

Human Resource Management and Teacher Attrition in Secondary Education in Cameroon

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Abstract: In the education systems of sub-Saharan Africa as elsewhere, it is usually observed that qualified teachers leave the profession or are underutilized for multiple reasons. Yet, they are the main vector for promoting efficiency in education. Identifying the public management factors that contribute to this attrition can be useful diagnostic lever to stem this phenomenon. In this regard, this article aims to examine the relationship between human resource management of the Ministry of Secondary Education of Cameroon (MINESEC) and teacher attrition. The study is conducted on a proportional stratified sample of 381 participants including 366 teachers, 14 school heads and the Director of Human Resources of MINESEC. It requires a descriptive approach as well as a hypothesis test. The results of the data analysis show that the management of positions at MINESEC contributes to the teacher attrition, on one hand, as well as access to remuneration by MINESEC teachers contributes significantly to their attrition.

Keywords: human resource management, attrition, teachers

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1. Introduction

The teacher is the most influential and powerful catalyst for equity and access to education, especially to quality education. According to Adedeji and Olaniyan [1], it is therefore understandable that the effectiveness of the educational system is partly correlated with teachers who teach in the classroom. Moreover, for Mokaddem [2], their absence is one of the main obstacles to educational progress. Using a descriptive and correlational approach, based on a quantitative estimate, this article aims to address the problem of teacher attrition observed in the Cameroon educational system in general, and more specifically in secondary education, which is also affected by teacher attrition [3], despite the efforts made by the government to retain teachers. The general question is as follows -Does human resource management practices at the Ministry of Secondary Education of Cameroon (MINESEC) influence teacher attrition? To answer this question, we start from the general hypothesis that certain human resource management practices at MINESEC lead to teacher attrition. Two secondary hypotheses are then formulated:

- Ranking at MINESEC contributes significantly to teacher attrition;
- Access to remuneration at MINESEC has an effect on teacher attrition.

In order to test these hypotheses, we have adopted a

course ranging from theoretical immersion to analysis and comments on the results, through methodological input and data collection.

2. Theoretical Integration

2.1. Human Resource Management in the Educational System

According to Wright and McMahan [4], "human resource management is a set of activities and deployment of personnel designed to enable the educational system to achieve its objectives". Miller [5] sees it as all "decisions and actions relating to the management of personnel, at all levels of the system, and channeled towards the achievement of its objectives". Thus, human resources management also depends on the structure of the organization and the context in which it operates.

Moisset, Plante and Toussaint [6] talk about human resource management in the education sector. They highlight the centrality of human resource management in education, and link the strong development of school administration to the increasingly strong demands made on the educational system in terms of service quality.

Authors such as El Mostafa [7] have tackled the issue of human resource management in the education sector, providing information on the reforms to modernize the administration of the education sector, the operating rules of HRM in the civil service, and the methods of managing

education staff, both in administrative terms and in terms of human resource development. Several other studies and books (Traore [8], Solaux, [9], Göttelmann-Duret [10], Solaux, Suchaut, Dogoh-Bibi, Zebang and Conde [11], Ajountimba, [12] Mulkeen and Chen [13], Adedeji and Olaniyan [1]) have examined issues related to the management of teaching human resources in the national education sector and the strategies of the parties involved in the African context. In any case, it is a question of preventing and managing the sociological and psychological effects that can arise from administrative measures in teacher management in Africa [9].

In the same vein of human resource management in Africa, it appears from Solaux et al [11] and later Mingat [14] that the allocation of resources to schools is random. Abuses are frequent in allocation policies and practices [15] and are very often the cause of teacher demotivation and attrition.

2.1.1. Ranking (Posting, transfers, appointments, internships...)

According to the provisions of article 50 of Decree no. 94/199 of 07 October 1994 on the General Statute of the State Civil Service in Cameroon, amended and supplemented by Decree no. 2000/287 of 12 October 2000, "the rank of a civil servant describes his precise administrative situation at a given point in his career in relation to a post". It specifies that the civil servant is placed in one of the following positions: active service, secondment and inavailability. For research purposes, we will restrict ourselves to active service.

Normally, active service is the Rank of a civil servant who actually carries out his duties in the post to which he has been assigned, transferred or appointed. A civil servant who is undergoing training or further training is also considered to be in active service. These different positions are accessed or granted by human resources management, depending on whether we are in the recruitment, retention or development phase. Rank management is therefore a component of human resources management, which reports on the employee's rank.

Ranking is therefore the set of management actions taken to specify teachers' workstations.

Posting System of Secondary Education Teachers

Posting in general may involve an official, a worker, a staff, a workforce or a military personnel. This person or group is assigned to a job, tasks, position, service, activities, location or working environment. It is codified by an administrative act and generally concerns a new recruit to an organization.

It may be arbitrary, concrete, balanced or unbalanced (with regard to a group or an entire workforce), interim or temporary, permanent, new, progressive, special or voluntary.

In secondary education, it mainly concerns graduates of Higher Teachers Training Colleges and is established by an act of the Minister of Secondary Education, after a process that takes into account needs, available jobs, the ranking in order of merit of graduates and the expression of their wishes.

Transfer system of Secondary Education Staff

In the context of secondary education in Cameroon, a

member of staff may be transferred at his or her own request by means of an ordinary transfer, which takes place, in principle, after three effective years of service in the same post, combined with the requirements of the service. They may also be transferred for reasons of family reunion, in accordance with the provisions of the General Statute of the Civil Service in force, which stipulates, among other things, in article 128 that : when two civil servants belonging to the same administration and residing in the same locality, are united by marriage, it is up to their user Ministry to choose the locality where they will be reunited, taking into account the requirements of the service, their family situation and the state of their health as attested by medical certificates. Civil servants may also be transferred for health reasons. In some other cases, teachers are transferred for "service requirements", i.e. without their consent, let alone their request.

The system of appointment in Secondary Education

In the education sector, appointment is the act of designating a teacher to a position of responsibility in education administration. It is a promotion to a higher hierarchical position. It entails a change of post and sometimes a loss of function for the previous incumbents.

Unfortunately, in most sub-Saharan African countries, the reality differs significantly from the normative reference [14]. As a result, the assignment, transfer and appointment of teachers in the public service in Africa remain somewhat a contested areas. According to Omgba [16], teacher assignments and promotions are based on partisan considerations. There is even a great deal of corruption. Testard [17] notes that positive law, informed by its historical heritage, oscillates between the consecration of appointment as a discretionary power of the administrative authority and the framing of this power as a vector of professionalization of public functions.

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2.1.2. Access to Salary in Secondary Education

In Cameroon, civil servants are paid monthly. In accordance with the provisions of Article 27 of the General Statute of the Civil Service of the State of Cameroon, "a civil servant shall be entitled salary after service has been rendered". This remuneration is based on two decrees: Decree no. 75/459 of 26 June 1975 determining the remuneration system for civil and military personnel, amended and supplemented by Decree no. 75/791 of 18 December 1975; and Decree no. 79/64 of 3 March 1979 setting the salary scale for the various categories of civil servants. However, the duration of the procedure for accessing first pay, although codified, varies due to the cumbersome and time-consuming recruitment process for the State.

Thus, access to pay is the time it takes for a teacher graduating from a Higher Teachers Training College and being employed by the Ministry of Secondary Education to reach his or her first pay grade.

2.2. Teachers and Teachers Attrition

2.2.1. A Teacher in MINESEC

Very often, the definition of a teacher is unclear and includes unqualified or part-time teachers. In some countries, such as Cameroon, the common understanding includes civil servants in national education bodies, including those in administrative and non-administrative posts. For UNESCO, the word "teacher" refers to any person who, in schools, is responsible for the education of students.

For the purpose of this work, we shall limit ourselves to the definition commonly accepted in Cameroon. A Teacher is therefore any qualified person, civil servant or contract worker, recruited in accordance with Decree No. 2000/359 on the Special Status of National Education Corps Personnel, to serve at MINESEC. By this definition, it is clearly understood that any agent who has received, at one time or another, the teaching and evaluation bonus, the teacher's technical bonus or the documentation bonus, provided for by Decree No. 2002/040 of February 4th, 2002 fixing the amounts and terms of payment of the bonuses allocated to staff in the National Education Corps, and recruited on behalf of MINESEC, is considered a MINESEC teacher.

2.2.2. Teacher Attrition

The voluntary departure of workers has been identified in the literature on human resource management as a crucial problem [18]. It has therefore attracted the attention of several researchers, including March and Simon [19]. The latter looked at work integration factors to explain voluntary departures. Locke (1969) looked at job satisfaction. Charters (1970) dwelt particularly on the dropout of new teachers, as did Greenberg and McCall (1974), who considered that the frequent exits from the profession that characterised young teachers were most often attributed to the precarious career path of beginning staff, as well as to the frequent postings to schools offering more difficult working conditions to which the latter were subjected.

Arthur (1994) focused his attention on the effects of the human resources system on performance and attrition. And more recently Ingersoll [23] carried out research on teachers of science and mathematics, which showed that attrition rates were slightly higher for these subjects. Similarly Humphrey, Nahrgang and Morgeson (2007), Weller, Holtom, Matiaske et al (2009) believe that attrition is also due to deficits in job satisfaction and/or organisational commitment and even leadership (Venkataraman, Boswell, Shipp, Payne et al. 2009). Conley and You (2009), Green and Schleicher (2010) and Chaet Cohen-Vogel (2011) have established a link between professional mobility and teacher attrition.

In the African continent, researchers have been examining the issue of teacher attrition. They have endeavoured to identify the factors and propose solutions with a view to curbing the trend. These include Bennell (2003), Moleni and Ndalama (2004), Akyempong (2007), Quartz et al (2008), Ndaruhutse et al (2008), Mulkeen, Crowe-taft et al (2010), Ratovondrahona and Normandeau (2013), Vso and many others. It can be seen that the attrition rates of some Sub-Saharan African countries are

broadly similar to those of OECD countries. However, reliable data on teacher attrition is hard to come by and published figures are largely based on estimates.

In Cameroon, the departure of teachers has also been exacerbated by the freeze on recruitment to the civil service since 1987. And despite the lack of reports and information, teachers in Cameroon are leaving the profession. The recruitment freeze, two successive salary cuts (of the range of 30% in January 1993 and 50% in November of the same year), and the devaluation of the CFA franc by 50% in relation to the French franc on January 12, 1994 led to a sharp drop in motivation, which in turn led to an enormous decline in the number of teachers, with a mass retirement of teachers and the migration of teachers to other administrations and to more attractive skies. In addition, there are people who "join the civil service only in search of a salary code number" [20] and the central services that are overstaffed with teachers in administrative tasks, other administrative services and bodies under the supervision of MINESEC, even though there is a shortage of teachers in several government schools in both rural and urban areas (Dubois, 2009). There are also "other young workers the state made enormous sacrifices to recruit, who have been into the administration who have deserted their posts, while continuing to receive their salary" [20].

2.2.3. Who are the Teachers Who Abandon Service?

Studies show that teacher attrition is also linked to the problem of entry into the teaching profession [21]. It has been observed that it is mainly new teachers who leave the teaching profession, rather than experienced teachers [21].

Available data indicate that the attrition rate is often high in the first few years of a teacher's career [21]. A study carried out in Texas [22] described this attrition phenomenon as a U-shaped curve, with a high attrition rate at the beginning of the career, a decrease in the middle of the career and an increase at the end of the career, when teachers are approaching retirement age. Moreover, teacher attrition is highest in the most disadvantaged areas.

2.2.4. Causes of Teacher Attrition

Karsenti, Collin and Dumouchel [21] report that, based on the meta-analysis of Borman and Dowling and the work of Kirsch, they have identified three types of dropout factor, to which they have added a fourth called "other":

- Dropout factors related to the teaching task (Macdonald 1999; Certo and Fox, 2002; MEQ 2003; OECD 2005; Chaplain 2008; Mukamurera et al. 2008; Portelance et al. 2008, Romano 2008; Buchanan 2010);
- Dropout factors linked to the teacher (Bloland and Selby, 1980; Brownell et al. 1997; Ingersoll 2001; MEQ 2003; Billingsley 2004; FCE 2004; Chaplain 2008);
- Dropout factors linked to the social environment (Gonzales 1995; Macdonald 1999; Billingsley 2004; Guarino et al. 2006; Kirsch 2006; Borman and Dowling 2008; Romano 2008; Cattonar 2008; Portelance et al. 2008; Buchanan, 2010);
- Other dropout factors linked to causes external to the teaching profession, and therefore beyond the reach of education policies.

Lothaire, Dumay and Dupriez [24], with reference to the work of Adams (1996), Kukla-acevedo (2009), Luekens, Lyteret (2004) and Theobald (1990), highlight that various studies carried out over the last three decades in several American states stipulate that, regardless of the level of education in which teachers teach, the phenomena of migration and attrition are indeed more marked among those at the beginning of their professional career and among those approaching retirement.

3. Methodology

This article used a quantitative approach. It was addressed to a sample of 381 participants, including 366 teachers, 14 head teachers and the Director of Human Resources at MINESEC. The sample was drawn up using a stratified sampling technique proportional to the size of the study population.

The survey used a Likert scale with five different levels of assessment according to a gradient of satisfaction. The data collected was processed using chi-square. The results were presented in terms of the following dimensions: management of positions (postings and transfers), access to remuneration and management of training courses that

students take from the first class correlated here with teacher attrition. To achieve this, we compare the χ^2 with the χ^2 read, taking into account the number of degrees of freedom and the significance level adopted: if the χ^2 calculated is less than χ^2 read, we reject the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and confirm the null hypothesis (H_0). At the end, we draw the conclusion that there is a significant link between the variables. If the χ^2 calculated is greater than the χ^2 read or critical, we confirm the alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. Thus we say that there is no significant link between the two variables.

3.1. Analyses of Results

3.1.1. Verification of the First Research Hypothesis

Our first hypothesis states that the management of secondary school teachers' positions contributes significantly to teacher attrition.

This table shows that the value of χ^2 is equal to $\chi^2_{cal} = 422,60$. Given that $\chi^2_{cal}(422,6) > \chi^2_{read}(43,77)$, H_0 is rejected et H_a is accepted. This means that MINESEC's human resources management contributes to teacher attrition.

Table 1. Cross-tabulation of teacher ranking and teacher attrition

		Teacher attrition							Total
		8,0	9,0	10,0	12,0	13,0	14,0	16,0	
Ranking of teachers	10	0	23	5	0	0	0	0	28
	11	103	12	5	7	5	0	0	132
	12	34	21	6	0	0	0	0	61
	13	36	22	0	3	11	0	0	72
	14	24	0	0	0	7	3	9	43
	15	0	0	0	0	30	0	0	30
Total		197	78	16	10	53	3	9	366

Source: Data collected during the research (2023)

Table 2. Chi-square tests for the first research hypothesis

Chi-square tests for HR1	Value	ddl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson chi-square	422,601(a)	30	,000
Likelihood ratio	343,848	30	,000
Linear by linear association	96,552	1	,000
Number of valid observations	366	30	

Source: Data collected during the research (2023)

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of access to remuneration and teacher attrition

		Attrition of teachers							Total
		8,0	9,0	10,0	12,0	13,0	14,0	16,0	
Access to remuneration	8,0	0	0	0	0	35	3	9	47
	9,0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	11,0	4	34	11	7	17	0	0	73
	12,0	0	2	3	3	0	0	0	8
	13,0	193	42	2	0	0	0	0	237
Total		197	78	16	10	53	3	9	366

Source: Data collected during the study (2023)

Table 4. Chi-square tests for the second research hypothesis

Chi-square test	Value	ddl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson chi-square	475,441(a)	24	,000
Likelihood ratio	430,595	24	,000
Linear by linear association	284,988	1	,000
Number of valid observations	366		

Source: Data collected during the research (2023)

3.1.2. Verification of Second Research Hypothesis

Our second hypothesis states that access to remuneration contributes significantly to the attrition of secondary school teachers.

This table shows that the value of χ^2 calculated is $\chi^2_{cal} = 475,44$. Given that $\chi^2_{cal} (475,44) > \chi^2_{read} (36,41)$, H_0 is denied while H_a is approved. This means that access to pay contributes significantly to the attrition of secondary school teachers.

3.2. Comments on the Results

3.2.1. The Ranking and the Resignation of Secondary School Teachers

The first hypothesis of our research states that position management at MINESEC contributes significantly to teacher attrition. This hypothesis was confirmed by statistical tests. We concluded that the management of secondary school teachers' positions contributes significantly to teacher attrition. According to the contingency coefficient of 0.73, there is a 73% chance that the management of secondary teachers' positions contributes to teacher attrition. These results are consistent with the literature and the theoretical framework. They are consistent with studies by Kyelem and Barro (2007) and the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA (2010). These results are also elucidated through Maslow's theory of needs (1943).

The study by Mfout (2010) showed that promotions and professional appointments in secondary education are not made formally, such as teachers' access to bonuses and promotion, which are subject to non-compliant practices. Such practices create frustration among staff. In fact, the management of teachers' positions, such as transfers and appointments, does not always respect teachers' career profiles. Our survey shows that 29.8% of teachers are still feeling demotivated after appointments have been published. This is the proportion of teachers whose profile allows them to hope for promotion or who wish to benefit from appointments. Arends (2007) points out those unfair promotion procedures contribute to reducing the attractiveness of the profession. These practices are not without consequences for teacher morale. Bennell and Akyeampong [25] and VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) point out that when teachers and the education system are poorly managed, this has a negative effect on teacher morale and motivation.

According to the provisions of Decree No. 2000/359 of 05 December 2000, on the Special Statutes of Civil Servants in the National Education Corps, in Articles 60 and 70, the appointment of civil servants in the National Education corps to positions of administrative responsibility is made in accordance with a career profile that takes into account grade, additional qualifications,

seniority, administrative and pedagogical grades, and positions of responsibility already held. No civil servant in the National Education corps can aspire to a position of responsibility within the Ministry of National Education unless he or she meets the conditions set out above.

Faced with numerous requests from teachers to be transferred to other localities or regions, most of these requests are not favourably dealt with. This gives teachers the feeling that they are not being taken into consideration. Teachers feel they have no control over their postings, transfers and promotions. This creates a strong sense of demotivation. On this subject, the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA (2010) reports that, teachers feel they are the plaything of the policy on postings. The education system remains centralized despite some efforts to decentralize educational resources. Staffs are managed at central level, with centralized services acting on proposals from decentralized services. According to UNESCO (2005), certain policy measures could have an impact on teacher attrition, in particular by improving policies relating to assignments and increased use of local recruitment.

3.2.2. Access to Remuneration and Teacher Attrition

The second hypothesis of our research concerns the existence of a significant link between access to remuneration and teacher attrition in secondary schools. Following hypothesis testing, we concluded that there is a significant link between access to remuneration and teacher attrition in secondary schools. With a contingency coefficient of 0.75, there is a 73% chance that access to remuneration contributes to secondary teacher attrition. These results are consistent with our theoretical framework. Indeed, they are in line with the studies and theories referred to, in particular Sauve's study (2012) and Maslow's (1943) and Deci's (2002) theories of motivation.

In Cameroon, as in most developing countries, access to formal employment is not easy. Because of this difficulty, the teaching profession, which is accessible by competitive examination, attracts several thousand applicants every year. While training for nursery and primary school teachers does not give direct access to the civil service, training for secondary school teachers in Cameroon's Higher Teachers Training Colleges opens the way directly to the highest category of the civil service. To become a secondary school teacher in Cameroon, it is necessary to successfully complete a five-year course for holders of the Baccalauréat or GCE Advance Level and a two-year course for those with a licence (first degree).

The conclusions of our study that access to remuneration encourages teacher attrition are in line with several other studies. Sauve's 2012 study in Quebec showed that the probability of attrition increases when teachers evaluate working conditions negatively.

Moreover, the same author points out that "when working conditions have a negative impact on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, individuals' intention to leave increases" [26]. These working conditions are partly guaranteed by teachers' pay. Salary is an important factor in teacher attrition. The salary, which teachers consider low in relation to the demands of the profession, is said to reflect the low value placed on teaching [26]. Guarino et al (2006), cited by Sauve [26], have shown that salary is positively correlated with retention. This is because, in regions where teacher salaries are higher, teachers stay in teaching longer than in regions where salaries are lower (McCreigh, 2000).

The time taken for teachers to receive their first salary and the arrears of unpaid salaries is relatively long. It varies with a pattern of 2 years. In principle, immediately after graduating from the HTTC, young teachers are posted throughout the country. The posting in itself organized in various ways. To get there, the Ministry provides them with transport allowances (a sum of money calculated according to the distance between the place of training and the place of posting, and given to the teacher to enable him to reach his post). However, in the field, the regional delegates for secondary education, who have been responsible for paying these sums for a number of years, are subject to a number of constraints that do not always allow full and timely payment of these allowances. They have to wait for the delegate to sign the required documents. Generally, young teachers decide to return to their posts at their own expense in the meantime. This is because the posting decision requires them to take up their post within 15 days of signing. On payday (sometimes a year later, sometimes never), teachers often realize that the amounts no longer vary according to distance, but depend on a flat rate decided by the regional delegate, according to the package allocated.

4. Conclusion

Management in an educational system, as the main factor, needs to bring together all the resources required to achieve its objective. Among the resources it needs, human resource occupies a place of choice and is therefore indispensable for the system. It is also a key player, a strong and effective link in the chain of quality education and sustainable development. UNESCO goes even further, considering teachers to be the main catalyst for equity, access to education and the quality of education. Despite the key role that teachers play in the process, they are often absent or leave the profession for different reasons. This is what prompted us to question the state of affairs, through the prism of administrative management. We came to the conclusion that all three of our research hypotheses were validated, with contingency coefficients ranging from 0.73 to 0.78. Consequently, there is a highly significant relationship between MINESEC's human resources management and teacher attrition. We make no claim to have dissected the issues involved. We therefore hope that other studies will be able to supplement it in order to enrich and deepen it further to the satisfaction of the elements that make up the mosaic of education management. In a call for better management of teachers,

proposals for overhauling human resource management methods in the education sector can be suggested:

- sharing, among MINESEC human resources management stakeholders, the understanding of the challenge that these resources represent in an organization, and moreover in education;
- rationalising and decompartmentalizing the management of teaching staff in MINESEC or even in the education administrations of Cameroon;
- Improving the teacher management information system, among other things.

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