfer requests, according to teachers, it is possible that the manifestation of these factors could have created a sense of not belonging, leading to requests for transfers. A striking disparity was noted concerning head teachers' responses to leadership style and teacher recognition. According to head teachers, leadership style and teacher recognition did not influence teacher transfer requests, yet collegial treatment had some considerable influence on teacher transfer requests. These differentials in responses could have been attributed to the fact that head teachers were probably being defensive of their management style. Similarly this study revealed that both teachers and head teachers acknowledged that lack of mentoring and induction influenced teacher transfer requests. Moreover, this study found that teacher transfer requests were pronounced among younger teachers. It is therefore possible to conclude that the majority of the young teachers who could have requested for transfer could have been influenced to make this decision due to lack of mentoring and induction programs in Suba District. Lack of mentoring and induction programs could have led to lack of support, guidance, socialization, orientation, adjustment, development and evaluation of a new teacher, thereby influencing transfer requests.

Evidence from this study however indicates that the school managements in Suba District have been slow to develop a systematic way to induct beginners gradually into the complexities of teaching. The absence of induction of newly recruited teachers in Suba District could have been attributed to two reasons. First, teacher recruitment may have been highly competitive, and for a teacher to be recruited at school level it could have been viewed as such a very big favour to the teacher. Therefore it was probably assumed that once a teacher was lucky enough to be recruited, then he/she was

expected to find his/her way through the school system and start to deliver results immediately, not expect more favours. Secondly given that the school could have lacked the teacher for a long time, the pressure to coach the deserving students to pass the National Examinations gives no room for the newly recruited teacher to be inducted and mentored. Finally, the responses by both teachers and head teachers indicated that teacher allowances are an interesting contrast. Rather surprisingly, teacher allowance came way down the list of reasons for requesting for transfers. This is probably because of the hardship allowance being offered by the government in most schools of Suba district. At school level 17 (58.6%) teachers who were interviewed admitted that their school boards normally organized some token to reward performance and pay for extra work done during school holidays. While teacher allowance may not have been much of a push factor in the sense that other reasons loomed larger in the decision to request for transfers, it was a pull factor in potentially inducing some of those who could be encouraged to stay to put up with other hassles of rural schools with poor infrastructure.

CONCLUSIONS

The focus in this study was on factors that influence teacher transfer requests in Suba District. The high rates of teachers transfer requests in Suba District imply teacher dissatisfaction in their schools. Thus teacher satisfaction in Suba district could be a function of the varying community, environment, individual characteristics of teachers and the perceptions they hold of the relative advantage and disadvantage of teaching in other schools, as well as the economic and organizational conditions of the schools in which they work. Results from this study show that the major sources of teacher transfer requests in Suba District is poor accessibility, lack of housing facilities, lack of electricity, rural location of the schools, lack of opportunities for further studies, lack of teacher housing, high pupil teacher ratio and lack of collegial treatment of teacher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Efforts should be made by the government to provide electricity and improve accessibility in Suba District by improving roads and providing regular and reliable means of transport to school mainly in the Islands.

The Ministry of Education should establish standards for school Board of Governors to facilitate the availability of housing facilities next to schools as a mandatory prerequisite for registration of a school or when applying to Teachers Service Commission to provide a teacher.

The Teachers Service Commission should encourage

job seekers to apply for jobs next to their families or homes so that the issue of moving to join family does not occur in the future.

The government should employ more teachers to lower student teacher ratio. It is difficult for teachers to give students the necessary attention they deserve with a lot of enthusiasm if they are too many.

Induction and mentoring programs should be introduced and intensified by the school administrations. In-service training and seminars should be encouraged and taken more seriously to assimilate the newly-recruited teachers in the school system.

The government should provide retention bonuses for teachers who manage to stay longer in addition to hardship allowances.

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