12. Teacher attrition in Wolaita: The cases of domestic migration of Bolosso Sore and Damot Gale *woredas*

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Abstract

There have been calls to reframe attrition issues from the macro-level to a more manageable organisational level, with particular emphasis on districts and schools. Moreover, it has been noted that data from school administrators might be the most grounded and accurate measures of actual staffing problems at the school level. This study concentrates on two districts in Wolaita Zone of the Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State of Ethiopia, gathering information from the directors and deputies of all 67 governmental primary schools in Damot Gale and Bolosso Sore. It concludes that although teacher attrition may be one of the problems within the educational system, it may not be as big a challenge as it is made out to be. In fact, it is possibly being used as a scapegoat for other underlying issues such as qualified but poorly trained teachers, inadequate teaching materials and the poor facilities of a country that is underdeveloped as a whole. Moreover, school management seemed to be looking for a panacea to be handed down from above, but ought to investigate less capital-intensive and more creative solutions that could both minimise staff attrition and mitigate its negative effects. Nevertheless, many schools have made commendable initiatives, such as building staff accommodation and classrooms with support from the community. Still, capacity has to be built and schools empowered more to seek their own solutions.

Key words
Teacher Attrition, Director Leadership Skills, School Improvement Programme, Teacher Mobility, Staff Turnover

12.1 General background

In 1991, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) defeated and overthrew the socialist government. The new Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) identified some of the major problems of the country as having been top-down policies, approaches to development being influenced too much by expatriates and unrealistic objectives set on assessment of the better-off regions (Prime Minister's Office, 1994: 8). A federal parliamentary republic was established, with the country divided into regions. These were in turn subdivided into progressively smaller administrative areas, namely zones, *woredas* (districts) and *kebeles* (the smallest administrative area).

In 1991, the Prime Minister's Office set up a central task force to study policy issues on curriculum and research, teacher training and development, educational measurement and evaluation, language in education, educational management and finance, and educational materials. Soon after, the TGE published a policy on education. The Education and Training Policy (ETP) stated that primary education would consist of eight years (in two, four-year cycles) and secondary education of two compulsory and two optional years, with the government providing free education for the first phase of education for ten years (TGE, 1994: 7). The self-declared aim of this policy was to provide direction to 'the development of problem-solving capacity and culture in the content of education, curriculum structure and approach focusing on the acquisition of scientific knowledge and practicum' (TGE, 1994: 2). This aim was supported by 5 general and 15

specific objectives, alongside the strategy of revising several fundamental elements such as curriculum, education structure, measurement and evaluation tools, medium of instruction and financing. Special attention and priority were given to a change of curriculum and educational materials, teacher training and staff development, and the management of education as a whole.

In 1995, the Ministry of Education (MoE) followed up on the ETP with a comprehensive document that gave a global view of the Ethiopian education arena over the next two decades called the Education Master Plan. This in turn was broken down into more manageable periods of five years each, named the Short-Term Education Plans or Education Sector Development Programmes (ESDP). By ESDP II it had become apparent that 'teacher training and staff development were crucial issues, as the quality of teaching and learning in Ethiopian schools was not able to produce a school-leaver workforce that could adequately serve the needs of national development' (MoE, 2008: 2). Consequently, the Teacher Development Programme (TDP) has become one of the main pillars of the education sector development programmes. However, Ingersoll and Perda (2010: 590) point out that initiatives to recruit and train teachers are rendered void if those teachers do not stay in the system. Consequently, overall strategic guidance is crucial. The overall strategic oversight of the Teacher Development Programme is the responsibility of the State Minster for General Education while '... the REBs [Regional Education Bureaus] will assume managerial responsibility for all activities being implemented within their region – including those at *woreda* level and in the TTIs [teacher training institutes]' (MoE, 2008: 6). Currently, there is the need for more *woreda*- and zone-level interventions, as there is a widely held variant of the teacher shortage thesis that shortages are the most varied at school level and geographically based (Ingersoll and Perda, 2010: 584). However, in Ethiopia there is a serious lack of capacity at these levels to supervise and manage educational projects.

The Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNPR) is located in the south-western part of Ethiopia and is probably the most diverse region in the country. It covers 112,323km^2 and has a population of 14.5 million people, who represent about 56 ethnic groups. Wolaita is one of the 13 zones, eight special *woredas* that have particular features or administrative structures, and one town administration that make up the region. The other zones are those of Bench Maji, Dawro, Debub Omo, Gamo Gofa, Gediyo, Gurage, Hadiya, Kefa, Kembata, Sheka, Sidama and Silte. The special *woredas* are: Alaba, Amaro, Besketo, Burji, Derashie, , Konso, Konta and Yem. The only city administration at regional level is Hawassa, the region's capital city. Wolaita itself is composed of 12 *woredas* and three town administrations. The *woredas* are: Bolosso Bombe, Bolosso Sore, Damot Fulasa, Damot Gale, Damot Sore, Damot Weyedie, Deguna Fango, Humbo, Kidno Ddoye, Kindo Koyesha, Ofa and Soddo Zuria. The three town administrations are those of Areka, Boditi and Wolaita Soddo.

At primary level, Wolaita has gross enrolment of 395,147 students and net enrolment of 349,298, putting its gross and net enrolment ratios at 100.6 and 88.9 per cent respectively (the national rates are 94.2 and 83 per cent respectively).[1] Wolaita has a gender parity index of 0.90 (national 0.93) and pupil–teacher ratios of 88:1 and 72:1 in its lower and upper primary cycles respectively (national ratios are 62:1 and 52:1). In terms of qualifications, 99.87 of first cycle and 93.13 per cent of second cycle primary school teachers are qualified[2] (national rates are 89.4 and 76.8 per cent respectively). Even though Wolaita has the highest pupil-section ratio[3] in the lower cycle in SNNPR, it managed to pass 71.7 per cent of all its students in the Grade 8 National Exam in 2007/08, second only to Basketo Special Woreda (Southern Nations and Nationalities People's Region Education Bureau [SNNP REB], 2009). This indicates the complexity and multidimensional nature of issues relating to the quality of education raised by researchers (Tikly, 2011: 1).

The two target *woredas* for this study are Bolosso Sore and Damot Gale. Bolosso Sore has 36 primary schools with 322 first cycle teachers and 144 second cycle teachers, while Damot Gale has 31 primary schools with 254 first cycle teachers and 139 second cycle

teachers. These schools have a total of 542 and 443 sections respectively. They cater for a total of 46,391 and 39,452 students respectively (SNNP REB, 2009). These two *woredas* are mostly in a rural area that is mainly agrarian, though they do contain small towns. They were among the worst performing of the 13 *woredas* in the zone.

The two *woredas* have been selected for this study due to the fact that Link Community Development (LINK), an international educational NGO working in five African countries, is active there. As a result, there is access to all the school directors, deputy directors, supervisors and Woreda Education Office (WEO) staff, as well as valuable data and 'inside information' on the schools. LINK is supporting the government-driven initiative of the School Improvement Programme. Similar to 'Uwezo' in Tanzania and 'Pratham' in India, this programme is aimed at improving the quality of education through evidence-based reflection and participatory planning, leading to ownership and accountability by all involved.

One of the components of LINK's support is training, and it aims to create flexible training packages to be developed and delivered in partnership with regional, zone and *woreda* education offices with the key focus areas on literacy, HIV & AIDS, director leadership skills, support to teacher continuous professional development (CPD) and Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) capacity-building.

12.2 Statement of the problem

The TDP made some major achievements and, shortly before the time of writing, three out of five second cycle primary teachers, and nearly all first cycle primary teachers, were considered to be qualified, according to the criterion of holding a certificate (MOE, 2008). This situation had recently changed due to the minimum qualification to teach at primary school being changed from a certificate to a diploma. However, 'teachers reported having increased levels of professional self-confidence, more methodological skill and a continuing desire for more professional development through other CPD courses' (MoE, 2008: 3).

In Bolosso Sore and Damot Gale, LINK has trained hundreds of teachers in all the schools and claims considerable improvement in the teaching as well as the students' results in national examinations. However, staff mobility and attrition may be seriously undermining the advances being made if, like some other countries, there is around a one-third annual turnover. This turnover may not be evident in national statistics, as national-level discussions mask the specific needs and diagnosis procedures revealed by disaggregated data (Ingersoll and Perda, 2010: 585). Tikly points out:

> the so-called 'implementation gap' between national policy and its implementation at the school level requires engaging with the experiences and views of teachers and head teachers, ensuring that initial and continuing professional development opportunities are consistent with the demands of new curricula and other initiatives, and providing support for schools in implementing and monitoring change (2011: 11–12).

Therefore, there is the need to scrutinise whether attrition is undermining the effectiveness of the training being delivered. If so, one should study the reasons underlying turnover and try to keep teachers in their schools at best and within the education sector at least.

Some researchers differentiate between teachers leaving the teaching profession altogether and others who simply leave the school, but stay in the profession. They use terms like 'teacher attrition', 'teacher migration', 'attrition' and 'mobility', interchangeably, or simply apply the terms 'leavers' and 'movers'. For this study, 'attrition' refers simply to the departure of a teacher from a school, no matter what the reason, as 'from an organisational level of analysis, teacher migration and attrition have the same effect' (Ingersoll and Perda, 2010: 587).

12.3 Literature review and theoretical framework

A plethora of research studies have been conducted on teacher attrition. Guarin, Santibanez and Daley (2006) carried out a review and found 4,919 unduplicated studies. After sieving out those that were simply theoretical discussions, non-empirical, of dubious quality or not quite relevant to their purpose, they ended up with just 46.

One of the major findings of the research on teacher attrition is the fact that as teacher quality is one of the most significant predictors of student achievement, 'teacher turnover has significant implications for the education profession, because it contributes to organizational instability and high levels of uncertainty in educational settings' (Swars, Meyers, Mays and Lack, 2009: 169).

Other relatively smaller research studies in the United States of America and elsewhere tried to analyse teacher and school characteristics related to attrition. Findings from these included that women had higher attrition then men and non-white teachers had lower attrition rates than white teachers, or reaffirmed the obvious fact that, 'teachers exhibit preferences for higher salaries, better working conditions and greater intrinsic rewards and tend to move to other teaching positions or to jobs or activities outside teaching that offer these characteristics when possible' (Guarin, Santibanez and Daley, 2006: 201).

Noticeably, most of the research was done in developed countries, reflecting the power and inequality that lie at the heart of the research process (Tikly, 2011: 1). Therefore, to move away from a hegemonic approach to a much more inclusive and context-sensitive perspective, it is necessary to take an in-depth look at smaller localities to arrive at views that reflect the context-specific, felt needs of the learners and teachers at the grassroots. This is in line with a general paradigm shift from an econometric and impersonal approach to a more humanistic and empowering approach, based on the premise that every individual matters.

12.4 Aims

There have been calls to reframe attrition issues from the macro-level, with its inexorable societal demographic trends, to a more manageable organisational level, with particular emphasis on districts and schools (Ingersoll and Perda, 2010: 568). Moreover, it has been noted that data from school administrators might be the most grounded and accurate measures of actual staffing problems at school level (*ibid.*).

Consequently, to begin with this paper intends to look at how many elementary teachers in 67 rural government schools in two *woredas* (districts) in SNNPR have actually left their posts over the last two years, exploring the major reasons why the teachers have left schools from the point of view of school directors.

Next, it will analyse the schools with the highest and lowest attrition rates to identify characteristics of these schools. Most schools are clustered in groups of five and have one *woreda* supervisor assigned to them, so following from this the paper aims to consider cluster-recommended solutions to teacher attrition and finally scrutinise the turnover at the school administration level.

By doing the above, this paper ultimately aims to contribute to the dialogue on the difficult educational delivery contexts of this part of Africa and suggest solutions to some of the challenges.

12.5 Methodology

All the elementary school directors and their deputies from the 67 governmental primary schools in Damot Gale and Bolosso Sore were given ten items asking them to rate the importance of various push factors for teachers leaving the schools on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The items were distributed at a training session held from 29 April to 30 May 2011 in the Zone capital, Wolaita Soddo. They were also asked to identify the number of teachers who had left their schools over the

last two academic years. Then they were put in focus groups along with their cluster supervisors and asked to discuss possible solutions (see Appendix 12.1 for exercise). Some of the issues they raised were informally double-checked with officials from the WEOs.

In addition, the heads and the schools that had very high or very low turnovers were put together and similar features were discussed with three LINK staff, who were familiar with the schools and the context. Finally a rapid survey was made on how many of the schools had kept at least the director or the deputy in management in the post for both the academic years in question. Some of the data was further described, presented and analysed using the data analysis application *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*, giving a descriptive snapshot of life including the entire target area.

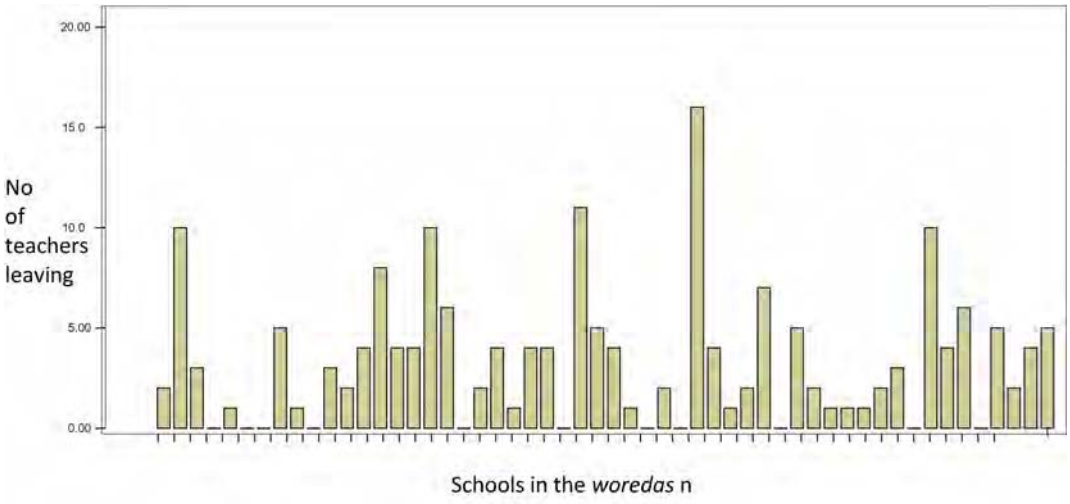
12.6 Findings and discussion

12.6.1 Rates of attrition

Twenty-nine of the 36 schools from Bolosso Sore and 29 schools from the 31 of Damot Gale completed the questionnaire (Appendix 12.2).[4] The number of teachers who left each school is shown in Figure 12.1, in which each bar represents one school. Bolosso Sore had an average attrition rate of 11 per cent, while Damot Gale had an average attrition rate of 25 per cent over the two-year period. If these rates continue, it would mean that Bolosso Sore would have 100 per cent staff turnover after around 15 years, while Damot Gale would have 100 per cent staff turnover in around eight years (although it is recognised that this does not take new recruits into account). National figures show only 18.2 per cent of teachers were found to have taught in the schools for more than five years (USAID and GEQAEA, 2008: 64). As the days in which teachers stayed in a school all their lives and received a gold memento when they retired are well gone, these rates are not alarming at the *woreda* level. In fact, these two *woredas* might be better off than some others in SNNPR, as they both have one of the three special towns used as administration centres in their vicinity and their WEOs are located in the towns of Areka and Boditi. Therefore, they have better access to urban facilities like stationers and the like.

However, at the school level, some schools have alarming attrition rates. The highest rate was in School 'm' in Damot Gale, at 75 per cent, with six of the school's eight teachers leaving in just two years. The highest rate in Bolosso Sore was School 'X', which experienced an attrition rate of 57 per cent. The second highest rate in the study sample was School 'b', which experienced a 60 per cent attrition rate when three of its five staff left. On the other hand, some schools have nothing to worry about: for example, Schools 'AA' and 'GG' in Bolosso Sore were able to retain all of their large staff numbers of 31 and 21 teachers respectively. Similarly, there were examples of schools in Damot Gale, such as Schools 'e' and 'y', with rates of 4 and 6 per cent, exhibiting negligible attrition rates

Figure 12.1 Attrition in both *woredas*



despite their staff sizes of 26 and 16 respectively. In fact, the single staff member who left the former school did not resign, but rather passed away.

Those schools with high attrition rates, or those with low attrition rates but with only few staff, like School 'W' (2) of Bolosso Sore and School 'f' (4), need to have safety measures in place to avoid major gaps being created in the learning and teaching process by the potential attrition of staff members. For instance, School 'b' experienced a 60 per cent attrition rate when three of its five staff left; 16 teachers left School 'X', which is quite a high number.

Figure 12.1 shows just what differences lie between and within these two *woredas* themselves, highlighting the 'complicating factor in understanding school-level effects on attrition is that, like students, teachers have different school experiences within the same school' (Kelly, 2004: 199). Therefore, a blanket decision made at a central point cannot be as targeted as a local one designed for a certain school.

12.6.2 Causes of attrition

Causes of attrition are shown in Figures 12.2 and 12.3, and in Appendix 12.3.

Having studied the attrition graphs in Figures 12.2 and 12.3 and discussed them with WEO staff, it would appear that both *woredas* consider the main cause of attrition (the major push factor) to be to move closer to urban areas – i.e. because of the general lack of infrastructure and facilities that are necessary for leading a reasonably comfortable life. This is not surprising as even in America, 'high-poverty schools were much more prone to mobility and attrition than affluent schools' (Swars *et al.*, 2009: 170). Therefore, the teachers are not leaving the teaching profession *per se*, but rather moving to other schools that have better amenities or that are closer to urban centres that provide these amenities. As this has implications more at regional level than at school level, it will not be expounded here. Some schools lack basic facilities, a case in point being a school that lacked latrines leading to the teachers rushing across the road to a hotel during break time. This in turn led to the waiters in the hotel locking their toilets and forcing the teachers to at least drink tea before allowing them to use the restrooms. Another was the distance that teachers had to walk from their accommodation to the schools; this is a matter of concern, as the distance teachers travel from home to school has been found to influence students' academic performance (USAID and GEQAEA, 2008: 6). So both Bolosso Sore and Damot Gale rated the reason of 'To be closer to urban areas' as the main cause for teachers leaving the schools.

Figure 12.2 Bar graph showing causes of attrition in Bolosso Sore

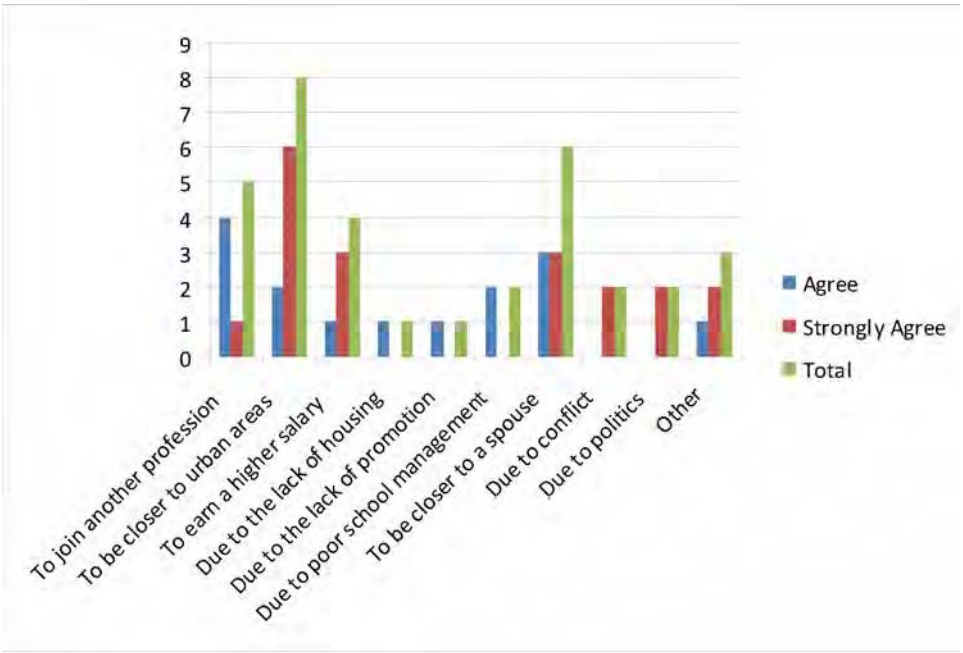
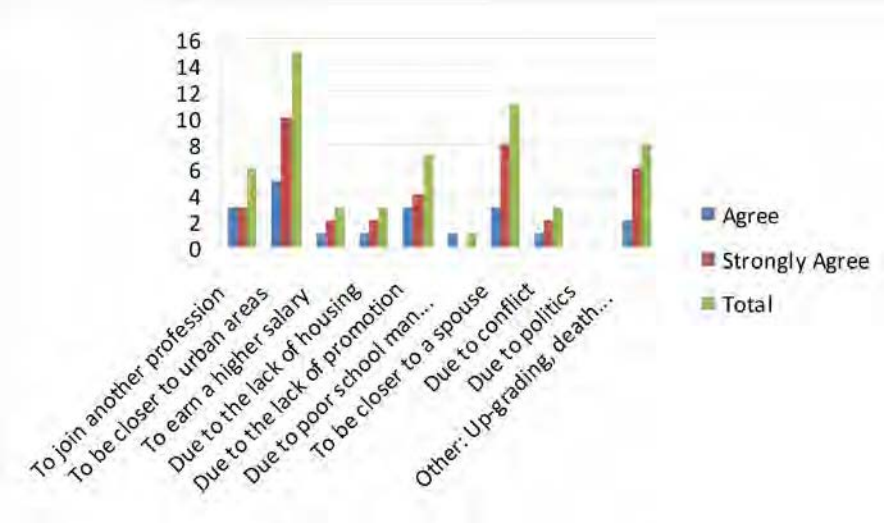


Figure 12.3 Bar graph showing causes of attrition in Damot Gale



Researchers have suggested that quality education as measured by standardised tests has shown to correlate more with economic growth than the number of years spent in school (Tikly, 2011: 5). This suggests that rural agrarian areas with low economic growth will also suffer from lower standards of education. This is worrying for zones like Wolaita, which suffer periodic famines and have a generally slow growth rate. Interventions like the new Growth and Transformation Plan are sorely needed, not only to boost the economic sector but also the education sector.

Interestingly, both *woredas* again agreed the second major cause for attrition to be the fact that teachers wanted to be closer to their spouses. Apparently, spouses are not willing to join the teachers due both to the lack of facilities, as well as the lack of employment in many areas. In addition to the romantic angle, the current cost of living is a factor that encourages teachers to move to their spouses. As they can hardly make ends meet, being with a spouse allows them to economise on things like food and board. During discussions, the directors explained that it is not necessarily only their spouses but also their parents and extended families that teachers seek to be near to for the above mentioned reasons. Remarkably, the issue of low salaries was not raised here, probably due to the fact that all the schools in the study were government schools on the same salary scale. However, research elsewhere shows that the effect of salary on attrition is minimal, though it probably determines the calibre of the teacher recruited in the first place (Kelly, 2004: 213–214).

Most of the other reasons were not seen as particularly significant to teachers leaving, except to join another profession. Even this was not as significant in terms of numbers leaving as it was in making teachers restive: when a teacher saw one of their number suddenly earning many times their salary, it made them consider other opportunities. An example given was a teacher who had managed to somehow buy a 'Bajaj' (motorbike-rickshaw) and was now on the 'gravy train'.

Noticeably, no-one in Damot Gale ticked 'Politics' to be a cause of attrition, while two directors in Bolosso Sore stated that this was a significant push factor. Since the controversial 2005 elections (Clapham, 2006: 31), there has been a drive to encourage most civil servants, especially directors, to join the ruling party, so it is possible that some directors opted to avoid commenting on this factor. However, the 2010 elections, as well as other political activities, did in some ways encroach on the school year, forcing teachers to rush through textbooks in minimum time and causing general feelings of discontent. In other countries, it has been noted that fear associated with expressing concerns to administrators and feelings of disempowerment led to low morale, expressed in passivity and reservations in speaking out and eventually becoming a reason for leaving the school (Swars *et al.*, 2009: 175).

Thus it would appear that the lack of facilities and the desire to be near one's spouse or family are the two major causes for the attrition – or rather turnover – of teachers. The nationally stated reasons of a lack of respect for the profession, the absence of training and promotion, and students' disciplinary problems (USAID and GEQAEA, 2008: 65) seem to have given way in this zone to the more fundamental question of how to get access to basic facilities and make ends meet. It is essential to ensure that the teachers are functioning efficiently as:

> Recent research suggests that teachers exert an influence on student achievement ... but the evidence is not always clear regarding the observable characteristic of effective teachers. Studies that have examined available indicators of teacher preparation or quality, such as academic ability, certification status and experience, find that the effects of those indicators are often mixed or very small (Guarin, Santibanez and Daley, 2006: 176).

12.6.3 Schools with extremely high and low attrition rates

To triangulate the reasons with the reality on the ground, the schools that had no or almost no turnover (less than five per cent) and those that had high turnover (greater than 25 per cent) in both *woredas* were put into two categories and scrutinised with the help of LINK project staff. The results are shown in Table 12.1. Thirteen schools were found to have negligible attrition, while 19 schools had a high turnover rate.

The project staff confirmed that the schools with almost no attrition were those with better facilities in terms of accommodation, transport and the like, or those very close to the special town administrations. Moreover, they pointed out that some of these schools were newly established and the teachers were still highly motivated to overcome the challenges experienced when one starts out afresh. Thus it is clear that Guarin, Santibanez and Daley's (2006: 201) observation holds true that individual schools and districts can influence their attractiveness to staff by the style of management they use.

On the other hand, those schools with high attrition lacked basic infrastructure and facilities due to their remoteness or being situated in difficult terrain – notably, those on Mountain Damot. As a result, teachers opted to live in places with relatively better facilities and commute. This obviously leads to fatigue and disillusionment, as commuting

Table 12.1 Table of schools with extreme attrition and retention rates

	Schools with negligible attrition (<5%)		Schools with high turnover (>25%)
1	School c	1	School a
2	School A	2	School b
3	School f	3	School R
4	School G	4	School j
5	School M	5	School l
6	School S	6	School m
7	School V	7	School J
8	School W	8	School K
9	School AA	9	School r
10	School Z	10	School U
11	School Y	11	School p
12	School CC	12	School X
13	School GG	13	School u
		14	School w
		15	School z
		16	School bb
		17	School cc
		18	School dd
		19	School ee

often means a long and tiring walk to and from school every day, whatever the weather conditions.

Perhaps in addition to reconfirming the causes of attrition, this exercise brought to light the fact that most teachers in the new schools had not transferred yet. This could indicate that if enthusiasm and commitment to view hardship as a challenge to be overcome can be instilled in all teachers, difficult circumstances may not jade them so quickly.

12.6.4 Cluster recommended solutions for attrition

All supervisors, directors and deputy directors sat in their cluster groups to brainstorm what should be done to reduce the rate of attrition in their own clusters. They wrote suggestions in various order on posters. These are presented in Table 12.2.

It is interesting to note how similar the recommendations across all the clusters are. Apparently, most head teachers feel that they know what is to be done, but just do not know how to do it. Most of the recommendations are more at a policy or goal level rather than practical projects that can be implemented at the school, cluster or *woreda* level. Moreover, they reflect both a high level of dependency on external bodies to provide solutions, as well as near impossible expectations of what can be achieved in a developing country like Ethiopia, especially in light of the fact that the region is already spending 28.2 per cent of its budget on education (SNNP REB, 2009: 11). In fact, the recommendations appear more like a dream list that a 'to-do' list. There is a clear need to address the 'expectation gap' to ensure illusions are not being created among any of the stakeholders, especially the community. Otherwise, the disillusionment that is certain to follow can only impact negatively on the educational system.

Clapham notes:

> Ethiopia's shortcomings are apparent. Its proverbial and continuing famines and its lowly position on any league table of global per capita testify to its inability to promote even the most basic of necessities for most of its people (2006: 17).

Nevertheless, the recommendations do reflect the extremely difficult conditions in which teachers are expected to provide quality education. Without basic infrastructure and facilities such as clean water, housing, lighting and shops, relative increases in the quality of education can arguably sometimes be little more than a positive interpretation of statistics or a temporary reaction to special interventions.

A few recommendations like constructing teacher accommodation have been tried by some schools and communities, but they lack lighting and water. Others were discussed with the *woreda* and zone representatives, like respecting teachers' rights, strictly implementing transfer regulations, improving school governance and peaceful conflict resolution. However, they pointed out that most required time, although LINK's training and intervention in the *woredas* were moves in the right direction and included most of these points. Unfortunately, however, some of these gains were being diluted by the director attrition. Others solutions, such as transferring teachers only after they had served for a minimum of three years in a school, could cause disenchantment among senior teachers in schools with harsh conditions, as fresh graduates might be appointed to schools with better services. This meant that teachers were often transferred before the three-year period. Furthermore, participants firmly believed that incentives like hardship allowances and spouse allowances would improve matters, but their budgets hardly covered their recurrent costs, let alone additional ones.

Thus it would seem that there are no quick fixes and that hopefully conditions in the schools and teaching will improve with the gradual socio-economic development of the country as a whole. However, Clapham (2006: 38) again rightly cautions that though there are certainly some limited and practical steps actors might be able to take, they must retain a modest assessment of what can be achieved.

Table 12.2 Table of cluster recommendations

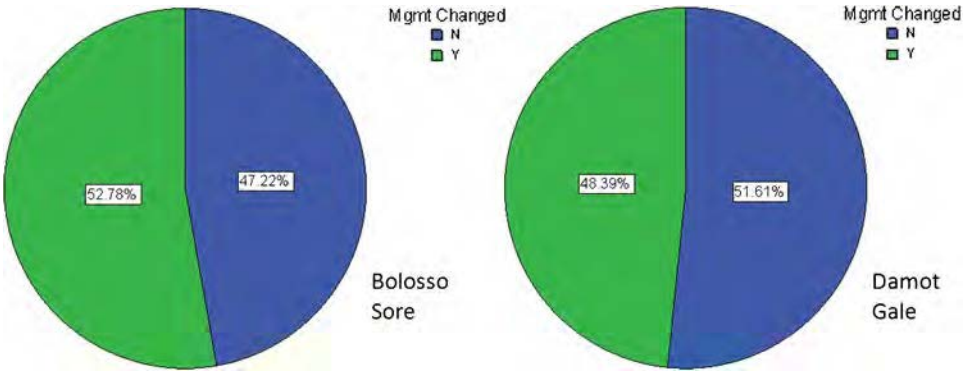
Achura Cluster • Building housing for teachers • Providing clean water • Holding markets near the schools • Establishing clinics • Improving community support • Improving school governance • Setting up recreation centres	Ade Damot Cluster • Building housing for teachers • Providing facilities available in towns • Setting up recreation centres
Bancha Cluster • Improving school governance • Building housing for teachers • Setting up recreation centres • Holding markets near the schools • Improving the flow of information	Buge Cluster • Building housing for teachers • Providing basic necessities • Peaceful conflict resolution • Upgrading all schools from 1–12 • Community respect • Improving school governance • Improving school environment
Cherake Cluster • Building housing for teachers • Providing clean water • Improving community support	Dolla Cluster • Providing facilities and infrastructure such as housing, water and lighting • Improving fringe benefits • Upgrading all schools 1–8
Gacheno Cluster • Building housing for teachers • Improving conflict resolution • Providing facilities such as housing, water and lighting • Improving school governance • Setting up recreation centres • Implementing transferring regulations properly • Respecting the rights of teachers	Gara Godo Cluster • Building housing for teachers • Providing clean water • Improving school governance • Improving fringe benefits • Providing encouragement and incentives • Building the capacity of staff
Jage Cluster • Improving school governance • Improving community relations • Providing facilities and infrastructure like roads, water, housing and clinics • Providing rewards • Increasing problem-solving in schools	Legama Cluster • Improving teaching learning • Providing basic necessities • Improving school governance, efficiency and respect • Setting up recreation centres
Shasha Cluster • Peaceful conflict resolution • Providing facilities and infrastructure such as housing, water and lighting • Improving community support	Wendara Cluster • Building housing for teachers • Setting up recreation centres • Improving school governance • Developing a spirit of co-operation • Providing encouragement and incentives

12.6.5 School management attrition

LINK has provided four modules on director training, and in order to reduce the effect of attrition has also trained deputies in schools (where they exist) to ensure continuity in management should the director leave. If either the director or the deputy continued in place for the two years of the training, management change was not registered in those schools. Management change is shown in Figure 12.4.

Nineteen schools in Bolosso Sore (three directors were absent during this session) and 15 of the 31 schools in Damot Gale had experienced management change (see Appendix 12.4), indicating that almost half the schools in both *woredas* had experienced

Figure 12.4 Management change in Bolosso Sore and in Damot Gale



management change (53 per cent and 48 per cent respectively. They consequently lost some institutional memory and at the same time did not completely benefit from the training. Most of the new directors said that they had not found any documentation or copies of the previous training materials on taking up office. It is also important to consider the attrition rates for directors themselves.

Ironically, it would appear that directors who are trying to reduce teacher attrition are rapidly seeking better conditions for themselves at more than double the pace of their teachers. The problem probably goes even higher, as around 60 per cent of the supervisors had also changed as well as one of the *woreda* heads, who had been replaced by their predecessor.

A fluid state of management undermines consistency and continuity throughout the school system and ought to be stabilised quickly. Hopefully, now that the business process re-engineering and the business score card exercises (both of which are recent government administrative reform programmes) are almost complete, attrition will show a decline.[5] However, strengthening of the education management information system (EMIS) is vital if there is to be well documented data for future comparisons and making evidence-based decisions.

12.7 Limitations

Most of the numbers for attrition were obtained from the memories of the directors and their deputies, so may not be completely accurate. At times, directors with their deputies were seen disputing numbers of staff who had left, alongside the reasons. However, it is hoped that this will not detract from the overall picture of the situation. Moreover, some of the responses seemed to suffer from self-censorship.[6]

12.8 Conclusion and recommendations

It would appear that teacher attrition is one of the many factors that is undermining the quality of education in the Wolaita Zone of SNNPR. This is due to the fact that teachers are leaving their schools, not so much to join other professions as to join another school that is closer to better social services and/or their family. This movement is usually carried out by transferring from one school to another within the government education system. On average, the *woredas* of Bolosso Sore and Damot Gale had attrition rates of 11 and 25 per cent respectively over a two-year period; this was much less than that of the schools' senior management, which had respective attrition rates of 48 and 53 per cent over the same period.[7]

Consequently, although teacher attrition may be one of the problems within the educational system, it may not be as big a challenge as might be supposed. In fact, it is possibly being used as a scapegoat for other underlying issues such as qualified but poorly trained teachers, inadequate teaching materials and the poor facilities of a country that is underdeveloped as a whole. Moreover, as Ingersoll and Preda point out, research does not

suggest that all teacher turnover is negative or that 100 per cent retention could, or should be, a goal of schools, (2010: 590).

Unfortunately, school management seemed to be looking for a panacea to be handed down from above and drew up a list of what they would *ideally* like when asked to suggest recommendations for reducing attrition. Although many schools have made commendable initiatives such as building staff accommodation and classrooms with support from the community, they also ought to investigate less capital-intensive and more creative solutions that could both minimise staff attrition as well as mitigate its negative effects. Examples of the former might be to involve staff's spouses in income-generating activities for the schools, like running cafeterias and ploughing the school plots, as well as actively creating and pursuing projects like obtaining solar panels for schools or bicycles for their teachers. Examples of the latter could include making sure staff improve documentation of training, lesson plans, student report cards and student files, which will assist new staff in taking over and catching up more easily, as well as conducting exit interviews with staff leaving and finding solutions to the push factors.

There is definitely the need to improve upon the existing EMIS system of gathering data by including better documentation of the characteristics of teachers likely to stay on in as well as leave the system, through means used in other countries like surveys on schools and staffing, and teacher follow-up after they leave the system.[8]

However, much more important is actually putting the data into use to plan and make locale-specific corrective modifications to existing policies to get the most out of them. For instance, if it is the best rather than the worst teachers who leave the schools, the existing transfer policy might be revisited with the teachers to ensure a longer duration with under-privileged schools with the possibility of a future accelerated transfer to a school closer to an urban centre.[9]

At the zonal level, there is the need to further differentiate between those teachers who are leaving the profession due to retirement and death, or in search of greener pastures, and those simply being transferred, as the latter do not detract from the actual teaching force of the zone. This is important, especially in Wolaita where the medium of instruction is unique to the zone and teachers cannot be brought in from other areas. Consequently, there may be the need to review sources of teacher recruitment and use different approaches like that of part-time hiring of qualified and effective teachers working in other sectors.

However, these are simple ideas emanating from the outside, while lasting change can only come from schools investigating their particular contexts and coming up with creative school-grown solutions that have been reached through participatory processes with all stakeholders. It is only through such processes that they can develop the capacity to tackle the multiple challenges, including attrition, that will crop up time and time again in this dramatically ever-changing world.

Notes

1 Source of national statistics: Ministry of Education Ethiopia, 2010.
2 This assumes qualification at the standard of successful completion of a one-year teaching certificate. However, new regulations in Ethiopia for primary school teacher qualification set the minimum standard as successful completion of a three-year teaching diploma.
3 A *section* in Ethiopia is a class of students. As many schools operate a double-shift system, the pupil-section ratio is used rather than the teacher-pupil ratio, as it can be considered to be a proxy for actual average class size. *Pupil-section ratio* is the average number of pupils in a given level per section in the same level. It is calculated by dividing the total number of pupils in a given level by the total number of sections available in the same level.
4 For the purposes of this paper, school names have been replaced by letters, with schools in Bolosso Sore given upper case letters and those in Damot Gale lower case letters.
5 It should be noted that the impact of these reforms will probably have had an effect on the data gathered in the study, but that this effect is difficult to gauge. As this impact is likely to be one-off, it has an effect on the degree to which the study findings can be held to represent long-term trends.

6 Additionally, the degree to which the business process re-engineering reform affected teacher movement could not be recorded. Also, the study chose to focus on rural areas; a similar study in urban areas would provide useful data for comparison.
7 Twenty-five per cent teacher attrition is still notably high.
8 It would also be interesting to see what kind of teachers leave school for a different profession, given that many teachers are engaged with other income generation projects or migrate to another country. In addition, new selection policies for entrance into pre-service teacher training will target students who wish to become a teacher, rather than allocating certain students to teacher training courses on the basis of their grades. A longitudinal survey would be useful to measure the long-term effect of this policy on teacher attrition, as these newly qualified teachers filter down into schools. Finally, the impact of teacher attrition on education quality, access and inclusion could usefully be the subject of further research.
9 However, given the problems noted above, this may not be a sufficiently effective or provide an immediate incentive. It might still be necessary to review teacher deployment policies to ensure fairness, reasonability and transparency.

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Appendices

Appendix 12.1 Teacher Attrition Form

A: In pairs with your deputy director, please fill out the following questionnaire for some research and self-reflections.

1. Name of school: _____
2. Number of teachers present in school: _____
3. Number of teachers who have left the school since last academic year: _____
4. Now please grade the reasons that you feel were the main ones for the teachers to leave your school by ticking the appropriate boxes:

	Reason for leaving the school	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	To join another profession				
2	To be closer to urban areas				
3	To earn a higher salary				
4	Due to the lack of housing				
5	Due to the lack of promotion				
6	Due to poor school management				
7	To be closer to a spouse				
8	Due to conflict				
9	Due to politics				
10	Other				

B. In your clusters along with your supervisor, please describe the factors that you feel would be the most relevant to keep teachers from leaving your school:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 12.2 Attrition rates over two academic years

Schools in Bolosso Sore	Left	Present	%	Schools in Damot Gale	Left	Present	%
School A	0	9	0	School a	10	26	39
School B	NG	NG	NG	School b	3	5	60
School C	5	23	22	School c	0	9	0
School D	2	29	7	School d	NG	NG	NG
School E	NG	NG	NG	School e	1	16	6
School F	NG	NG	NG	School f	0	4	0
School G	0	32	0	School g	NG	NG	NG
School H	1	9	11	School h	3	27	11
School I	2	22	9	School i	NG	NG	NG
School J	4	16	25	School j	4	9	44
School K	8	30	27	School k	4	20	20
School L	NG	NG	NG	School l	10	22	45
School M	0	3	0	School m	6	8	75
School N	2	34	6	School n	1	6	17
School O	4	20	20	School o	4	31	13
School P	NG	NG	NG	School p	11	21	52
School Q	NG	NG	NG	School q	1	8	13
School R	4	45	9	School r	5	17	29
School S	0	29	0	School s	2	25	8
School T	NG	NG	NG	School t	4	23	17
School U	4	14	29	School u	7	19	37
School V	0	33	0	School v	1	16	7
School W	0	2	0	School w	5	10	50
School X	16	28	57	School x	2	21	10
School Y	2	10	20	School y	1	26	4
School Z	0	7	0	School z	3	8	38
School AA	1	31	3	School aa	4	9	44
School BB	1	28	4	School bb	10	28	36
School CC	0	7	0	School cc	6	18	33
School DD	2	20	10	School dd	4	7	57
School EE	NG	NG	NG	School ee	5	20	25
School FF	NG	NG	NG		**117**	**459**	**23**
School GG	0	21	0				
School HH	NG	NG	NG				
School II	5	49	10				
School JJ	2	30	7				
	65	**581**	**13**				

NG = No grade due to figures being unavailable.

Appendix 12.3 Perceived reasons of attrition

	Reason for leaving the school Bolosso Sore	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
1	To join another profession	4	1	5
2	To be closer to urban areas	2	6	8
3	To earn a higher salary	1	3	4
4	Due to the lack of housing	1	0	1
5	Due to the lack of promotion	1	0	1
6	Due to poor school management	2	0	2
7	To be closer to a spouse	3	3	6
8	Due to conflict	0	2	2
9	Due to politics	0	2	2
10	Other	1	2	3
	Reason for leaving the school Damot Gale	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**
1	To join another profession	3	3	6
2	To be closer to urban areas	5	10	15
3	To earn a higher salary	1	2	3
4	Due to the lack of housing	1	2	3
5	Due to the lack of promotion	3	4	7
6	Due to poor school management	1	0	1
7	To be closer to a spouse	3	8	11
8	Due to conflict	1	2	3
9	Due to politics	0	0	0
10	Other: Upgrading, death and transfer	2	6	8

Appendix 12.4 Management change over two years

Schools in Bolosso Sore	Mgmt Changed	Schools in Damot Gale	Mgmt Changed
School A	Y	School a	Y
School B	N	School b	Y
School C	N	School c	N
School D	N	School d	Y
School E	Y	School e	Y
School F	N	School f	Y
School G	Y	School g	N
School H	N	School h	N
School I	Y	School i	Y
School J	N	School j	N
School K	N	School k	Y
School L	N	School l	Y
School M	Y	School m	Y
School N	Y	School n	Y
School O	Y	School o	N
School P	Y	School p	Y
School Q	N	School q	Y
School R	Y	School r	N
School S	N	School s	N
School T	N	School t	N
School U	Y	School u	N
School V	N	School v	N
School W	Y	School w	N
School X	N	School x	N
School Y	N	School y	N
School Z	Y	School z	N
School AA	Y	School aa	N
School BB	N	School bb	Y
School CC	Y	School cc	N
School DD	Y	School dd	Y
School EE	N	School ee	Y
School FF	Y		**15/31**
School GG	Y		
School HH	Y		
School II	N		
School JJ	Y		
	19/36		