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Teacher Attrition: Why Secondary School Teachers Leave the Profession in Afghanistan

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Teacher Attrition: Why Secondary School Teachers Leave the Profession in Afghanistan

A Thesis Presented
By
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Submitted to the School of Education of the
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ABSTRACT

This study examines factors influencing teacher attrition in public secondary schools in Kabul, Afghanistan. Substantial increments in the school-age population, the Education for All (EFA) mandate, and a “seven-fold” growth in number of students during the last decade have collectively increased the demand for teachers in Afghanistan; whereas, teachers from the public schools are leaving the teaching profession in large numbers. The lack of teachers poses serious challenges for the education system especially for Ministry of Education.

This exploratory study focuses on the reasons for the departure of both current and former teachers. It also explores and suggests some strategies to address this phenomenon. The study used a mixed method approach, using questionnaires, interviews and observations to collect data. A total of 44 current teachers and 18 former teachers were asked to respond to the questionnaires, while 2 current teachers, 3 former teachers, a principal, a student, and a member of Information Education Management Information System (EMIS) were interviewed. The results of this study revealed that low salary is only one of the major factors for teacher attrition in Afghanistan. The study also found multiple other factors that influence teacher attrition including ineffective recruitment and deployment process (school distance); heavy workload; unequal work distribution and administration corruption; low salaries and other benefits; lack of professional development programs; and social factors. The study concluded that in some cases, only one of these factors causes the attrition while in many cases, a number of factors collectively compel teachers to leave their jobs. Recommendations suggest the need to reform policies, to restructure organizations, to increase teacher support, and to promote stakeholder engagement.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CIE	Center for International Education
CT	Current Teachers
DED	District Education Department
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EFA	Education For All
ERIC	Education Research and Information Center
FL-EDW	Florida Education Data Warehouse
FT	Former Teachers
HRMIS	Human Resources Management Information System
IARCSC	Afghanistan Independent Administration Reform and Civil Servants Commission
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NSF	National Science Foundation
OECD	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD-DAC	OECD – Development Assistance Committee
PTC	Parent Teacher Committee
PD	Professional Development
SASS	Schools and Staffing Survey
SMS	Short Message Service
TFS	Teacher Follow-up Survey
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TTC	Teacher Training College
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization
UIS	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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DEDICATION

To my family

To my mother, who always prays for my safety and success; to my father, who supports me unconditionally as a magnificent friend; to my four sisters, who always express their love, care and kindheartedness in a unique way; to my brother, who always gives me energy with his amazing sense of humor and to my wife for her unfathomable love and support.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Teacher attrition causes teacher shortages and increases the number of inexperienced teachers in secondary schools especially in Afghanistan. In general, “teacher attrition could be permanent or temporary” (Egu et al., 2011, p. 109). In the first type, teachers leave full-time classroom teaching for jobs in unrelated fields and/or depart from the teaching profession for new and different fields. In the second type, teachers remain in the profession but move to other similar jobs within the education system and/or leave temporarily to have children, start a family, or complete higher education and finally return to continue their jobs.

In this study, I examine teacher attrition in public secondary schools in Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan. The study focuses on the reasons both the current and former teachers give for leaving the profession. The paper discusses each of the issues, based on initial findings, and recommends a number of possible solutions suggested by the study participants. I also get the benefit from several pertinent literatures on the topic from other countries in order to provide further concrete, feasible and effective recommendations.

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter discusses the research topic, purpose, questions, significance and context. The second chapter discusses various pertinent literatures on the topic to elicit assumptions and create a theoretical framework for the study. The third chapter describes the research design and methods used, sampling, data collection (interviews, questionnaire, and observation), and data analysis. The fourth chapter contains the findings. Finally, this paper ends with a concise description of the research conclusions, recommendations and implications.

Research Topic

There are several important reasons I selected “teacher attrition” as a research topic for my Master’s project. First, in Afghanistan, and of course everywhere, teaching is often referred to as a noble profession. Teaching is the opportunity to change or give a child’s life direction. There is also the chance to share something very personal – a passion for learning. I became inquisitive as to the factors that push teachers to leave the teaching profession. Secondly, I once discussed high teacher attrition rate because of HIV/AIDS in some African countries – South Africa, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Kenya etc. – in one of my courses at the University of Massachusetts’ Center for International Education (CIE). This issue (teacher attrition) deeply intrigued me. Although HIV/AIDS is not a factor for teacher attrition in Afghanistan, due to various other factors I assumed the high rate of teacher attrition in Afghanistan would be comparable to some African countries. Thirdly, besides having a high attrition rate, there is no evidence documenting the factors that influence teacher attrition in Afghanistan, which made this topic more intriguing for me. The topic captivated me and, thus, I selected to explore issue of teacher attrition in Afghanistan for my Master’s thesis.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the factors and dynamics influencing teacher attrition in the secondary schools in Kabul, Afghanistan. In this study, I attempted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on teacher attrition not only because they may indicate to various causes but also to see if the shortage of teachers affects millions of school-aged children to access schools. I assessed all issues related to teacher attrition to the extent possible to find-out the level of teacher attrition as well as the factors and reasons that affect this phenomenon. I also

assessed the frequency of each factor from the sample group. Moreover, I tried to explore various strategies – using the recommendations provided by teachers who participated in this study, various literatures, and my own knowledge about the context – to help in retaining teachers, specifically the experienced teachers that are more prone to leaving the teaching profession. I will share the study findings with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to inform them about the factors to this phenomenon as well as to contribute in formulating strategies for coping with this problem and taking effective actions for reducing teacher attrition rate in the country.

Research Significance

The teacher shortage faced by poor countries is intensely illustrated by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) report. “It [(UIS)] estimates that between 14 and 22.5 million teachers will need to be recruited and trained by 2015” (UIS, 2004, p. vii). “The pupil–teacher ratio in Afghanistan was reasonably low – 32:1 – in 1998, yet by 2002 the ratio had doubled to 61:1” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 100). This was the result of the enrolment of large numbers of new students, especially previously excluded girls, in primary school. Class sizes rose so dramatically while few new teachers were hired to cope with the influx.

This study aims to illuminate various facets of teacher attrition. I could not locate any previous studies conducted in Afghanistan which documented attrition rate, its associated factors and its negative impacts. According to EMIS Team Member from the Ministry of Education, they do not collect or record data about the teacher attrition and their associate factors (personal interview, 2013). The Ministry of Education (MoE) strategy to address the shortage of teachers is

a single loop treatment; they continue increasing the number of Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and student enrollment in the TTCs¹, which has been ineffective.

I believe that even a small-scale research study to explore the main causes of teacher attrition in secondary schools to later-on prioritize these causes from greatest to least, and share the study findings and suggested directions to MoE, will help in formulating strategies and programs for reducing teacher attrition. In fact, such research should lead to designing and conducting large-scale research by the government and other larger organizations that work in the education sector in the county. I would like to reiterate that a conducting comprehensive research is of utmost importance as the education system in Afghanistan is already faced with substantial lack of school teachers due to the –“seven-fold” increase in the number of students in the last decade, and this number continues to increase (MOE, 2011, p. 2). Such research will substantially contribute in identifying factors for teacher attrition as well as adapting strategies to cope with the problem teachers shortages compared to the current MoE single loop approach. According to research, some of the common concerns and negative consequences of this phenomenon are the following:

- Millions of school age children especially in the remote areas will have no access to schooling.
- The exit of teachers from teaching and their transfer/movement to other professions are a costly phenomenon; both for students who lose the opportunity of being taught by an experienced teacher and for schools - especially for the MoE which must recruit and train the replacing teachers.

¹ TTCs (Teacher Training Colleges) provide teacher education to all teachers of primary through high school (MoE, 2010). The TTCs implement two programs: 1) pre-service – i.e. high school graduates that enter TTC after taking Kankor exam, and 2) in-service – i.e. practicing school teachers from primary, middle (junior secondary) and high (senior secondary) levels that are introduced to TTC through their school administration and or local level education office.

- On one hand, teacher attrition can endanger the process toward achieving the EFA goals and, on the other, the MoE already faces a shortage of teacher in the country.
- Teacher attrition can also increase the difficulty of hiring new teachers – as hiring of qualified teaching staff is not an easy task.
- Last but not least, pupil-teacher ratio will increase due to shortages of teachers that will consequently affect the quality of the education system as a whole.

Research Questions

The following questions guide this research:

- What are the leading factors of teacher attrition, i.e. why do teachers quit the teaching profession?
- How do compensation and other benefits impact the retention of teachers?
- What are the alternative careers for teachers in Kabul?
- What are some possible strategies and ways to help improve teacher retention?

Context

According to the MoE (2008), Afghanistan faces significant challenges in the process of reconstruction of its national level education system. This started from developing a broken-down system (a situation of largely destroyed infrastructure), lack of human resources, isolation from the international community during several decades and an enormous gap in knowledge and technology (MOE, 2008). Despite impressive achievements during the last ten years, many immense challenges lie ahead for the education sector (MoE, 2011). Currently, 80 percent of the population cannot read or write, and half of school age children are out of school (Indigo

Foundation, 2011; Wahab, 2012). In 2001 after the fall of the Taliban, an estimated 80 percent of school buildings at all levels had been damaged or destroyed” (Indigo foundation, 2011; The World Bank, 2005).

Additionally, attacks on schools and teachers are a feature of the prevailing insecurity and state of fragility in Afghanistan. Insecurity can have serious implications for teacher retention and management (such as teacher attendance, deployment and professional development activities) even in places where schools are not directly attacked (Kirk, 2008). In many areas, the education authorities are unable to access the schools to provide support and supervision. In such locations, ensuring adequate teachers in the classroom is a crucial challenge for government and education partners. As per the OECD, those states are called fragile when they lack the capacity to provide the basic services needed for poverty reduction, development, ensure security and human rights including providing education to their populations (OECD-DAC, 2008). In addition, the population in Kabul has tripled since late 2001, to approximately 4.5 million people, making it perhaps the world’s fastest-growing city in the last eight years (Setchell & Luther, 2009). This increase of the population also poses a serious challenge to the education system, especially for the Ministry of Education.

In addition to the above challenges, teacher attrition aggravates the education situation in the country especially in Kabul. Teacher attrition substantially contributes to teacher shortages. It increases the number of inexperienced teachers, at least in a low-resource context, and limits the access of school-aged children to quality education. This is especially true in a fragile context (i.e. Afghanistan) where the education system has already been badly weakened by years of war and instability. Teacher attrition also becomes a significant barrier toward achieving the Education for All (EFA) goal and it also causes problems of educational quality, equity and

efficiency. A large number of qualified teachers have fled the country, taken jobs outside of the education sector due to various factors including receiving continuous threats from active Taliban factions and insurgents.

The MoE estimates that “approximately 42% or five million of the estimated 12 million school-aged children and youth do not have access to education and over 5000 schools are without usable buildings, boundary-walls, and safe drinking water or sanitation facilities” (MoE, 2012, p. 1). As per the research conducted by Ayobi, “no female students are enrolled in grades 10-12 in 200 of 412 urban and rural districts, and 245 out of 412 urban and rural districts do not have a single qualified female teacher” (2010, p. 5). In addition, due to the instable security situations and lack of basic living facilities in the rural areas, “90% of qualified female teachers are teaching in the nine major urban centers including Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar, Mazar, Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Jawzjan and Faryab” with the remaining 10% for the rest of the country (Ayobi, 2010, p. 1).

Finally, in a traditional conservative society like Afghanistan, a large number of teachers leave the teaching profession for personal reasons including moves of their home locations, changes in marital status’, upgrades in education levels and other changes in their life circumstances.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Little is known about teacher attrition in Afghanistan. As I pointed out above, I could not locate any previous studies conducted in Afghanistan that examine attrition rate, its associated factors, its negative impact, or strategies to reduce it. Therefore, in this section, I will review related literature from different contexts on similar issues.

In order to compile a comprehensive and relevant literature review, research studies from the academic databases such as the Education Research and Information Center (ERIC), Google scholars, Google advance search, and JSTORE were searched. In addition to that different issues of various related journals were consulted to find applicable studies. The scope of the review concentrates on existing review of the empirical literature, both qualitative and quantitative, in the areas of teacher attrition and retention. For the most part, I have chosen relatively recent published research. However, some older studies and references from the books that inform some salient aspects of teacher attrition are also added.

The literature review is organized into three sections about teacher attrition, causes and factors of teacher attrition, and a review of theoretical concepts relevant to the notion and purpose of teacher attrition.

Teacher Attrition

Miller and Chait (2008) defined teacher attrition as “teachers leaving the classroom to take up other professional responsibilities, inside or outside of education, or to spend more time with their families (p. 2)”. Macdonald (1999) refers to teacher attrition as “either a problem for work force planning and resources or an indicator of the relatively poor quality of school life and teacher morale” (p. 835).

Research shows that teacher attrition possibly is expected or unexpected, and it could be permanent or temporary (Egu, Wuju & Chionye, 2011). In the former, teachers retire, or they leave the profession to get a job in different fields with more pay (UNESCO, 2006). Ingersoll (2001) defines these departures as turnover. In the later, teachers remain in the profession but move to other similar jobs within the education system (Miller and Chait, 2008) and/or leave temporarily to have children, start a family, or complete higher education and finally return to continue their jobs. Luekens et al. (2004) divides teachers into three main groups: stayers—the ones who stay for years in the same school, movers—who transfer to other schools but remain part of the system, and leavers—who leave the profession of teaching altogether because of retirement or adopt new occupation. No matter what type or reason, attrition causes massive damage to school and the whole education system of a country in the long run.

Reasons for teacher attrition

According to Heller “teachers have one of the highest attrition rates of any profession” (2004, p. 4). Like many developed, developing and underdeveloped countries, retaining the teachers is one of the major threats to the Afghanistan national goal of providing quality education at schools (Ayobi, 2011).

Research points to several factors that potentially cause teacher attrition including low wages (Liu, 2007; UNESCO, 2006; Lambert, 2004; Mingat & Rakotomalala, 2003; Shen, 1997; Theobald, 1990; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004), poor working environment (Arnold, 1993; Stinbrickner, 1998; Weiss, 1999; Johnson, 1990), lack of professional development activities (Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1987), teaching workloads (Mingat & Rakotomalala, 2003), lack of teacher’s interest in pedagogy (Lortie (1975; Johnson,1990;), constraints on their

autonomy (Lambert, 2004; Hargreaves, 1994), fears and insecurities of beginning teachers (Liu, 2007), and most importantly the stress and depression associated with teaching (Kyriacou, 1989).

Researchers have different ways of categorizing these factors. McClelland and Varma (1996) classified these factors into two broader categories of needs; i.e. personal and professional needs of teachers. According to them almost all the factors and reasons that keep a teacher in the profession are surrounded by their personal or/and professional needs. Cunningham (2000) used the term “pull factors” that specify the personal and professional factors of teaching that affect attrition. Hence, when looking into reasons behind teacher attrition or the factors that can keep teachers in the schools, one should focus on the needs of teachers.

There are countless reasons, and enormous research has been published about the factors related to teacher attrition and its associated needs. However, keeping in mind the focus of this study, I will review the most cited research about the relevant factors to the context of Afghanistan. In order to examine the significant and relevant reasons of teacher attrition, this literature review is organized around two broader interconnected categories: personal factors and professional factors. The section on personal factors of teacher attrition is further divided into three different but unified themes of a) physical factors, b) social factors, and c) psychological factors. The first theme provides the reader with an overview of how low wages and poor working conditions compel teachers to leave the profession and choose other jobs. The second theme presents arguments related to social factors that trigger teacher attrition including gaps in relationships, low social recognition, and gender issues. The third theme analyzes extrinsic and intrinsic psychological factors, teaching workloads and associated stresses.

The section on professional factor reflects upon concerns related to professional development of teachers. Most importantly, issues related to the qualification and experience of

teachers, the reasons that force novice teachers to stop teaching, and possible strategies to retain teachers—organizational support and mentoring program.

Personal Factors

Teachers are not only professional people in schools, but they are members of a family and a society. Like any other profession, teachers have needs related to their profession and the environment in which they serve. They also have their personal lives, although outside of their schools, that hugely affects their teaching performances.

Pajak and Blase (1989) distinguish personal factors as extrinsic including monetary incentives and teaching conditions, and intrinsic factors as satisfaction, job security, responsibility and social status. According to them personal factors could be fully enjoyed outside the context of the school, but they are dependent on professional factors of teaching.

Personal conditions for the teaching profession are worst in low resource contexts like Afghanistan. UNESCO (2012) reported that the educational system in developing countries, particularly in war zones, are facing issues like the lack of resources, improper security measures, no or/and unsafe school buildings, inefficient funding, low wages, poor governance, corruption and lack of proper management. All these issues are the motives for high teacher turnover and thus the failure of quality education.

In order to explore the connection of personal factors with the teaching profession and issues of teacher attrition, I have further divided them into physical, social, and psychological factors.

a. Physical factors

In this section, I will primarily focus on the issues of low wages and poor working conditions with respect to teachers' attrition or retention.

i. Low Salaries

There is an enormous research claiming that salary is one of the most common reasons for teacher attrition worldwide (Imazeki, 2005; Kelly, 2004; Ingersoll, 2000; Weiss, 1999; Shen, 1997; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple & Olsen, 1991; Rickman & Parker, 1990; Murnane & Olsen, 1990; Schlechty & Vance, 1981).

On the basis of a five year national level research—in collaboration with National Science Foundation (NSF) that examines United States policies to determine the issues of teachers including tougher licensing requirements, salaries, mandatory qualification, merit, and certification—Murnane, et.al. 1991 stated that,

Teachers who are paid more stay longer...Teachers with relatively low salaries were more likely to leave teaching than were better paid teachers...a teacher in the below average salary stream was approximately one and a half time more likely to leave at the end of the first year than a teacher in the above average salary stream (p. 71).

Feng (2005) conducted a study to analyze the determinants of teacher attrition among public school teachers of Florida. The researcher used a statewide administrative dataset from Florida Education Data Warehouse (FL-EDW). Given that FL-EDW can only provide data about teachers who teach in a Florida public school but not about leavers or transferred teachers, the researcher examine the data sets of Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) conducted in 1999-2000. The results of the study indicate that among all other factors of school characteristics, class size, students' performance on standardized tests, and number of disciplinary incidents, salary of the teachers was the prime determinant of teacher

attrition. It was found that about one eighth of the leavers departs to private schools and/or has taken jobs in other states with higher pay scales.

Moreover, there is a strong relationship of teachers departing to other professions and fields of studies. Particularly, natural and applied science teachers are more prone to leave the teaching profession because of their practical skills, which are useful for other professions and industry (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001).

Borman & Dowling (2008) reviewed six different studies about teacher attrition and found that math and science teachers are the highest leavers in number and more likely to seek other alternatives. Marvel & Rowland (2007) analyzes the data of teacher attrition from the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) — a survey that provides information about teacher mobility and attrition in grades K–12 in 50 states and Washington DC. 7,429 current and former teachers, 2,864 stayers, 1,912 movers, and 2,653 leavers completed the survey. They reported that about 60% to 70% of mathematics and science teachers in public schools left teaching, compared with all teachers. Thus, the public school struggled to hire mathematics and science teachers during those years.

Similarly, low salary and late-reimbursement compared to other professions are the major push factors that force teachers to discontinue the teaching profession in a low resource context like Afghanistan. The plight of Afghanistan's teachers is untold. They have the lowest salary of teachers in the world. Financially, teachers are amongst the lowest paid people in the society. Only around 6 percent of the national budget is allocated to the education sector. According to one of the reports of Afghanistan's Independent Administration and Civil Servants Commission (2011) "a teacher's salary in Afghanistan has gradually increased to a current range between \$100 (for a grade 12 teacher with no experience) to \$150 (for a teacher with a Bachelor or

Master's degree and up to 40 years' experience) which includes meal allowance, transportation, and recent pay raise" (p. 18).

Given all the research evidence on the importance of salary and the relationship of low salary with teacher attrition, Glewwe, Hanushek, Humpage, and Ravina (2011) reviewed literature from 1990 to 2010 about school resources and educational outcomes in developing countries and reported that money alone is not the answer to increase student learning (p.3) and retain teachers. Therefore, the next section sheds light on the importance of working conditions and their association with teacher attrition.

ii. Poor working conditions

Salary is one of the most influential and attractive factors for teacher retention. Research places a lot of emphasis on working conditions and its association with teacher attrition (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008; McKenzie, Santiago & OECD, 2005; Macdonald, 1999; McClelland & Varma, 1996). Research pointed out the following factors as most importantly neglected, substandard building scarce resources, furniture and supplies, and teachers' accommodation (Imazeki, 2005; Argyris, 1971, Cardinelli, 1980). McKenzie, Santiago, & Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development affirm that, "the reasons that teachers give for leaving the profession (other than retirement) confirm the pivotal role of working conditions (2005, p. 177)." Although the conditions and their importance vary from context to context, lack of expenditure on working conditions is associated highly with teacher attrition. For instance in context of developed countries, teachers place emphasis on quality and appropriateness of working conditions. On the contrary, in developing contexts teachers try to continue in severe working conditions, where attrition could be easily linked to the absence of basic facilities of offices, light, books, and classrooms (Chapman, 1994).

In a developed context, Buckley, Schneider, and Yi, (2004) investigated the reason of leavers with respect to school facilities in large urban districts of United States. They obtained the data from a survey administered in collaboration with the Washington Teachers Union for K-12 teachers in Washington, D.C. Their study found that teachers were prone to leave the profession because of their dissatisfaction with the quality of facilities provided by the school compare to their dissatisfaction with salary.

Moreover, Boyd, et al. (2009) also tried to uncover the relationship between school working conditions and teacher attrition. In a longitudinal study over two years, they asked 4,360 new teachers of New York City to complete a survey in their first and second year of teaching. The survey was divided into the factors related to preparation experiences, characteristics of the schools, teaching practices, and their personal goals. In order to assess the working conditions and retention behavior, they compared the survey data with administrative data of the district. The results demonstrate that teachers considered working conditions as a one of the main factors in staying or leaving the profession. This research study suggested further research was necessary on school contextual factors like teachers' collaboration, staff development, autonomy of teacher, and characteristics of the community.

In contrast to the developed contexts, the teaching conditions are much worse in low resource contexts like Afghanistan. Glewwe, P., & National Bureau of Economic Research (2011) reported that in developing countries, particularly the countries where crises and war have destroyed the basic infrastructure, they do not have the necessary resources to create a desirable teaching learning environment.

b. Social Factors

Given the importance of physical facilities and how they affect teacher attrition in the previous section of this literature review, this section will shed light on the social factors that trigger teacher attrition, specifically the lack of organizational support to nurture relationships, low social recognition, and gender issues.

i. Gaps in Relationships

This section will discuss the literature about the gaps in relationship of teachers with colleagues, students and community, and its correlation with teacher attrition, which Johnson (1990) called the “sociological perspective of teacher attrition”. Although enormous research supports the importance of physical factors in order to keep teachers in this profession, teachers need social relationships and support beyond the safe and resourceful teaching environment. Deal and Peterson (1999) emphasize that better physical facilities at schools help teachers’ instructional purposes, but school culture that focuses on socialization among teachers, with their students and community can assure teachers a healthy and secure working environment. Croasmun, Hampton and Hermann (1997) analyzed the reasons of teacher attrition and confirmed that factors such as lack of collegial interaction, lack of administrative support, lack of parental interest, and lack of appreciation from students discourage teachers and thus cause attrition. Johnson (1990) raises the similar concern and highlights that teachers prefer not to stay in a school where they are isolated from their colleagues, their autonomy is overlooked, and their presence has been ignored while decision making.

School administration plays a vital role in teachers’ satisfaction and motivates them to stay in their profession. Nieto asserts, “Teachers become incensed at the lack of respect they are shown by administrators. The reluctance of administrators to involve teachers more substantively

in school reform efforts is certainly not a new problem. Teachers are being ignored” (2003, p. 71).

Furthermore, some teachers consider student learning and their positive response as a significant predictor of their teaching commitment. Deal and Peterson (2002) refer to it as “psychic reward” that depends on teachers’ qualification, and organizational support—their autonomy of classroom planning and management, support from administration and professional development. Dissatisfaction and low commitment of students, absenteeism, and their confrontational behavior is highly correlated with teacher-attrition (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990).

ii. Low Social recognition

In addition to the influences of collegial and student relationships on attrition, research also underscores the significance of teachers social identity and status in the community (Tye and O'Brien 2002). According to Jones (2001) despite the greatest expectation and symbolic regard towards teaching profession, teachers have a low social status and mostly receive low admiration in their community. He quoted that “if only teachers gained greater influence and authority in their careers and schools, they would find greater satisfaction in their work and students would benefit” (p. Xvii).

In Afghanistan teaching is considered as a noble profession from both academic and religious perspectives, however, teachers—regardless of their gender—have to fight every day with social and cultural stereotypes (Ayobi, 2011). Smithers and Robinson (2003) analysis of teacher attrition reports that “there were some differences in the reasons for leaving with gender; male teachers were more likely to resign because of social factors, and female teachers for personal reasons” (p. 61). The following sub-section will discuss gender issues in detail.

iii. Gender issues

In many contexts it is assumed that teaching is the most suitable and predominant profession for women. However, research reported that regardless of the context; it is hard to sustain female teachers for a long period of time, compared to male teachers (Ingersoll, 2001; Smithers & Robinson, 2003; Guarino et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Kirby, 1999). Stinebrickner (2002) analyzed the occupational change and departure from the teaching profession and informed that the majority of the female teachers leave the profession altogether, or leave temporarily because of various personal reasons. The personal factors of female teachers include maternity leave, family care/ raising children (Smithers & Robinson, 2003; Tye & O'Brien 2002; Ingersoll 2001), clash between family responsibilities and professional expectations (MacDonald 1999), socio economic reasons (Ingersoll, May, & Consortium for Policy Research (2011), and imbalance between marital satisfaction and job satisfaction (Salley, 2010).

Furthermore, the World Bank (2011) reported that in sub-Saharan African or the South Asian context, the majority of female teachers stay home and stop working once they get married. Moreover, they prefer to get posted close to the family and avoid postings in different places. Hargreaves (1994) describes that in some cases, local people resist allowing an unmarried female teacher to be posted in their schools. Most of the above-mentioned factors are very similar to what female teachers face in the context of Afghanistan. According to a report published by Asia Foundation “the status of women in Afghanistan has been of deep concern since they were stripped of their fundamental rights under Taliban rule” (2011, p. 1).

c. Psychological Factors

Both physical and social factors highly depend on psychological needs. According to Baard, Dec, and Ryan (2004) “the term needs has been used most commonly to refer to a

person's conscious wants, desires, or motives" (p. 2). Although, it's hard to predict or analyze intrinsic desires or motives, they can greatly affect the anticipated extrinsic actions and performances of the individuals.

i. Extrinsic vs. intrinsic factors

The extrinsic physical and social factors include the provision of a safe and resourceful working environment, increase in salaries, incentives to build relationship with school and society while the intrinsic factors can include high self-esteem, ownership, belonging, autonomy and satisfaction. McClelland and Varma (1996) reveal that fulfillment of psychological factors like satisfaction and motivation are fundamental for effective teaching performance and development of schools. Much research demonstrates that intrinsic factors such as job insecurity and disrespect that motivate teachers to leave teaching (Boyd et al., 2008; Ubom & Joshua, 2004; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kreis & Milstein, 1985; Deci, 1975).

Despite the important role these factors play in the teaching profession, generally in every context, and particularly in a low resource contexts, teacher's psychological needs are mostly neglected and disrespected (Folajimi, 2009; Glewwe, P., & National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011). Folajimi published a report on teaching profession and factors that affect the teaching in the developing context of Nigeria and found out that

Compared with other learned professions such as medicine, law, engineering, and architecture teaching ranks rather low. Some teachers are dissatisfied with, and even depressed about their professional standing...Time and again, they ask: is teaching a profession? (2009, p .6)

ii. Teaching workload and associated stress

Despite having low ranking compared to many professions, teachers have very heavy workloads, ambiguous roles and responsibilities, exhausting schedules, unsupportive

administrative issues (Nieto, 2003; Johnson, 1990; Cardinelli, 1980; Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1966; McClelland & Varma, 1996). According to McKenzie et.al. (2005) “Highest reasons of teachers leaving the profession are mostly associated with concerns about heavy workload” (p.199).

Being stuck with teaching overcrowded classes, overwhelming schedules, planning lessons, and evaluating the classroom activities, teachers are unable to connect with other colleagues and barely have time to think about their personal and professional growth. OECD (2009) reported that effective professional development support from the organization help teachers deal with their dissatisfaction and other personal factors i.e. beliefs, attitude and self-efficacy. Subsequently, it is very hard to retain teachers in such frustrating and stressful conditions, particularly with no or lack of organizational and professional support.

Professional Factors

Personal factors also have a great impact on teaching performance and job satisfaction. However, professional factors of teachers play a major role and coexist with the personal factors. According to Pajak and Blase

Teachers identified many specific personal traits as having a positive influence on their professional lives. These included, among others, being organized, structured, personally satisfied, ethical, moralistic, just, creative, nonconforming, and personifying the work ethic (1989, p. 297).

Undoubtedly, personal factors are likely to influence teacher motivation and might result in helping or constraining their professional commitment. Nonetheless, engagement in productive activities in order to enhance professional knowledge helps teachers to overcome such influences (Goodson, 2003), and improve their self-perception and self-esteem (Liebes, 1983).

While reading different articles and literature published in different books about professional needs and factors, I observed that professional factors of teaching may deal with a myriad of aspects including; school working conditions, peer relationship, their own perceived role, professional commitment and corresponding content and pedagogical knowledge. However, in this section, I will focus on the literature related to professional development needs and activities, their importance and association with teacher attrition.

a. Professional development opportunities

One of the reports of OECD (2009) defines professional development as activities “that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher (p.49)”. Kreis and Milstein (1985) depict that a lack of adequate professional development opportunities results in teachers’ dissatisfaction. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) emphasize follow-up of activities and administrative support of teachers in order to avoid job dissatisfaction and burnout of teachers. Furthermore, teachers should be provided with forums to share their professional development experiences with peer and foster positive and collaborative collegial relationship (Deal & Peterson, 1999). This opportunity will also help them connect their personal learning with professional development and hence, result in boosting their confidence and need fulfillment in the profession.

McKenzie, et al. (2005) highlight that adequate professional development activities can help reduce the teaching burden; it can enhance teacher’s commitment, facilitate learning, and build collegiality. However, in developing countries, most of the professional development activities do not accomplish the needs of the teachers. Johnson (2008) claims that many professional development programs fail because they do not address the most basic and contextual needs of the teachers.

Much research shows that the lack of professional development opportunities and professional support in schools is one of the highest reasons for teachers to leave the profession (Boyd, et. al., 2009; Folajimi, 2009; McKenzie, et al., (2005); Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Cunningham, 2000; Ingersoll, 2000). Thus, professional support and participation in professional development activities have different degrees of impact on experiences and novice teacher's decision of leaving the profession.

Darling-Hammond and Bransford, (2005) argue that needs of professional development of teachers highly depends on their teaching experience. Experienced teachers need refresher courses to update their knowledge (Tye, & O'Brien, 2002). Nevertheless, novice teachers lack the actual classroom experiences, and rely heavily on knowledge and skills they acquired in teacher preparation colleges (Fullan, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Ingersoll, et al. (2001) examine teacher supply, demand, and quality from an organizational perspective. They specifically looked into teacher turnover to other professions and the role of school characteristics and organizational conditions. They analyzed the data gathered through nationally representative Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) in coordination with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The results show that teacher turnover is strongly correlated with the individual characteristics of teachers yet the decisions whether to stay or leave teaching are related to their age. They consistently found that younger teachers have very high rates of leaving the profession, and conversely, teachers close to their retirement stay.

b. Issue of attrition of novice teacher

Novice teachers learn through experience which most of the time is contrary to their expectations. Thus teaching becomes a chaotic activity for them. In such situations, if teachers

do not have adequate support and autonomy to practice their knowledge either they leave the profession altogether or try to transfer to other schools (Darling Hammond, 2003). Thus, beginning teachers who get support during their initial year of teaching, would more likely to stay in their profession for longer.

I will focus on two aspects that can help novice teachers overcome their uncertainties and threats including: organizational support and mentoring programs.

i. Organizational support

Support from the school both personal and professional is very crucial for novice teachers, supportive working environments in particular. Schools should provide them a chance to experience, and support their proposed practices and strategies. School support can help novices to survive their initial years of transitioning from a learner to a professional. Cherian (2007) points out that collaborative attitudes in schools foster novice teachers' learning to teach. Novice teachers feel more confident if administrators and senior teachers welcome them to their culture and help them adjust to the environment. Such an environment not only helps novices to get acquainted with their working environment but also convince them to stay in the profession (Croasmun, Hampton and Hermann, 1997; Johnson, 1990).

ii. Mentoring Programs

Mentoring is a critical topic and holds promise in bridging the gap between theory and practice by providing successful teaching- learning experiences to the novices. In other words, the proponents of mentoring argue that mentoring provides support “that mediates the difficulties of the first years of teaching” for prospective teachers (Little, 1990, p. 297). Smith and Ingersoll (2004) have further extended their hopes in mentoring to improve teacher retention and minimize the rate of teacher attrition.

Eson (2010) conducted a study to assess the effectiveness of two-year mentoring programs in order to decrease turnover rates especially for newly hired teachers. The study also determined whether mentor programs help novice teachers to change their attitudes toward attrition or not. The data was collected through interviews with five new teachers—before participating and after participating in the mentor program. Moreover, the researcher observed the teachers in their classrooms at the start and at the end of the program. The results of the study indicated that mentoring program provided the support and facilitated the transition process for beginning teachers. It was also reported that the behaviors of teachers were changed. In post interviews they expressed comparatively positive feelings to staying longer.

Consequently, in order to retain novice teachers in the teaching profession there should firstly be a close partnerships and strong communication among novice teachers, school administration, school staff, and mentors. Secondly, mentors should be professionals who play a significant role in shaping not only the teaching practices of novices but also what and how to think and behave as a teacher.

Theoretical Framework

In order to establish a theoretical framework that deals with teacher attrition and factors that push teachers to take such decisions, I will discuss Maslow's need hierarchy (1954) and Herzberg's two-factor theory (1983). Both of the theories focus on the needs fulfillment and satisfaction of an individual in a context. Research has confirmed that there is a very strong connection between job satisfaction and needs fulfillment that compel teachers to leave, stay or transfer from the profession. Therefore, based of above-discussed literature review, I can

connect the factors of attrition with the concept of needs identified by Maslow and factors of job satisfaction proposed by Herzberg.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow (1954) assumes that every individual requires the fulfillment of following five kinds of needs.

1. Physiological needs: the most basic needs of survival including air, water, food, clothing and shelter.
2. Safety needs includes security of an individual and his/her belongings.
3. Social needs: the need of giving and receiving love, care, belongingness, and companionship.
4. Esteem needs: includes the needs of self- respect, self-reliance, proficiency, and achievement internal), and appreciation, status, consideration and power (external).
5. Self-actualization: includes the needs for growth and self-contentment.

Maslow illustrates that the fulfillment of one type of needs persuades an individual to desire the needs of the next level.

Referring to the factors identified in the reviewed literature, physical needs such as adequate salary and better working conditions are some of the factors that affect the physiological need level such as food, shelter, and clothing. If teachers do not have their basic needs fulfilled, they will seek other opportunities. However, if teachers have their basic needs fulfilled, as Maslow pointed out they will think about other factors such as a safe and protective environment, fair management and job security.

Moreover, social factors of fostering positive and strong relationship with others—teachers, students and community—fulfill their needs to be loved, and accepted. Teachers develop the sense of belonging and care with others, and such strong social connections help them stay longer in the profession. However, teachers not only need to have social interactions, but they also seek respect from their students, fellow teachers and community. They want to have a status that encourages them to continue in the profession. They need recognition and rewards from the administrators on their improved performance. They require professional support to enhance their knowledge and teaching skills. In turn, the accomplishment of social needs confer recognition, respect and knowledge, which drive them to the next level of esteem needs.

Esteem needs respond to the psychological factors such as satisfaction with their job, compassion, self-esteem, and boosting their confidence. With the attainment of esteem needs, the psychological factors encourage teachers to think about their weaknesses and strengths, hence, they enter into the self-actualization level of needs. Once teachers get to that level, they are aware of what they need, what they want to be and what they are capable of. Nonetheless, Maslow (1954) stated that it is very hard to fulfill the self-actualization needs because as teachers grow psychologically they keep growing and developing in their fields. This would be the ideal level that would allow teachers to be committed to their profession and therefore affect the learning of students, as well as increase the profile of the school.

Herzberg's two Factor Theory

Herzberg (1959) proposed that fulfillment of needs highly depends on individual satisfaction. He divides the factors of need satisfaction into two categories:

1. Hygiene factors that do not satisfy the individual needs but cause dissatisfaction.
(Examples: job benefits, working environment, job security, and salary etc.)
2. Motivational factors that give individuals positive satisfaction. (Examples: recognition, work challenges, and responsibility etc.)

The factors of Herzberg theory precisely portray the importance of these factors as specified in the literature review — personal, social and professional. These factors cause dissatisfaction which result in teacher attrition: low salary, poor working conditions, constraints due to gender, low status, heavy teaching workload, its associated stress, lack of organizational support, lack of professional knowledge of senior teachers, and fears of beginning teachers. However, if all these factors are satisfied, they could positively impact the teachers' decision to stay in the profession.

Furthermore, the higher order needs are usually satisfied by intrinsic factors. The motivating factors of autonomy, reward, accomplishment, recognition, and professional development activities motivate teachers, and they can accomplish the hard tasks and, are capable of working efficiently and effectively. Consequently, both the theories depict that needs of the teachers should be fulfilled and satisfied that eventually motivate teachers. It will not only help retain teachers, but it will also provide them an opportunity to build a quality physical, social, and psychological environment of learning.

Based on the literature review about attrition and factors that drive teacher attrition, I concluded that there are various personal and professional factors that hinder retention of teachers. It is very hard to separate these interconnected personal and professional factors as McClelland and Varma (1996) suggest, “there is the need to balance personal and professional

development, and to strive to achieve the one through the other, by means of appropriate in-service activities” (p. 82).

Teachers will stay in this profession if the teacher has high or at least equal salaries as offered by other professions, if they teach in a secure, equipped and resourceful working environment with adequate work load along, if they receive the gratitude and respect from the community and students, if they are praised and appreciated for their hard work, and if they are provided with the professional development activities, and mentoring programs.

If a system fails to fulfill both the lower and higher level needs of teachers, they will be demotivated and less passionate. It will not only force them to leave the profession and look for to avenues for work, but the system will suffer because of their low performance and lack of interest.

Glewwe et al. (2011) consider schools as “factories” that produce “learning” using various school and teacher characteristics as “inputs” (p.5). Hence, if an educational system provides the quality input with the goal of producing quality product (students), there is a need to make this profession attractive and desirable by fulfilling the needs of teachers, and offering them satisfaction and motivation to work in these education “factories”.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Method

I used a mixed-method approach for this study, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2005). The rationale for mixing both types of data is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient by themselves to capture the trends and details of situations, such as the complex issue of various factors of teacher attrition and retentions (Ivankova & Stick, 2007; Papadimitriou et al., 2011). The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods will complement each other and provide a more complete picture of the study findings (Ivankova & Stick, 2007). However, the mixed-method design is not only about combining qualitative and quantitative methods in one design; there is a whole range of qualitative and quantitative tools that have different strengths and weaknesses in generating evidence to underpin conclusions (Creswell, 2005). In addition, “qualitative methods can result in quantitative data while quantitative data can be used in statistical or econometric analysis” (Ton, 2011, p. 5).

Participants and Sampling

Quantitative Survey

The sample group for the quantitative survey consisted of both some current teachers in secondary schools in Kabul and some former teachers who had already left the teaching profession, as shown in Figure 1.

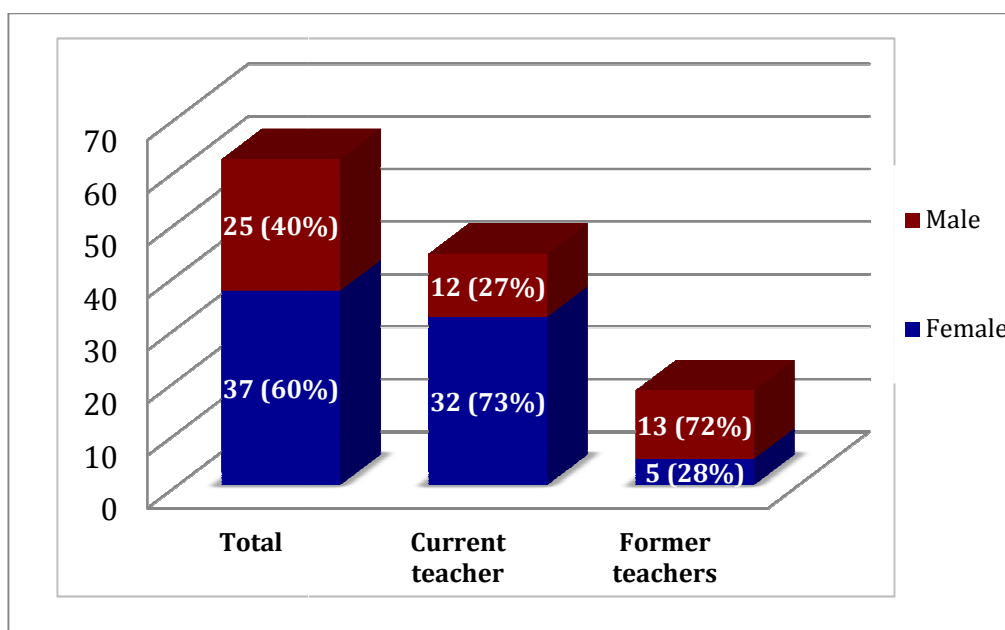


Figure 1: Number of teachers by gender who responded to interview questionnaire

Current teachers. Initially, I selected six secondary schools in Kabul city to apply the survey questionnaires; however, at the outset of the process, from the first responses to the questionnaire, I realized that the school principals influenced the process and/or the teachers were not assured about confidentiality of their responses. Therefore, I discarded all the questionnaires (approximately 40) that I received from these schools feeling that they would affect the validity of the study. With this in mind, I conducted the survey in Sayed Jamaludin Teacher Training College (TTC), where teachers from various secondary schools in Kabul were attending the winter teacher professional development training program. I was able to administer the questionnaires with the gracious help of a faculty member at the TTC. The study sample consists of 70 secondary school teachers who attended the winter PD training. The faculty member scanned all the completed questionnaires and emailed me the electronic copies for further processing. I am deeply grateful to her assistance and time. The data collection process took place between January and February of 2013. The application of the questionnaires in the

TTC was more effective than the original six selected schools, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the teachers felt freer to provide accurate information as they were away from their school and appeared to be less fearful of disclosing their responses outside of their own school environment. Secondly, the collected data were comparatively more representative, as the data are gathered from 40 schools representing nine various ethnic groups, as shown in Figure 2.

I used systematic random sampling for selecting the sample for administering questionnaires with current teachers. I, with the help the TTC faculty member, picked every third (i.e. 70) teacher from a pool of 210 secondary school teachers (a homogeneous group) that attended the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) workshop held in the TTC during the winter break. The faculty member distributed the questionnaire to 70 sampled teachers, of which 44 (63%) were completed and returned. The process of random sampling generated returns that represented a wide variety of ethnic groups.

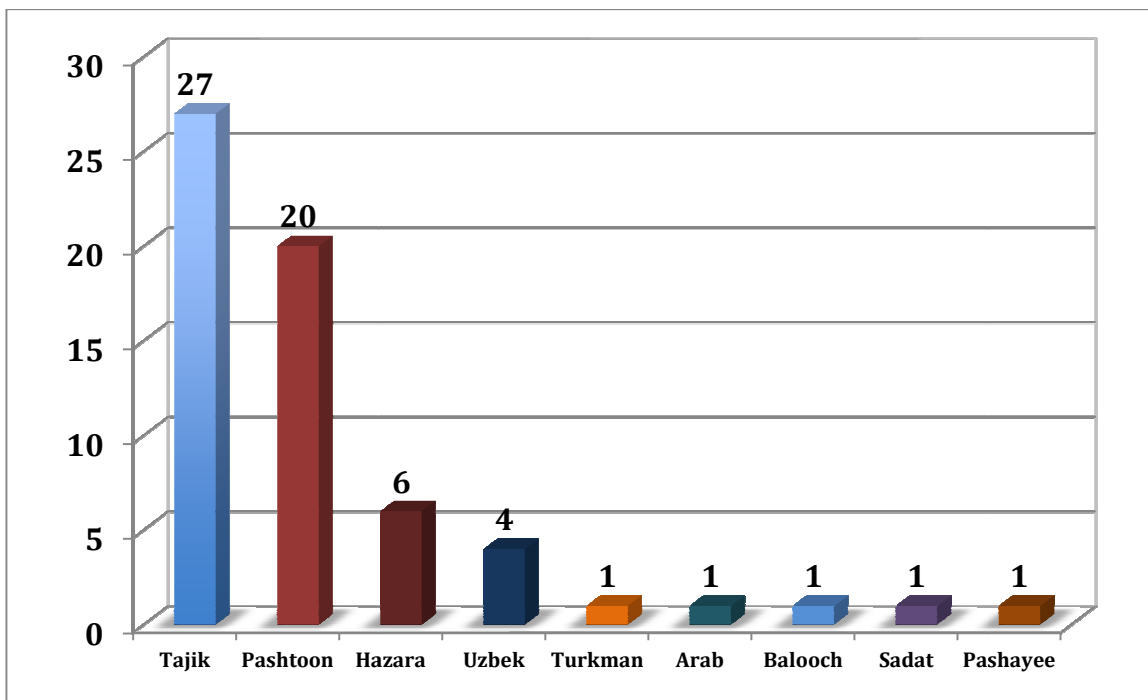


Figure 2: Number of teachers and their ethnic group who responded to survey questionnaires

Former Teachers. I used two main sources to locate teachers who had left the teaching profession. Initially, I contacted some current teachers to help me in providing contact information and/or locating the departed teachers. Secondly, the Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS) Director from the Afghanistan Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) assisted me in locating some of the civil servants who had worked as teachers, using the IARCSC database. A total of 25 former teachers were contacted and asked to respond to the second questionnaire developed for teachers who had left their profession. Out of the 25, 18 (72%) participants returned the questionnaire. Again, I am thankful to the faculty member and the HRMIS Director for assisting me in locating and administering the questionnaire. They also sent me the scanned-copies of the completed questionnaires. The table below shows the number of teachers who completed both questionnaires, including the subjects they teach.

Table 1: Teachers and their subjects that responded to survey questionnaires

Subject of study	Current Teachers	Former Teachers	Total
General	21	5	26
Dari Literature	3	2	5
Science	5		5
Math	2	2	4
Social Science	2	2	4
English Literature	1	3	4
Pashto Literature	3		3
Biology	1	1	2
Islamic Education	-	2	2
Chemistry	1	-	1
Computer Science	1	-	1
Geometry	1	-	1
History	1	-	1
Law and Political Science	1	-	1
Psychology	1	-	1
Education	-	1	1
Total	44	18	62

As shown in the Table 1, the sample selected for administering the questionnaires (both for current and former teachers) also represents teachers from various academic disciplines, including natural and social sciences, languages and literature. The 26 teachers whose subjects of study are “general” are high school and/or TTCs graduates. Further information about the sample groups’ qualifications is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

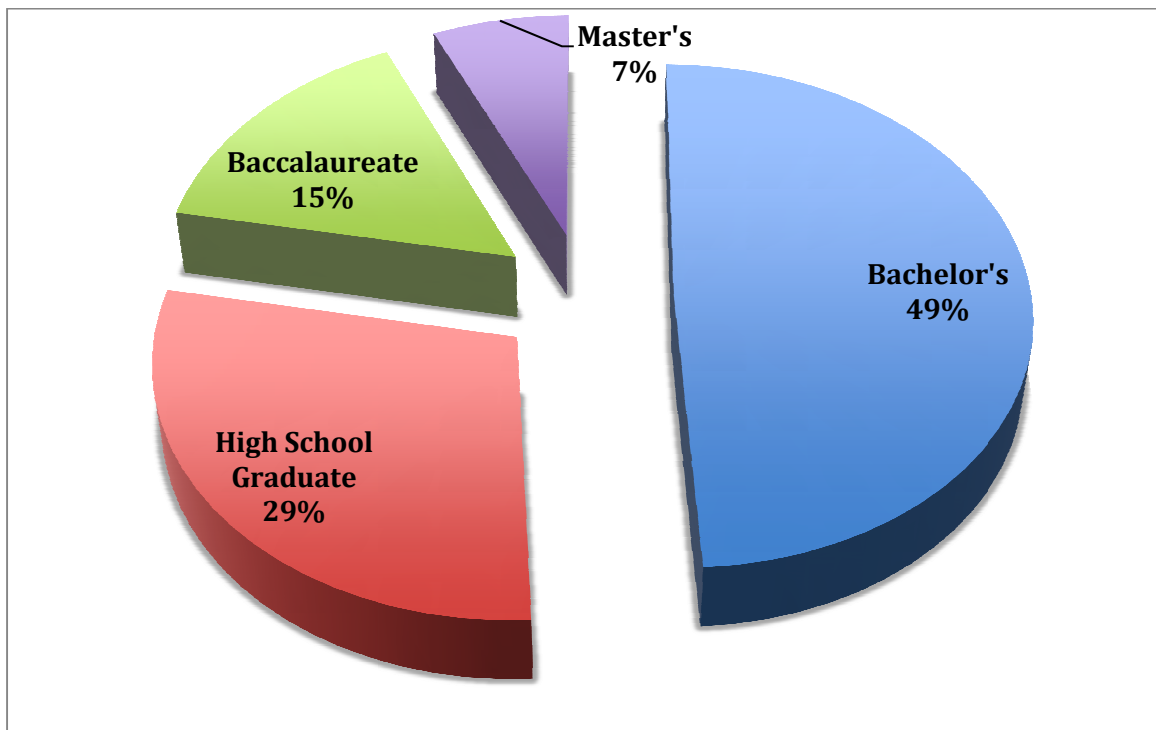


Figure 3: Qualification of the teachers who responded to the survey questionnaires

Qualitative Survey

I interviewed a total of eight people for this study including three current teachers, two former teachers, a student, a school principal, and a member of MoE’s Education Management Information System (EMIS); as shown in Table 2. I identified four people (two current teachers, the school principal and the student) during my first field visit to two secondary schools in summer (July) 2012. The three former teachers were initially contacted by the Teacher Educator

who assisted me with administering the questionnaire. She provided me with the teacher's contact information and facilitated a Skype call with them. I also contacted the Team Leader of EMIS department at the Ministry of Education (MoE) to get some data about the statistics and reasons for the teachers who left their profession. I knew him personally; as we both used to work together. I conducted all interviews through Skype.

Originally, I used the “criterion sampling” for this study (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, P. 138), as the selected sample was guided by two key principles: 1) the teachers who left the teaching profession, and 2) the current teachers who remain teaching. Then I expanded the sample to a school principal, a student, and a member of the EMIS department at the Ministry of Education. What emerged were new themes, and explanations, such as the relationship between teacher attrition and administrative corruption, teacher absenteeism, ghost teachers, health insurance-related attrition, and teaching loads. The inclusion of students deemed helpful, particularly in terms of validating the emerging themes about teacher absenteeism and ghost teachers. The inclusion of an EMIS member was helpful in gaining information about the teacher attrition rate for at least the past five years, and reasons for teacher departure, and the involvement of principals was also helpful.

Table 2: Study Sample

Method	Sample size
Questionnaire survey	44 current teachers from 22 secondary schools
	18 former teacher representing 18 secondary schools
Individual interview	2 current teachers from two different schools
	3 former teachers left the teaching profession from three different schools
	A secondary school principal
	A secondary school student
	A staff member of EMIS from Ministry of Education

Data Collection

The dependent variable, teacher attrition, refers to teachers who stay or leave the teaching profession. The independent variables include all of the factors associated with teacher attrition. For the purpose of the study investigation, the findings and analysis include 62 questionnaires (44 for current teachers and 18 from former teachers), eight interviews, observation field notes from two initial visits, and data from MoE-MIS. The interviews were conducted through Skype.

Questionnaire

I applied two different self-reported questionnaires for the current and former teachers. I asked the former teachers to give actual reasons for leaving teaching, and asked the current teachers to give reasons for their possible departure. I used the same questionnaire to collect further information, such as the type of school, gender, age, and subject of teaching. Moreover, additional space was provided in the questionnaires in order for the respondents to report any alternative factors that attributed to their leaving the teaching profession. At the end of each questionnaire, I asked the participants to provide recommendations separately for other relevant organizations and individuals, including the Ministry of Education, schools, and parents in order to address the problems with attrition.

I used Microsoft Access and Microsoft Excel to analyze the collected data from the questionnaires. The questionnaires for the current and former teachers are attached in annex 1 & 2, respectively.

Interviews

I used semi-structured interview as a primary method for the data collection. The

interviews included a series of designated questions followed by probing questions. Using this technique, I hoped to discover deeper and more concrete examples (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The key interviewees include a school principal, two current and three former teachers, and a student from secondary schools in Kabul, Afghanistan. The interviews were conducted in a flexible manner to provide respondents with the opportunity to share what they deemed necessary and beneficial to the research purpose. The interview questions were mostly “narrative inquiries” and led to storytelling by the interviewees about their background experiences and reflections (Rossman and Rallis, 2012, p. 97). This form of in-depth interviewing is grounded in the theoretical genre of phenomenology (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). See the Interview Guideline in annex 4.

I ensured anonymity and explained what the results would be used for (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I used pseudonyms for all participants of the study I explained why to the participants, as some of them were eager to use their real name. I explained that they might be pleased to use their real names now, but that if they want to remove their names in the future, I would be unable to do so. Therefore, I apologized for not doing what some of the participants preferred. I also sent the “Interview Consent Form” and agreed with all participants before conducting the interviews, attached as annex 5. The necessary clarifications were initially completed via phone conversations, and we scheduled Skype interviews. The interview times ranged from 30 minutes to approximately one hour. All the interviews are recorded and transcribed for thorough examination—a full description of the analysis process detailed in Data Analysis section.

I first met with the school principal to find out information about the school organizational setting, asked for his support for imparting the study, and finally got their

permission for interviewing teachers. I interviewed five teachers and a student, each including questions as to why teachers leave the teaching profession, and exploring ways to encourage them stay in the profession. I also interviewed the Team Leader from EMIS in order to capture some data regarding teacher attrition.

According to Gonzalez et al. (2008), this method of data collection helps to structure the wording and sequence of questions so that they are more appropriate and occur more naturally along the interview process, while maintaining relevance to the predetermined topic. As Patton asserts, the “interview guide approach” allows for the “interviews to remain fairly conversational and situational while allowing the interviewer to explore, probe, and ask questions that will illuminate the topic at-hand.” (2002, P. 349). My goal was to explore the issue of teacher attrition in a way that would probe spontaneously, while uncovering the problems more naturally (Gonzalez & et al, 2008). This method helped me to gather the data I was looking for, while the interviews remained open and conversational.

I recapped and summarized the information obtained to make sure that the parts most relevant to the study were captured. I also used member checking during follow-up interviews, which allowed the interviewees to have the opportunity to clarify or refine certain aspects of the interview. As Seidman (1998) suggests, a researcher should conduct follow-up interviews to get data in order to know about the interviewee’s backgrounds, experiences and meanings (as cited by Rossman & Rallis, 2012). See the key interview questions in annex 3.

Observation

My first day in the field was during July 2012. I visited two secondary schools in Kabul and also briefly interviewed a school principal. I had a follow-up interview with the same

principal later in November 2012. During these two short visits, I made some observation notes and some of the findings from these observations are reported in the findings section. Since all the interviews for this study were conducted through Skype, I had limited opportunities for collecting more data through conducting observations. However, the initial field visits allowed an opportunity to observe the surroundings and gather some information on various facets related to teacher attrition.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

I reviewed all the collected questionnaires to ensure the accuracy of the responses provided, and some of the respondents were contacted in case there was need for further clarification and corrections. I used MS. Access and MS. Excel for all quantitative data entry and data analysis. I also analyzed data related to the target group background variables for several characteristics of teachers, including their ages, genders, ethnic groups, qualifications, subjects they teach, and years of service as teachers.

I completed exploratory multiple analysis of the teacher attrition and cumulatively examined eight predicted factors of attrition, such as teacher deployment, lack of professional development opportunities, low or late remuneration, work condition, teacher mobility, work burden, family problems, and lack support from parents and society. Such self-reported data are useful because those departing are, of course, often in the best positions to know the reasons for their departures. However, “self-report data are also retrospective attributions, subject to bias and, hence, warrant caution in interpretation” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 15). Hence, I utilize the self-report data from a larger set of respondents. This allows the analysis to take advantage of the

breadth of the quantitative data while also providing a means of comparison concerning the effect of various factors of the teacher attrition.

Qualitative Data

Data analysis was conducted throughout the research process. I audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews and then reviewed each of the transcriptions in their entirety. Although the interview questions were developed to explore the factors for teacher attrition and possible strategies to addressing them, the transcriptions were reviewed so as to let the themes emerge. As asserted by Rossman and Rallis, “This method of data analysis is consistent with an interpretive phenomenological approach that seeks to offer opportunities for themes to emerge” (2012, p. 96).

I examined the interview transcriptions (narratives) and field notes, and looked for indications of categories. For each category, after several reviews, I coded them on the document and developed codes into names that describe events or issues. Subsequently, I coded each transcribed interview according to key categories or themes, based both on my assumptions, and on those that emerged during the data collection and analysis processes. I then transferred each code into a separate MS Word document (file) in which I could compare each category consistently. For instance, I created four separate files (current teachers, former teachers, principal, and student), then in the next step, I labeled the main and sub-categories in the relevant file (e.g. former teacher who left teaching profession due to school remoteness was labeled “1-school remoteness” as main category, and “1.1 lack of transportation” as sub-category. I had to complete this process several times, as I had to reorganize the codes and include them after further comparisons of each one with other events. The main and sub categories emerged as I

proceeded with data collection and analysis. Later, I developed them into individual themes in order to capture all possible aspects of the topic.

The coding process helped me to collate the data into smaller groups and make it more manageable. The process also helped me to see relationships between each concept and various categories. I followed by drafting and reviewing summaries of interviews, trying to capture the main themes and ideas that emerged at the school level. These summaries enabled me to examine broad similarities and differences across interviews. Next, I wrote an analytic memo and highlighted key themes that emerged using these codes and data-analytic matrices. Due to limited interviews with teachers, I focused on describing only a few of the factors that compel teachers to leave the teaching. I continued to write analytic memos and to hold analytic discussions as I proceeded with the coding. Memos and discussions like this provide opportunities for the researcher to reflect on ideas “and pose ideas about developing categories and themes” (Rossman and Rallis, 2012, p. 286).

I reviewed the transcription of each interview individually, with themes emerging based on each person’s responses. After these themes were noted and labeled, the themes were integrated across participants. These led to the eventual themes that are described in this study (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Conclusions were drawn using the more qualitative approach of describing the hypothesis and themes that emerged, which is approach as this research seeks to describe phenomena.

The participation of the interviewees was beyond my expectation. They were extremely keen to share as much information as possible in order to help with mitigating the problem. Iqleema, one of the interviewees, said, “I am very happy that you have chosen this topic and truly I am surprised that there are people who think about why teachers quit their jobs. Although

I am very busy, I will be glad to answer your questions and share the problems of teachers; this is the first time I face with such questions, I hope your research could be a good start in addressing the teacher problems” (Personal interview with Iqleema, former teacher, 25 October 2012).

I ensured the research validity through applying several techniques including careful review and revision of interview questions and probes, using a single interviewer for all six participants, describing to each participant how the data will be used, and member-checking, in which individual responses were reviewed and checked with each research participant. I constantly compared the data collected from observations, interviews, and field notes in order to verify responses and to ensure congruence (Gonzalez et al. 2008).

Limitations

Although I successfully captured a range of views about the research questions, the limited sampling and interviews made it difficult to provide a complete picture of the issue. This study revealed that in order to comprehensively examine the research questions, it would require interviewing a more broadly representative sample of teachers within each target school and teachers who left the profession.

Other limitations include shortage of qualitative data required for deeper analysis of teachers’ concerns, experiences and challenges that they face every day in various contexts. I could not interview stakeholders (e.g. students, parents, community members, I/NGOs involved in education development, and MOE) to get their impressions with respect to these issues. More importantly, I conducted this research only in Kabul (the capital city of Afghanistan) and focused on a small sample size. Thus, the findings are not representative of the teachers across the country. Finally, because this may be the first research conducted in Afghanistan on teacher

attrition, caution is needed in interpreting the results. An implication of this research is the need for further studies to be conducted in various contexts, such as in other urban areas, as well as semi-urban and rural areas, in order to explore the causes of teacher attrition and what contributes to teacher retention in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

In this chapter the findings—derived through data obtained from survey questionnaires and in depth interviews with participants— are presented in a categorical manner. Different emergent and existing themes based on the proposed theoretical framework from the literature about teacher attrition and research questions of the study are classified into different categories. In order to triangulate the data, the graphical presentation of the statistical data is added along with the supporting qualitative data in forms of *comments of respondent* and *interview excerpts*. Results in each category are presented with a detailed discussion of the views of Former and Current Teachers about factors behind teacher attrition and factors that can potentially minimize the attrition of teachers.

In Afghanistan, the general perception is that teachers leave the teaching profession primarily due to low salary, with a large amount of literature also supporting this view. However, the results of this study reveal multiple important factors that influence teacher attrition in addition to the low salary. The four overarching themes include: 1) Ineffective Recruitment and Deployment Process (School Distance); 2) Heavy Workload, Unequal Work Distribution and Administrative Corruption; 3) Low Salaries and Other Benefits, Lack of Professional Development Programs; and 4) Social Factors Influencing Teacher Attrition. The Social Factors category is further divided into three sub themes: Gender Issues, Teacher Social Status and Recognition, and Teacher Safety. Furthermore, views of participants on the factors that influence their fellow teachers to leave the profession are also discussed in a different category. In order to get to the root causes of attrition, and to recommend some combating strategies of addressing teacher attrition phenomenon, I obtained some data that indirectly reveals the alternative careers to the teaching profession, which is discussed in a separate broader category of findings.

Ineffective Recruitment and Deployment Process (School Distance)

The teacher recruitment process is centralized in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Education (MoE) in coordination with the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission manages the hiring process for the education system in the country. The MoE – in many cases – deploys the newly recruited and/or transfers experienced teachers to the places far from their home locations within or even to other provinces without providing housing and/or transportation facilities. Lack of transportation and housing seems to be among the major challenges for the deployment of teachers, especially for female teachers.

The results in the Figure 4 reveal that the recruitment and deployment process highly influence teacher attrition. Among the Former Teachers, 67% (33% being a very important factor) of the respondents cited that school distance – even within the province – was the reason for leaving the profession. The other 44% (11% being a very important factor) of the Former Teachers left the job because of their deployment to other provinces.

Former Teachers: *Were long distance and/or deployment to other province(s) factors influencing your departure from teaching profession?* (n=18)

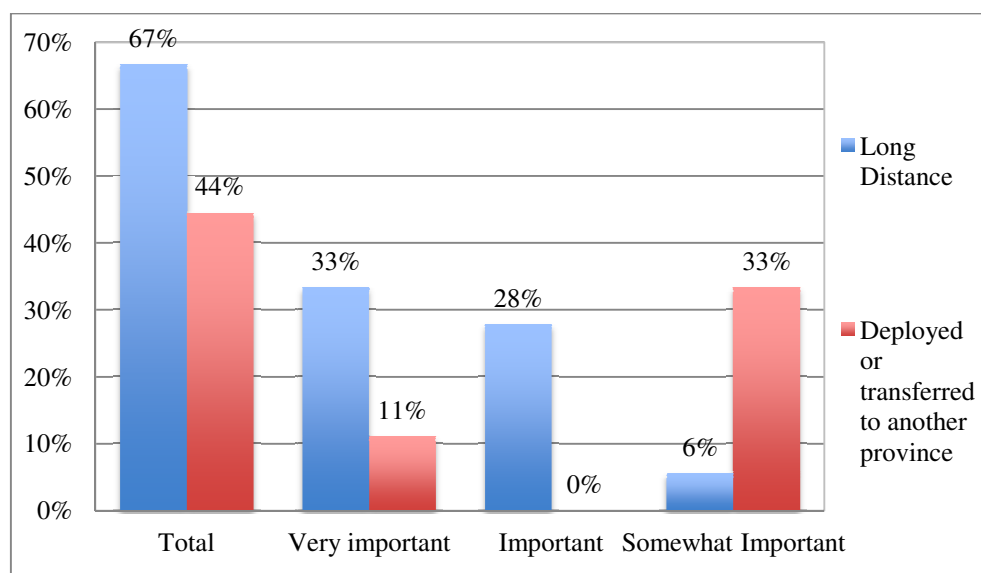


Figure 4: Percentages showing long distance between homes and schools, and deployment to other provinces as reasons for Former Teachers to leave the profession.

Moreover, as shown in Figure 5, 52% (23% being a very important) of the Current Teachers also believe that the school's distance could be a factor for their departure from a teaching job while the other 34% of respondents consider deployment to other provinces as one of the possible reasons for their leaving.

Current Teachers – Would long distance and/or deployment to other province(s) influence your departure from teaching profession? (n= 44)

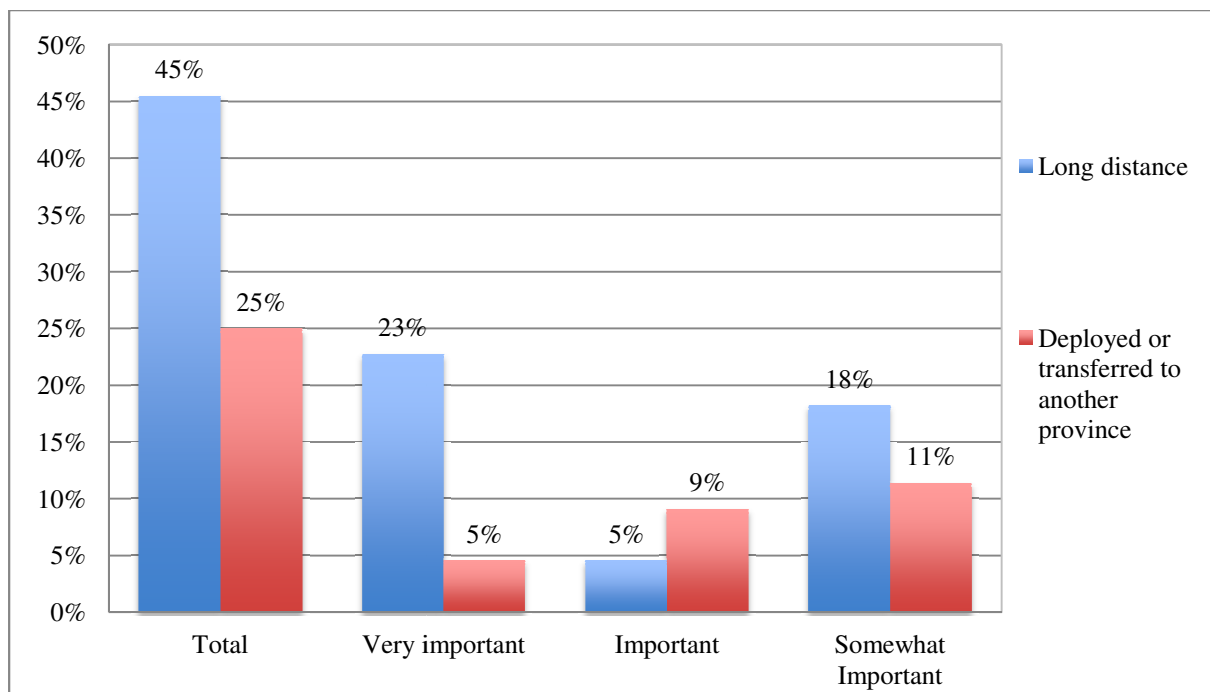


Figure 5: Percentages showing long distance between homes and schools, and deployment to other provinces as potential reasons for Current Teachers to leave the profession.

Interview Excerpt

Iqleema is a former secondary school teacher who left the profession due to the long distance of school. She was recruited as a math teacher and assigned to one of the secondary schools in Kabul city, which was eight miles away from her home. She says,

The main reason that I left the teaching profession was the remoteness of the school and school did not provide transportation either. The public transportation system is very poor or, let me say, it does not exist anymore, whereas the private transportation is very expensive.

According to her, she spent three months of the winter break, going every day to the Ministry of Education and to her school requesting a transfer to a nearby school but the officials in the Ministry and the school principal both frequently referred her back and forth to the other. She added,

Eventually, I realized that my family got suspicious about me, as I was every day telling them that my problem would be resolved. Despite all my efforts, I failed to convince the Ministry and the school to approve my transfer.

She concluded that she had no choice, but to leave the job. Now she is working as an Intern at USAID's Women's Role in Civil Service Program. Although she is immensely happy with her current job in development sector, she still prefers to return to the teaching profession as soon as she can get a job in a school located near her home or even join her previous school if she has transportation. (Personal interview with Iqleema, former teacher, 25 October 2012)

The above findings clearly indicate how the current recruitment and deployment process trigger teacher attrition. Teachers assigned to unpopular posts often fail to take up the post. The findings also revealed that in addition to long distance, the unorganized "*Teacher Transfer Process*" –from one school to another within a province or from one province to another province—is another factor for teacher attrition. In order to validate the above findings, I also interviewed a student (grade 8) in order to have his opinions about the issues pertaining to school long distance for some teachers and how it affects students' learning.

Interview Excerpt

Aimal says that

Some teachers usually come to class late, and they look very tired too. Often, they are late for about 20 minutes thus we are unable to cover the lesson plan on that day for the subject. Such teachers usually tell us that their homes are located far away from the school and due to poor public transportation it is difficult for them to be on time every day. These teachers teach less but instead give more homework. Yet, we cannot complete

the required amount of lessons for the subjects taught by these teachers. For example, by the end of the academic year, we can only complete 5-6 chapters of the textbook with 10-12 chapters. (Personal interview with Aimal, November 20, 2012)

The above excerpt shows that not only is school distance a factor in teacher attrition but it also affects the *teaching and learning quality*. Although some of the teachers, despite the long distances, are eager to continue in the teaching profession, it is hard for them to be on time every day because of a poor public transportation system. As a result, it negatively impacts the learning process. In case of Iqleema, though the school was only a few miles away from her home, she could not afford the transportation cost. Concerning the more remote schools, this will result in a much higher attrition, less experienced staff and especially many unfilled posts. As found by Buckley, et al. (2004) teachers are more prone to leave the profession because of their dissatisfaction with school facilities, including transportation and school distance as compared to their discontent with salaries.

Furthermore – as shown in Figure 6 – 66% (41% being a very important factor) of these teachers stated that the “*proximity of school*” is an important factor that helps teachers stay in the teaching profession.

Current Teachers – *Is the proximity of school and/or working together with your spouse factors that would make you prefer stay in the teaching profession?* (n= 19)

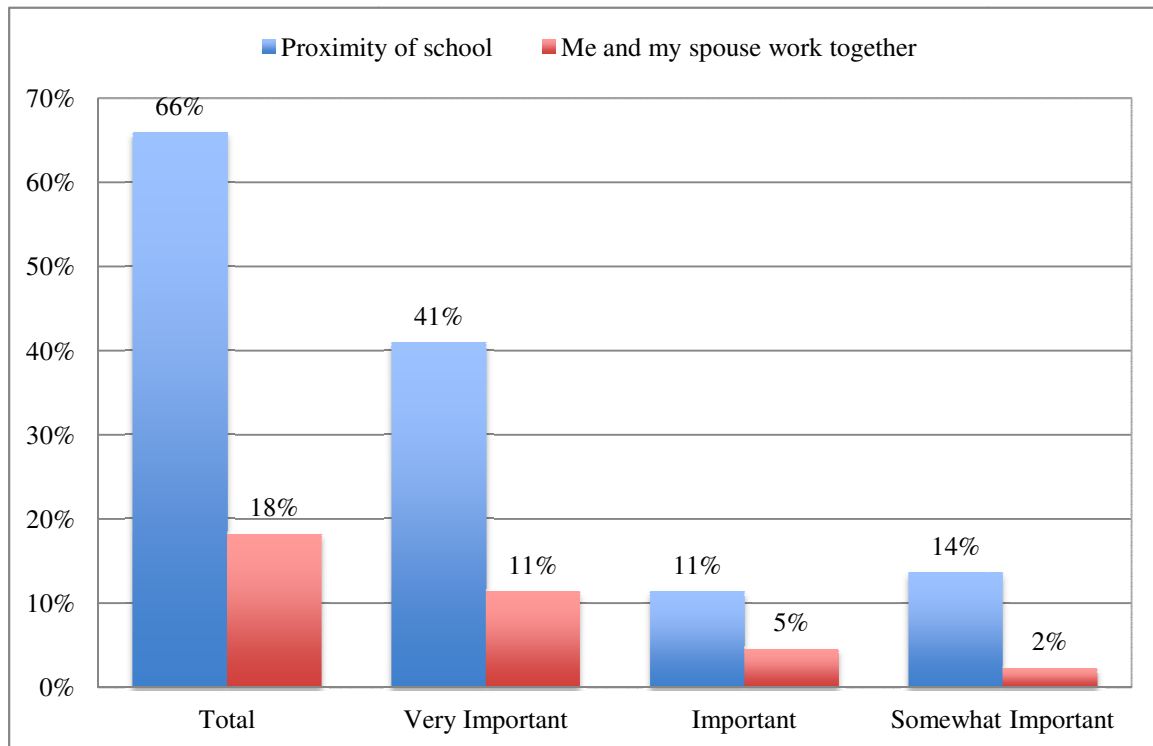


Figure 6: Percentages showing proximity of school, and/or working together with their spouse as potential reasons for Current Teachers to stay in the profession.

These findings imply that there are some hurdles with recruitment and deployment processes at various points in the education pipeline. These processes need to be reviewed in order to simplify and streamline recruitment, deployment, and transfer processes so as not to discourage teachers from teaching. Folajimi (2009) claimed that distance from schools and safe working area plays a vital role in teachers' decision to stay or leave in the profession.

Heavy Workload, Unequal Work Distribution and Administration Corruption

Data of this study shows two types of unethical practice that are potentially among the key factors for teacher attrition in the secondary schools in Afghanistan, particularly in Kabul. First, teachers have to pay bribes to their supervisors and/or principals to receive salaries, and

second, the phenomenon of ‘ghost teachers’. According to one of the reports of the Military Fusion Centre, which refers to ghost teachers in Afghanistan, “Ghost teachers are those who do not come to work but who nonetheless receive a salary or those who are double – registered and thus receive two salaries for a single day work” (2011, p.3).

When I asked the Former Teachers to rate two possible reasons (heavy and/or unequal distribution of workload) on a 5 point scale ranging from ‘very important’ to ‘somehow important,’ out of all 44 respondents, 39% consider the heavy workload and the another 33% the unequal distribution of work by school principals, as reasons of departing their jobs, as shown in Figure 7.

Former Teachers – *Were the heavy workload and/or unequal workload distribution by your supervisor or school principal factors for exiting the teaching profession?* (n=18)

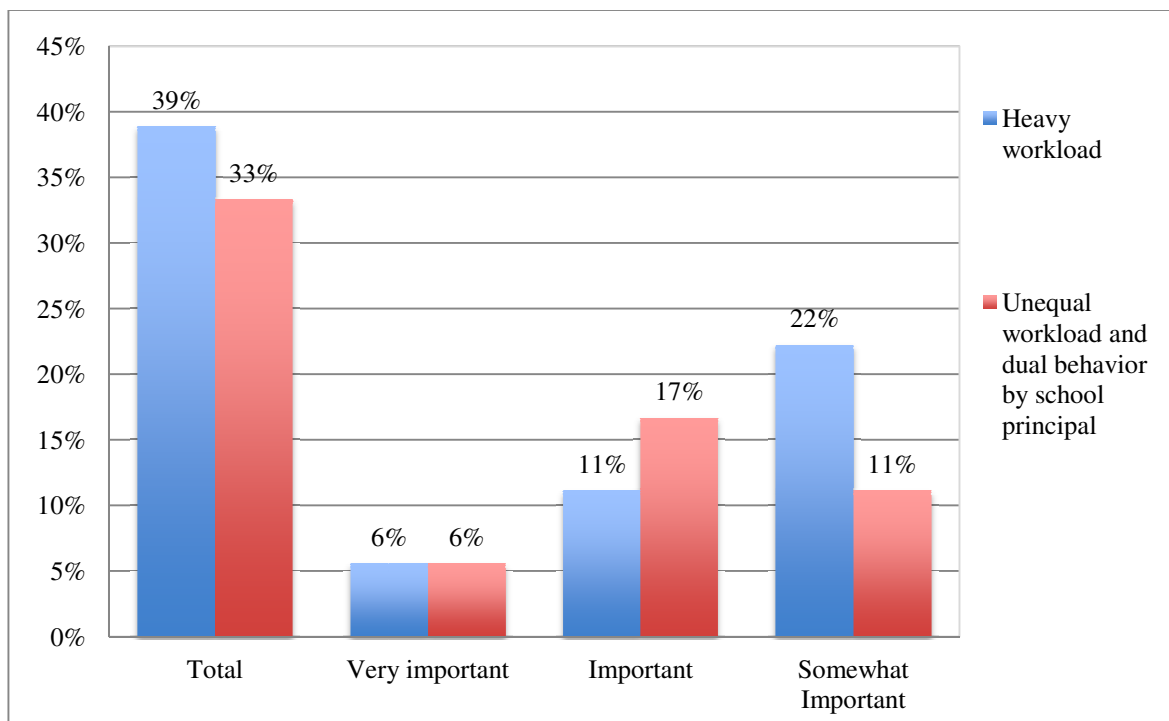


Figure 7: Percentages showing heavy workload and unequal work assignment reasons for Former Teachers to leave the profession.

Similarly, the findings presented in Figure 8 indicate that Current Teachers considered the “heavy and unequal workload” as the major potential reasons for their leaving. Over 28% of Current Teachers indicated that the heavy workload and the other 52% considered the unequal workload distribution as important for leaving.

Current Teachers – Would the heavy workload and/or unequal assigning of workload be the factors to influence you to leave your profession? (n= 44)

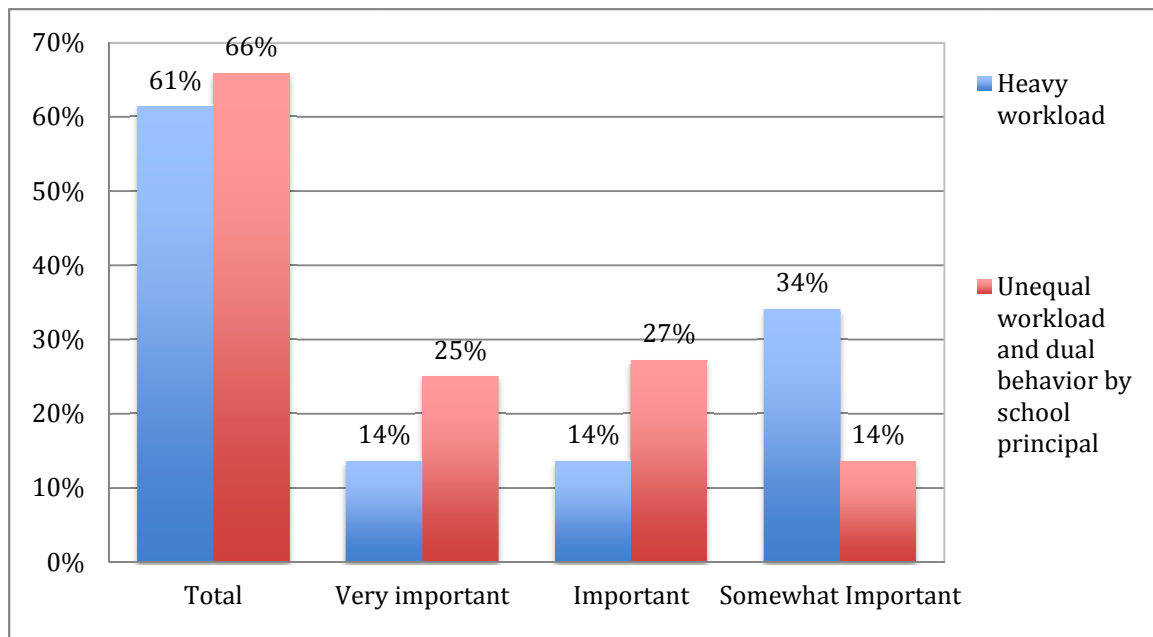


Figure 8: Percentages showing heavy workload and unequal work assignment reasons for Current Teachers to leave the profession.

Interview Excerpt

Najiba is one of those teachers who left her teaching job due to – as she called it – a “dishonest heavy workload.” Najiba taught in two shifts in Kaserul Istafada secondary school. Even then, the school principal would often ask her to teach additional two and sometimes three sessions every week. She said, “*The more you teach the more they put onto you.*” The reason why she did this extra work was because some of the teachers did not come to the school regularly and were often absent. Hence, the principal would task her as well as some other teachers to teach for them. The principal usually said that he had either sent the absent teachers

to attend a training program and/or had assigned them administrative work, to go to the Ministry and so on. Worse than this, there are teachers that never go to school at all, and the existing teachers were told that the Ministry temporarily transferred them to the remote schools in other provinces. However, she said “*we all knew it was untrue as we occasionally met those teachers around.*” She also mentioned,

My job was very, very important to me, and it was a huge part of who I was. I sincerely wanted to work hard and help the kids at school, but I felt very bad covering for such people and lent a hand in administration corruption. I was also not sure how long I should sustain with that mental and physical frustration I had, as it was a non-stop phenomenon.

She continued, though the teaching workload had been increasing day by day. She was going home late every afternoon, grading student papers at home and did not have time to spend with her family. She concluded,

This huge workload was not tolerable any longer, so I decided, or lets say I was in some ways forced to quit my teaching profession eventually. (Personal interview with Najiba, November 08, 2012

)

During my first field visit to a secondary school, I also noticed that some teachers had an argument with administrative staff about their attendance. Apparently, the administrative staff marked some teachers absent and then the principal intervened and resolved the problem.

Data both from the survey questionnaire and interviews affirms teacher absenteeism in the secondary schools—the phenomenon of ghost teachers. In addition, due to the administration corruption and lack of reliable Human Resources Management System and procedures, including the Education Management Information System , some of the teachers are registered twice in the records, and receive two salaries from the government (Military Fusion Centre, 2011). Another group of teachers work for both public and private schools at the same time. In this case, as it is hard for them to be away from the private schools, these teachers’ absence increases

substantially in the public schools, particularly if they are already double-registered. In the cases that teachers are only registered in one school, running of small businesses and private training centers (shadow education) are the most common secondary occupations for such teachers. In all the above cases, teachers are bribing the school administration, especially the principal. This tendency could even reach some senior officials at the Ministry of Education.

As the data depicted in Figure 9, “*having a secondary job*” is the choice and a need for nearly half (45%) of the respondents who want to stay in the teaching profession. Though only 14% considered having a secondary job as a “*very important*” factor, it is clearly revealed from the responses that 45% of the teachers have a second job.

Current Teachers – Do you want to stay with the teaching profession because you also can have a second job? (n= 19)

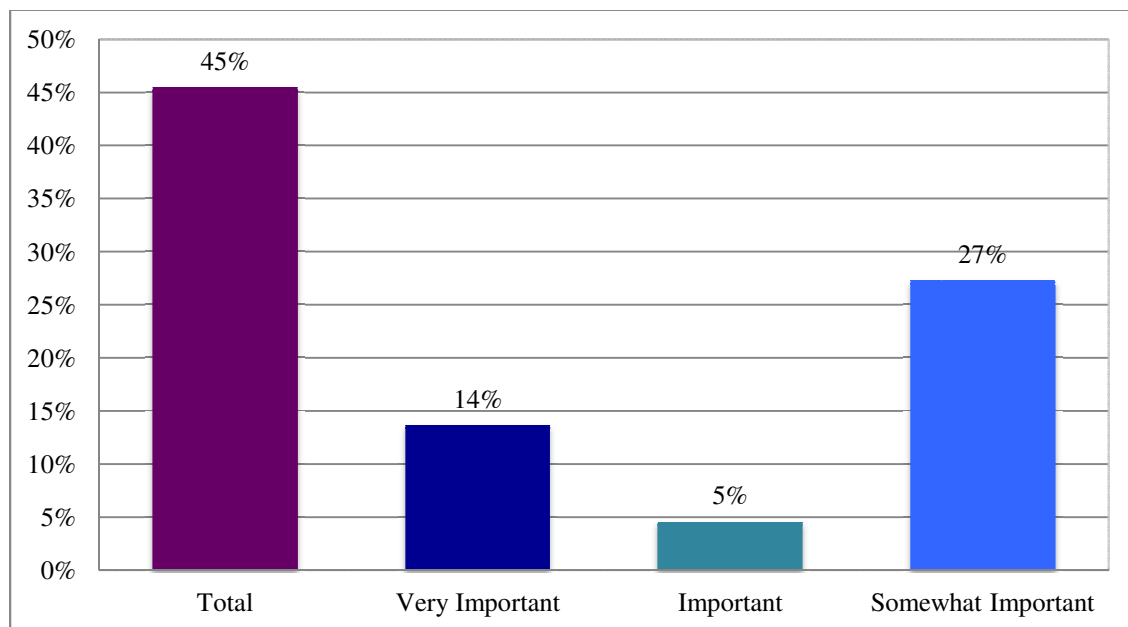


Figure 9: Percentages showing “*preference of a secondary job*” as a potential reason for Current Teachers to stay in the profession.

Interview Excerpt

Janat Gul, a current teacher is another interviewee, who was extremely dissatisfied with being in the profession. He is completely overwhelmed with the amount of work due to teachers’

absenteeism. Janat Gul says,

Too much work, I mean; I do not have time for my personal life any longer, not having time for my kids and for myself. How lost I feel and how tired and how depressed, I feel really down when I am covering up for such teachers who get governmental salary for nothing, thinking oh, I cannot believe I have chosen this for my career, you know, this is not living, this is not good. (Personal interview with Janat Gul, November 15, 2012)

It can be easily inferred from the above findings that the existence of “ghost teachers” and “teacher absenteeism” is another form of unrecorded teacher attrition. These phenomena result in large classroom sizes given that a school has far fewer teachers than policymakers may perceive based on payroll records. It can also be clearly depicted from the above extract that the teachers without connections, and not involved in the corruption, do not tolerate such situation. They find it immoral hence prefer leaving the teaching profession and joining other governmental jobs and/or working for NGOs, as soon as opportunities present themselves. As affirmed by Folajimi (2009), teachers leave their profession when they feel the workload is too heavy for them, and there is too limited or no recognition and appreciation for.

Moreover, such hidden teacher attrition severely affects the education system compared to the known lack of the teaching workforce. In addition, the findings also denote that the phenomena of “ghost teachers and teacher absenteeism” – which were common mostly in the remote and insecure provinces – have also expanded to the capital city. These teachers who have connections with powerful groups and/or those who pay bribes are partly or fully absent in the school. The government, especially the Ministry of Education takes no actions possibly due to involvement of some officials in the Ministry in such corrupt practices.

Low Salaries and Other Benefits

The findings of this study revealed “low salary” as a major factor behind attrition. In

Afghanistan, all public school teachers are working under the same salary scale, which is designed and being implemented by the Independent Administration Reform and Civil Service Commission. In this salary-scale, no extra benefits or privileges including health insurance and transportation are considered. An additional complaint by many interviewees and respondents to the survey questionnaires was that the extra work assigned by supervisors or school principals are not paid for or compensated in any ways.

Teachers are not only dissatisfied with their salaries but also with late-reimbursement and lack of health insurance. Teachers, based on the new system of salaries, even from very remote areas, are required to go to the banks, mostly located in the center of big cities, to collect their monthly salaries. As it happens normally almost every month, many teachers, especially male teachers, leave teaching for other professions even to similarly paying jobs, but with less workload and on-time payment.

As illustrated in Figure 10 and 11, all of the former teachers (61% being very important) and over 78% (22% being very important) of the current teachers, considered low salary and late reimbursement among the reasons for their leaving.

Former Teachers – *Were low salary and/or late imbursement the factors for leaving your teaching profession?* (n= 18)

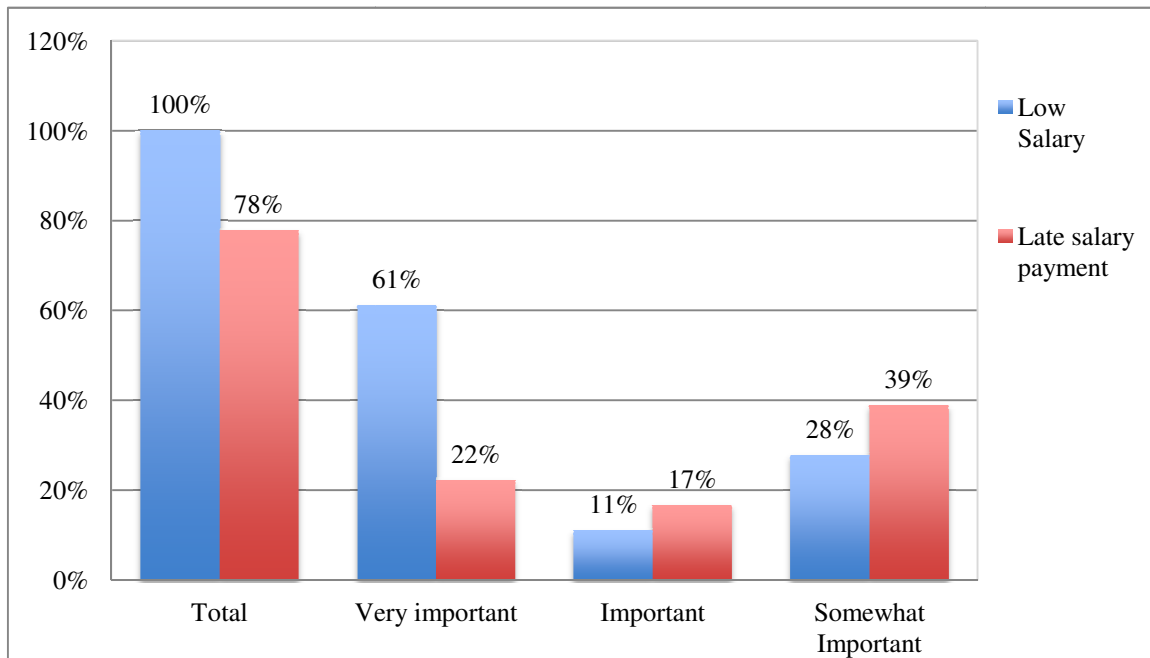


Figure 10: Percentages showing low salary and/or late payment as the reason for Former Teachers to leave the profession.

Current Teachers - *Would low salary and/or late salary payment are the factors to leave the teaching profession?* (n= 44)

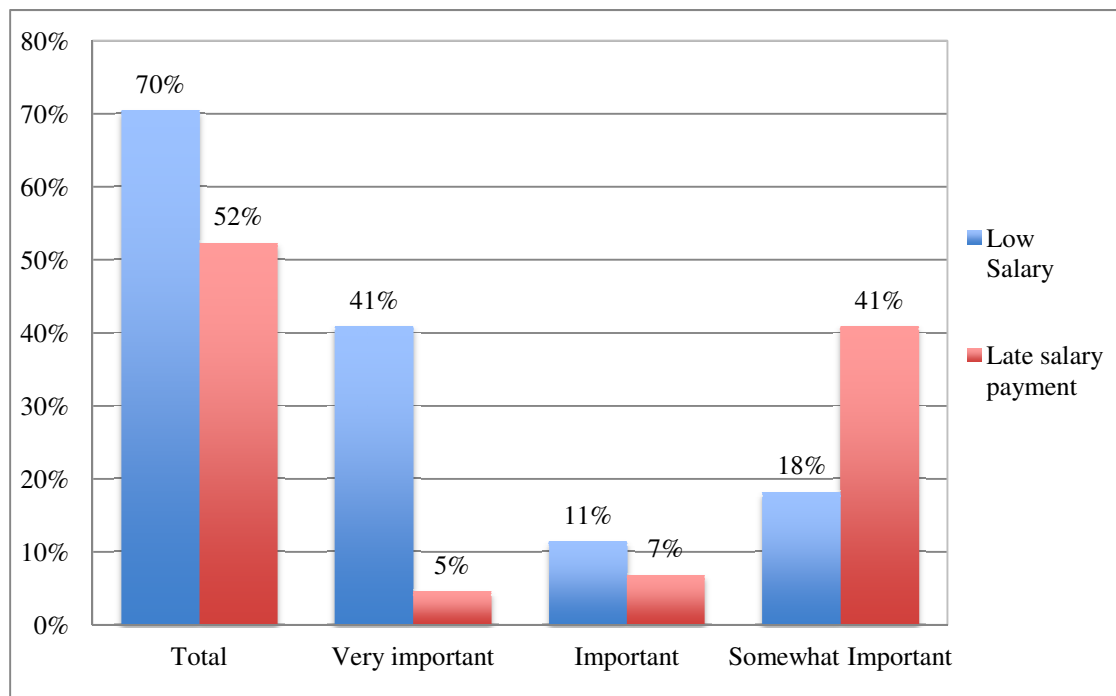


Figure 11: Percentages showing low salary and/or late payment as the reason for Current Teachers to leave the profession.

Interview Excerpt

A former teacher (interviewee) stated, “*My salary was so low compared to the amount of workload.*” Another current teacher, Janat Gul said that payment system for teacher salaries is a mess and time consuming. He added:

Based on the new payment system we are required to collect our monthly salaries from banks, particularly Kabul bank’s branches. There is no nearby branch to our school, so we have to go to the center of the city. Often there are huge lines of the teachers in the bank and we have to wait for hours for our turn. After the long wait – the bank staff occasionally tell us that the Government (Ministry of Education or Ministry of Finance) has not yet transferred the salaries to our accounts. Such dealings are unpromising especially as we are coming a long way and return with an empty-pocket. This situation also discourages us to continue to our teaching occupation. (Personal interview with Janat Gul, November 15, 2012)

In addition, the teachers in Afghanistan have no access to other basic services like health insurance. In many cases, teachers cannot afford to pay for health services. I also assume from the excerpt below that if the Ministry of Education provided at least a basic package of health coverage for the teachers, despite the low salaries, a majority of the teachers would stay in the profession.

Interview Excerpt

Maleha and her husband were both teachers. She had been a teacher for 15 years. Two years ago her husband had a brain attack, and from that day onward he could not go to work as he was paralyzed. She was loaded with all her husband’s responsibilities too. She said, “*Our life changed to hell and there was no way to get out of that hell.*” She had to pay for the treatment of her husband and feed her children too. She tried to sell the equipment of their house as well as borrow money, but their relatives do not trust her as they thought that if they lend her like \$1000, how she could return it back from her salary. After a month, the doctors told her that it is late for her husband treatment. She said, “*I was honored and called good teacher in school, society and*

among our relatives; however, all these are meaningless to me now.” She started looking for another job so that could feed her family. She is now working as a cook in a private company, and her salary is substantially better than what she received as a teacher. She said,

Yet my only concern now is that I do not want my relatives to know about my job and remind my children about what I was/am doing; I want my children to have a comfortable life like others and do not to be insulted by other children.

She calls on the government to consider health insurance for the teachers, as their salaries are so low to pay for treatment expenses; she concluded,

If I had health insurance, I would have not faced all these problems, and I might not leave the teaching profession. Health is one of the greatest gifts of God and losing it just because of not having money is really difficult. (Personal Interview with Maleha, November 10, 2012)

The findings also clearly denote that not only the low salary but also late payment of salary, lack of basic health insurance and other incentives including overtime payment, lunch or transportation allowance etc. can collectively influence teachers’ decision to stay or leave. These results also signify that most of the teachers will continue in their profession even with low salary if they have health insurance, appropriate workload, and/or at least receive a timely salary. A good example of this type provision is the health services for employees of the Ministries of Interior, Defense, and/or Public Health.

Another interviewee, Habiba says,

I do not recall of a single time receiving my salary on time. Often I get my salary after two or even sometimes three months. There is no other benefit for teachers. For example, we do not have health insurance. I have four kids if any of them get sick; it will cost me, one month salary to pay for doctor fee and medicine bill even for a simple illness. (Personal Interview with Habiba, November 22, 2012)

In fact, financially, teachers are amongst the lowest paid people in the society. Only around 6 percent of the national budget is allocated to the education sector (IARCSC, 2011). Teacher salary in Afghanistan has gradually increased to a current range “between \$100 (for a grade 12

teacher with no experience) to \$150 per month (for a teacher with a Bachelor or Master’s degree and up to 40 years’ experience)” which includes meal allowance, transportation, and recent pay-raise (IARCSC, 2011, p. 18). Thus far, such salary is not attractive compared to other forms of employment as well as the recent increases in cost of living in Afghanistan.

Lack of Professional Development Programs

In addition to the financial dilemma, the lack of effective and continuous teacher-training programs, especially for the beginning teachers, is another key reason for high teacher attrition. As depicted in the Figure 12, 56% of Former Teachers found themselves unprepared for the reality of the classroom, which influenced them to leave their profession.

Former Teachers – *Was the lack of professional development and/or difficulties in teaching a factor that you will leave your job?* (n= 18)

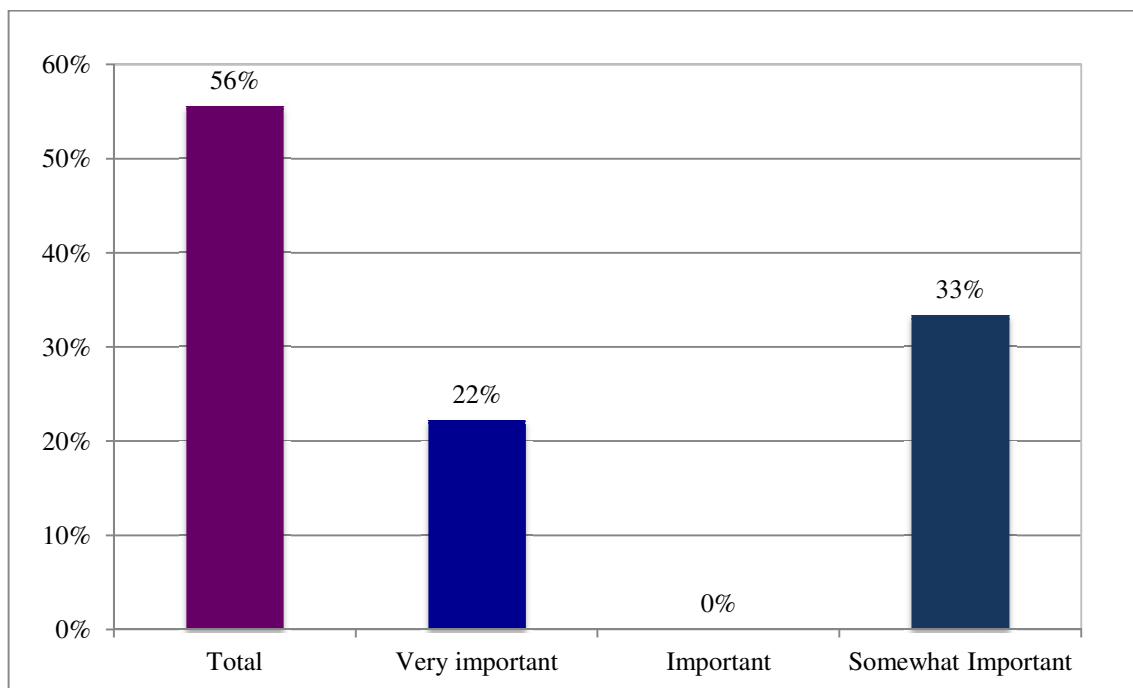


Figure 12: Percentages showing lack of professional development programs as a reason for Former Teachers to leave the profession.

Moreover, the result in Figure 13 reveals that 57% of 44 Current Teachers who responded to survey questionnaire, considered the lack of professional development programs and difficulties with teaching, as one of the main reasons for their potential departure from the teaching profession. 36% of these teachers consider such a deficiency as a *very important* reason, followed by 7% *important* and 11% *somehow important*.

Current Teachers – *Is the lack of professional development and/or difficulties in teaching a factor that you will leave your job?* (n= 44)

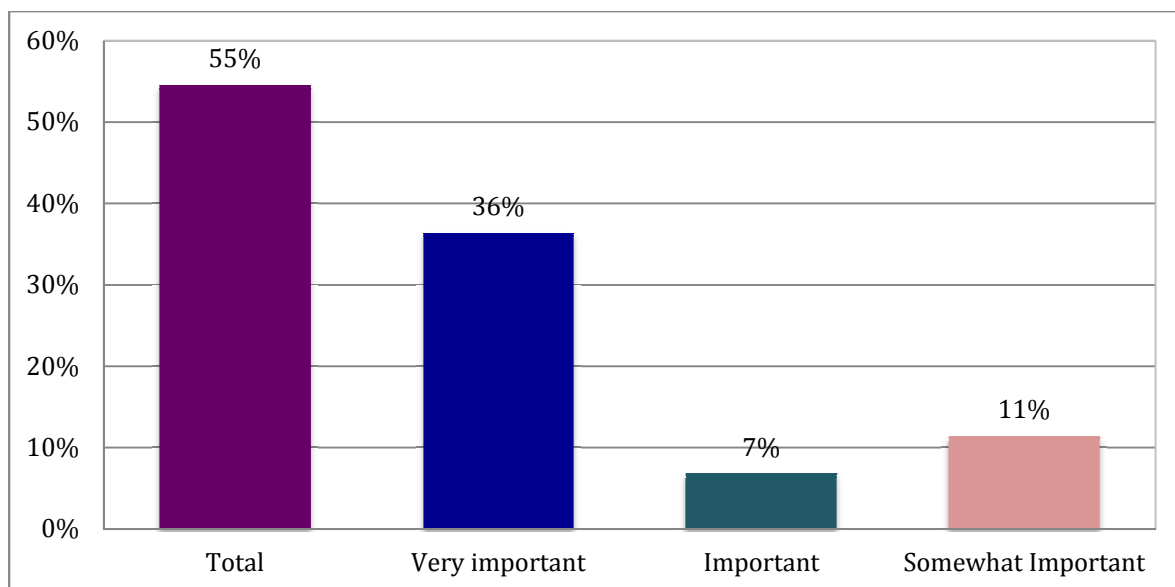


Figure 13: Percentages showing lack of professional development as a potential reason for Current Teachers to leave the profession.

Another common reason that was underscored by many respondents is the induction of novice teachers immediately into the complexities of a job that demands many classroom management decisions and administration activities every day, leading teachers to abandon their teaching career. According to Liu, (2007) first-year teachers tend to have a higher risk of quitting teaching than other teachers (p.2).

Undoubtedly, teachers' education and preparedness before entering the profession matters a lot; novices who are satisfied with their pre service teacher education, stay in teaching more than one who is not prepared for the real classroom teaching. A novice teacher, who receives pre-service education irrelevant to the realities of the real classroom context, faces multiple challenges. Ongoing professional development in schools plays an important role in keeping novice teachers in the profession for longer (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The data of the survey questionnaire also illustrates that 55% of teachers recommend '*professional development programs*' as a solution to teacher attrition.

Table 3: Percent of study participants who recommended profession development training as a solution for addressing teacher attrition.

Recommendations	Frequency	Percentage
Provide Profession Development training programs in order for teachers to be competent in classroom environment, particularly for novice teachers.	22	35%
Pay attention to each individual teacher's problems, especially in teaching.	3	5%
Identify teachers' professional development needs and provide the required training, especially for novice teachers.	9	15%
Total	34	55%

The above recommendations signify that most of the teachers across the schools in Kabul city are untrained. Despite the fact, 70% of the of school teachers in the country lacks the minimum required qualification of grade-14 and are in need of professional development (Education Summary Report, 2009, p. 27). To date, the Teacher Training (TT) programs have been either insignificant compared to the immense need or were unseen in many schools.

On the other hand, professional teachers who completed their 2 or 4 years degree in the teaching profession are reluctant to join or carry on in the unattractive profession of teaching

where they are not getting professional development training to cope with teaching problems in the classroom environment.

Comments of respondents - one of current teachers commented in the survey questionnaire,

...to be honest, I found some of my students more knowledgeable than myself on various issues. For example, some of my students know how to use the computer and have access to Internet. They are usually coming to class with new ideas and update information while the majority of the teachers including myself have neither access to such facilities inside school nor can afford to learn or use it outside the school environment.

(Respondent # 11)

Social Factors Influencing Teacher Attrition

Gender Issues

Marital status is related more strongly to attrition than any other variable for females in Afghanistan. Although, there is no exact data about the attrition rate, especially due to marriage in Afghanistan, generally speaking, the majority of newly female teachers stop working after getting married. In total, 60% female and 40% male teachers took part in this study.

Interestingly, the female teachers are still the majority in public schools in Kabul city. According to MoE recent data, the female teachers constitute “74.3% teaching workforce in Kabul city.”

(MoE, 2011, p. 53)

Figure 14, shows that nearly half (44%) of the Former Female Teachers considered family problems – including restriction by their in laws, child bearing, and child rearing – among the compelling causes for their leaving. 22% the respondents considered family problems as *very important* factors, followed by 11% *important* and 11% *somehow important*.

Former Teachers – *Were the family problems and/or restriction the factors to leave the teaching profession? (n = 18)*

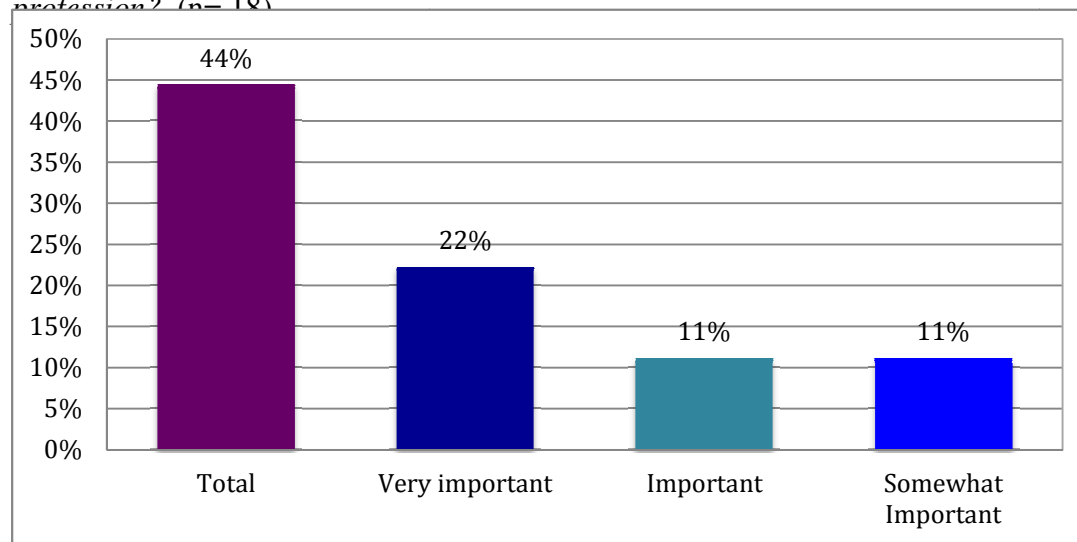


Figure 14: Percentages showing family problems (staying home after marriage due to family restriction and/or for child bearing or child rearing) as reason for Former Female Teachers to leave the profession.

The above findings demonstrate that nearly half of female teachers left the teaching profession after getting married. They stay home being in charge of everyday household-tasks and subsequently need time for child bearing or child rearing. Although the preference of the spouse for leaving or staying in this profession is a push factor to leave, the decision of staying in this profession highly depends on other factors like existing family condition and change in family status.

The findings in Figure 15 from the Current Teachers also indicate that 16% of respondents considered family problems as *very important factors* for their probable leaving, followed by 3% important.

Current Teachers – *Would the family problems and/or restriction the factors that you left the teaching profession?* (n= 32)

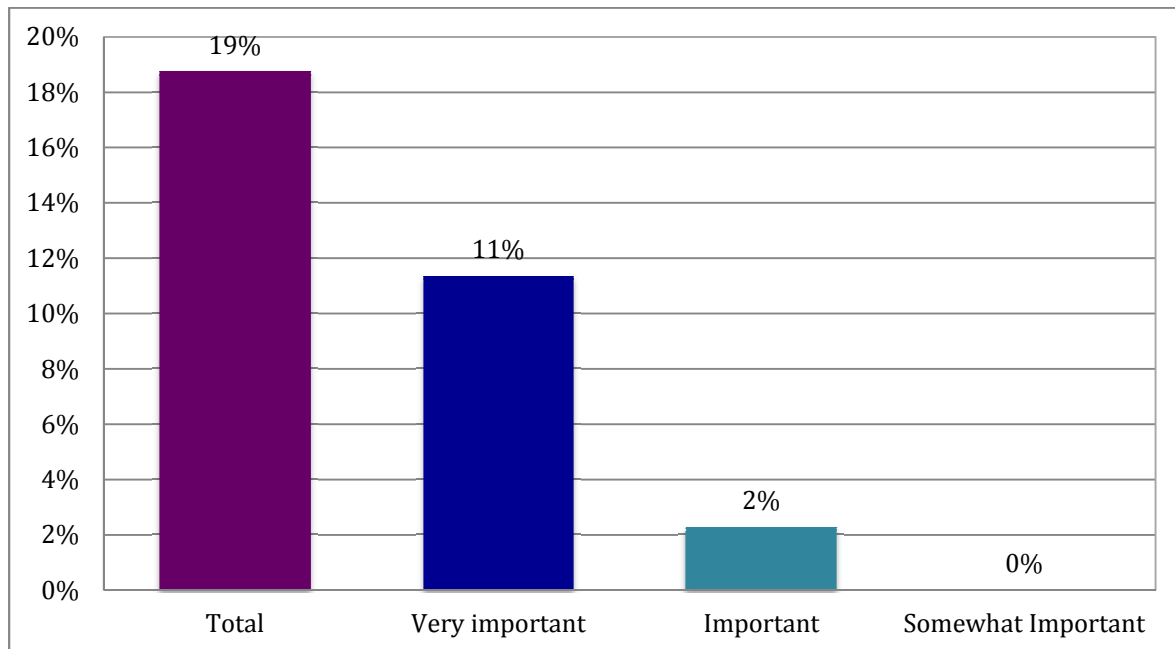


Figure 15: Percentages showing family problems (staying home after marriage due to family restriction and/or bearing or rearing a child) as a potential factor for of Current Teachers to leave the profession.

These findings can be somewhat surprising, because in the other countries especially in the West, it is expected that married women are both supposed to work to provide supplementary income.

Comments of respondents [current teacher]

One of the respondents said,

Even my husband prefers that I should continue teaching, but his family wants me to stay home and take care of my children and do the house work.(Respondent #35)

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Another current teacher stated,

My husband family encourages me to stay in my profession, but I feel it is too much for me to take care of my children, do the housework, and also continue to do my teaching profession. Also, there is no kindergarten in the school, to take care of my younger kids when I teach. (Respondent # 25)

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Teacher Social Status and Recognition

The climate of disrespect for teachers gets worse in Afghanistan. They do not have the required support from the government, schools, MoE, people, and especially from the students' parents. They are also accused of not educating the kids appropriately. Disrespect by school principals, students and parents are other discriminating factors, particularly, for teachers who are not involved in corrupt practices.

As illustrated in Figure 16, 17% of the respondents, the Former Teachers, indicated that disrespect by students and/or their parents were among the factors that compelled them to leave their profession. 6% of the respondents considered such disrespect as a *very important reason*, followed by 6% *important* and other 6% *somewhat important*.

Former Teachers – Was disrespect by students and their parents the factor you left your job?
(n = 18)

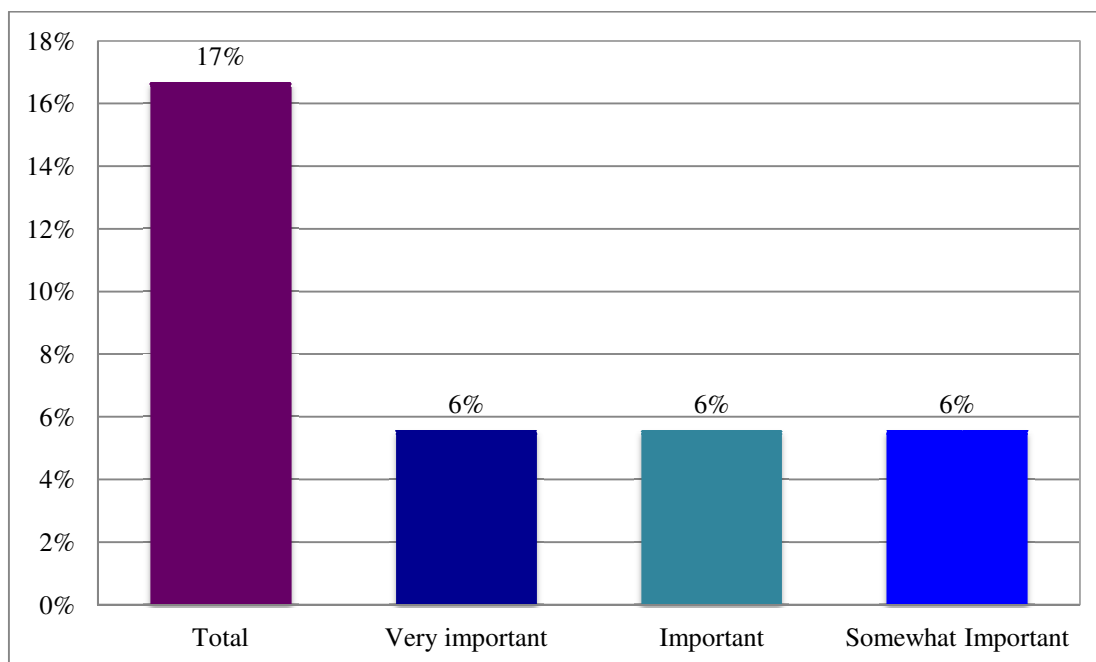


Figure 16: Percentages showing “*disrespect of students and their parents*” as a reason for Former Teachers to leave the profession.

The result from Current Teacher, showed in Figure 17, also indicates that 43% of respondents complain about such attitude, with 18% being as a *very important and/or important* factor. This issue made teaching nearly impossible.

Current Teachers – *Is disrespect by students and their parents a factor that would influence you leaving your job?*

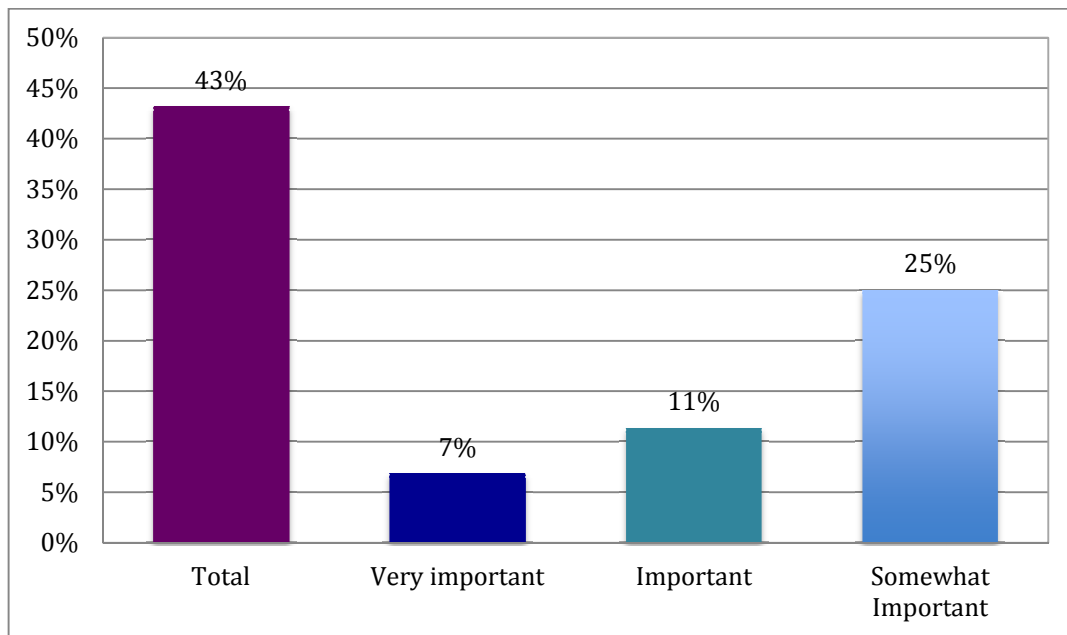


Figure 17: Percentages showing “*disrespect of students and their parents*” as a potential reason for Current Teachers to leave the profession.

Comments of respondents

One of the current teachers commented that

School students have too many issues, one of the worst is that student threaten us for their good grades in school and outside of school thus he prefers working in other governmental organization. (Respondent #12)

Another current teacher, who responded to survey questionnaire, pointed out,

Some students threaten the teachers for not considering them absent when they are away from the school or ask for better grades with poor performance. The teachers try to contact their parents to resolve the problems however, in many cases, it aggravates the situation, especially when the student parents, instead to help with the school, are backing their kids. Due to the fact, some of these students are lending a hand with their family economy; thus they have their family support. School administration does not deal with such behavior, so they remain the teacher’s problem, and when parents are called in

for a meeting, again, the supervisors or principals blame the teachers for not being able to handle the problems, so it continues to be the teacher's problem. (Respondent # 8)

In addition, economically, teachers are considered as the lowest group in the society. A current teacher noted, *"Being a teacher means being poor."* (Respondent # 4)

People in the society consider teachers as the poorest people of the society and their rights are being jeopardized by such a consideration. It is very substantial in respect to male teachers, as the teacher profession is mostly known as a female job, especially in primary and secondary schools (Nieto, 2003; McClelland & Varma, 1996; Johnson, 1990).

Another current teacher shared that *"considering such recognition by the society, high-stakes working conditions, we are fortunate to have so many passionate and committed teachers still in the profession."* (Respondent # 22)

According to Folajimi (2009) teaching social and culture functions have never been critically challenged, but the public has not adequately supported teaching. Consequently, a variety of problems – such as low salary, lack of housing, heavy workload and lack of appreciation by the society –compel teachers to think about leaving the profession.

Teacher Safety

Security is another great concern, particularly for the female teachers. Schools have become a prime target for the Taliban. According to Asif Nang, the spokesman for Afghanistan's Ministry of Education, currently, "467 schools are closed as a result of security concerns, with an estimated 300,000 students deprived of school access while around 200 schools were destroyed" (McCanna, 2009, p. 1).

Though, I did not include any questions about security issues as factors to teacher attrition, assuming security will not be a problem in Kabul city, 9% of Current and 6% of Former

Teachers added the ‘*lack of security and safety*’ to their responses. In addition, Table 4 shows the number of teachers who suggested following two recommendations as solutions to teacher attrition: assurance of teachers’ security and safety, and provision of a safe and proper learning environment.

Table 4: Percent of study participants who recommended ensuring teacher security or safety for decreasing teacher attrition

Recommendations	Frequency	Percentage
Security institutions should ensure teachers safety and secure the school. Teachers do not feel secure as insurgents on day-to-day basis attack the schools.	13	21%
Provide an appropriate and safe teaching and learning environment (classrooms, lab, play ground, equipment, computer, Internet, teaching materials etc.), as the current school environment is not attractive to many teachers.	16	26%
Total	29	47%

The above findings and the recommendations signify that teacher security and a safe learning environment are of great importance in order to keep teachers in the profession. Providing these two necessities will be also pivotal to increase the confidence level of their families to allow them to continue their jobs, especially the female teachers.

Comments of respondents

A current teacher commented

Terrorists will stop at nothing to keep Afghans from receiving education, every day, we hear our hidden enemies poison water for our students and teachers or thrown acid at their faces. (Respondent # 16)

The Asian Foundation report (2011) reveals that “parents in insecure areas to send their daughters to school for fear of reprisals such as school burnings and acid attacks on girls (p.2).” Thus, lack of an appropriate and a secure learning environment is another hurdle for the teachers.

They feel unsafe while teaching in an open area, under tents, in schools without surrounding walls and absence or lack of security measures. According to Buckley, Schneider, and Yi, “teaching takes place in a specific physical location (a school building) and the quality of that location can affect the ability of teachers to teach, teacher morale, and the very health and safety of teachers” (2004, p. 3).

Views of Participants about the Factors That Influence Their Fellow Teachers to Leave the Profession

In order to get unbiased data and also summarize some of the major factors for teacher attrition, I asked both the Current and the Former Teachers if during their tenure, they have known fellow teachers who left the teaching profession, as well as the reasons for their departure. I found that asking about their colleagues was a very effective approach to find out the actual reasons for departure as compared to asking the teachers themselves to respond to the same question.

68% of the Current and 61% of the Former Teachers stated that they have known fellow teachers who left their teaching professions. I included a list of 12 possible key factors from which they could choose, and also provided additional space for them to list any other factors that caused attrition of their fellow teachers.

The Former Teachers shared the reasons for their fellow teachers to leave the profession, with a response rate of 18% for low salary and deployment to remote school, 11% for long distance with the city followed by 11% disrespect by the school principal, 9% lack of professional development both for novice and experienced teachers students and their parents, 9% personal or family problems, 9% heavy workload, 7% unequal distribution of work by the principal and/or his/her dual behavior with the teachers, and 11% late reimbursement of salaries,

as showed in Figure 18.

Former Teachers – *What were the main factors causing your colleagues to leave the teaching profession?* (n=18)

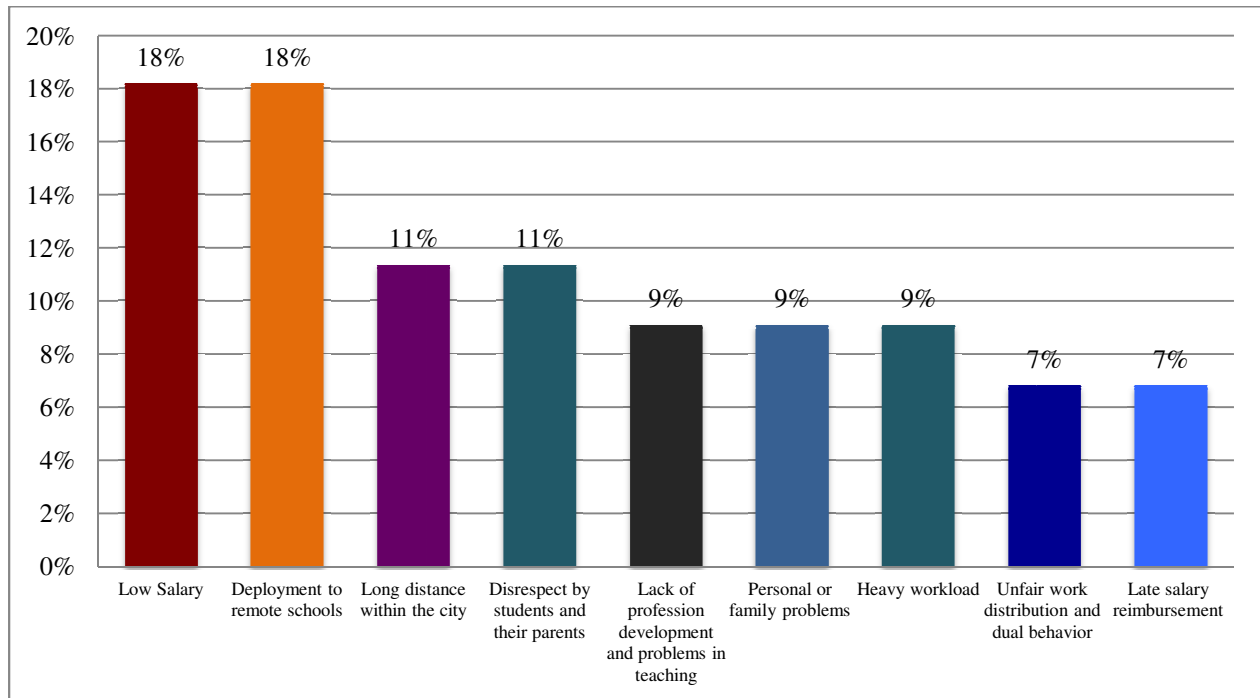


Figure 18: Percentages showing factors that Former Teachers rated as reasons for their fellow teachers to leave the profession

I also included the same question in the Current Teacher questionnaire. The results signify that the findings both from the Current and Former Teachers are alike in many cases.

The findings from the Current Teachers, as showed in Figure 19, indicate the following factors with a response rate of 16% for both low salary and deployment to remote schools followed by 14% personal or family problems (change in marital status, child bearing and rearing), 12% long school distance within Kabul city, 11% late reimbursement of salaries, 9% heavy workload, 7% lack of professional development for the novice and experienced teachers, 7% unequal distribution of work by the principal and/or his/her dual behavior with the teachers, and 5% disrespect by the school principal, students and their parents, 1% on security, and 1% on

continuing to their higher education.

Current Teachers – *What were the main factors causing your colleagues to leave the teaching profession?* (n= 44)

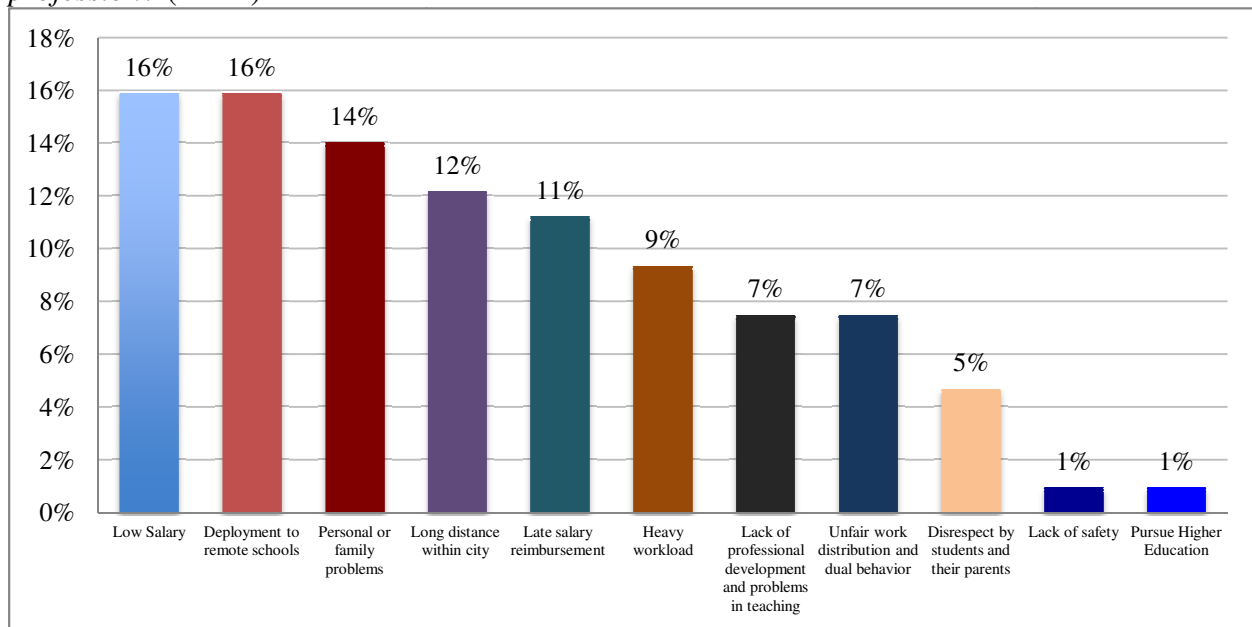


Figure 19: Percentages showing factors that Current Teachers rated as reasons for their fellow teachers to leave the profession

Alternative Careers to Teaching Profession

In order to learn about some major possible alternative careers for teachers who leave their profession, I asked all the participants (Current and Former Teachers) to indicate all of the possible alternatives in survey questionnaires using 4 Point-Likert scales (mostly, sometime, rarely and never) for each response. The findings in the Figure 20 show that the teachers depart to various other professions in the public and private sectors and/or leave the profession and stays at home (in case of female teachers).

Current & Former Teachers – What are the alternative jobs to the teaching profession? (n= 62)

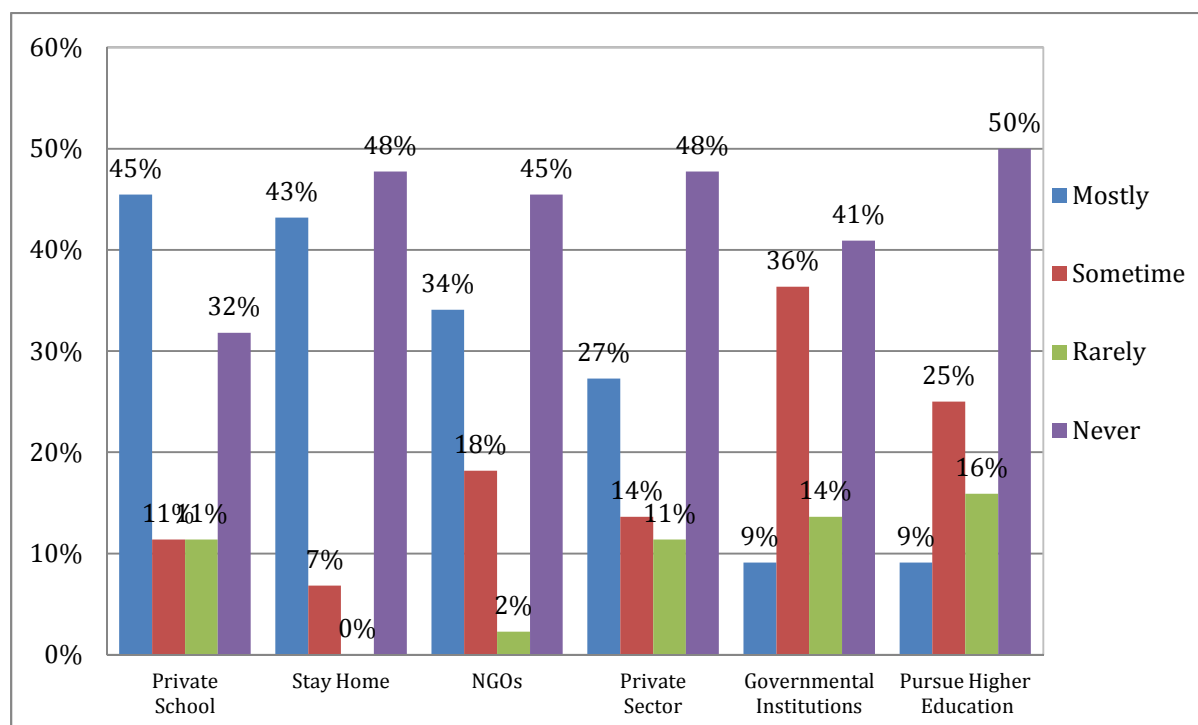


Figure 20: Percentages showing the major alternative careers for teachers who left or are prone to leave the teaching profession.

As shown in the above graph, the highest response rate of 45% indicates that *most* teachers leave or are prone to leave to the private schools while other 30% of respondents said they never leave to private schools permanently because the benefits in the private schools are not better compared to public schools – i.e. Private schools do not provide pension benefit to their teachers. These results validate the previous discussion about the double-registration of teachers – i.e. Teachers are employed both by public and private schools simultaneously. Hence, such teachers spent most of teaching time in private schools and/or other private Learning Centers to make supplementary income to their government salary.

The second highest response rate of 43% showed that *most* female teachers leave their jobs to stay home. The third highest response rate shows NGOs as an alternative career. The results in Figure 20 show that 34% of the teachers *mostly* leave to Non Governmental

Organizations; followed by 18% sometimes, and 2% rarely. In fact, since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, thousands of NGOs are operating in Afghanistan, which mostly attract school teachers for implementing their development projects, mainly out of the education sector. In addition, the lack of commitment by the Afghan Government to improve the living condition of teachers also pushes the teachers to join NGOs for comparatively improved benefit packages. One of the Current Teachers said, *“I have been teaching for 25 years. I did not notice any positive change in my life but instead it is getting worse. I am tired of this situation and am seriously thinking to leave this job”* (Respondent #43).

As mentioned before, the monthly salary for Afghan civil servants, including the teachers, ranges between 100 to 150 USD while the salary for a driver in the NGOs is between 500-1000 USD. This huge difference in remuneration results in a brain drain from the government institutions, especially from the public schools.

The other alternative career for teachers is working in the private sector. The findings suggest 27% of the respondents stated that most frequently the teachers depart to the private sector followed by 14% *sometimes*. Similarly, to the expansion of Aid Organizations (NGOs), the economy in the country has also significantly improved over the past decade with “declining inflation, a stable exchange rate and increasing domestic revenues.” (NED, 2010, p. 5) Consequently, a large number of the teachers departed either to start their own small business or joined the private sector firms mainly construction, telecommunication, logistical and others private companies and corporations.

Other 9% of the respondents mentioned that teachers *mostly* leave to governmental organizations followed by 36% *sometimes*. As we discussed it earlier, teachers prefer to work in governmental organizations even with the same benefits they receive from teaching but in a

better working environment, with an appropriate workload and on-time remuneration. One of the key reasons for the lower response rate for leaving to governmental institutions can be the recent presidential decree advising all the governmental institutions, especially the Afghanistan Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission that avoid hiring teachers from the public schools. Based on the above findings about administration corruption, I doubt the decree would help to decrease teacher attrition but will be another opening to the administration corruption.

Subsequently, 9% of the responses indicate that teachers leave to pursue their higher education and rarely return to the teaching profession, especially the teachers who are completing their graduate degree. People with higher degrees usually find better jobs than rejoining their schools. Their attrition rate is higher for teachers who have completed their higher education in Teacher Training Faculties and Colleges. However, they stay in the profession at least by the completion of their studies

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on data analysis and theoretical framework, the study affirms the literature about various factors that influence teachers, personally or professionally (McClelland and Varma, 1996; Borman & Dowling, 2008; Eson, 2010; Feng, 2005; Folajimi, 2009; Herzberg, 1959; Maslow, 1954) and concludes that teacher attrition in Afghanistan is highly correlated with the fulfillment of teachers' personal and professional needs.

The study determines that there are various factors behind teacher attrition in Afghanistan. It is confirmed that low salary is not the only but one of the major factors for teacher attrition. The results uncover that over 70% of the teachers leave their jobs due to non-monetary factors such as deployment to remote schools (within and outside of their provinces), lack of transparent and effective transfer processes, school distance, lack of transportation, incompetency in the classroom environment due to lack of professional development programs, lack of health insurance, safety, access, cost-effectiveness and disrespect of some students and their parents are the key reasons to leave the profession. It is concluded that marital status, bearing and rearing child, family restriction or lack of families' confidence and safety are vital factors for female teachers to leave the profession and stay at home whereas male teachers leave the profession mostly because of lower salary and lower social status and recognition.

The education system lacks mechanisms for evaluating and rewarding teachers for their quality performance and achievements. The professional development opportunities provided by the MOE are ad-hoc, short-term, lack follow-ups and are not responsive to individual teacher's day-to-day classroom needs. Majority of teachers, particularly those in rural and semi-urban areas lack the minimum qualification required by the education system. The school and local

level education structures lack professional support systems for, particularly under-qualified, teachers to improve their skills.

The study also highlights a very interesting and less cited phenomenon of ghost teachers and its association with teacher attrition. It is concluded that some teachers, who have connections with school principals and other officials in the MoE, work in different positions in different organizations and receive multiple salaries simultaneously. The phenomenon of ghost teachers consequently increases their absenteeism in the school.

From a structural perspective, the education system, although being strongly centralized, lacks effective control supervision mechanisms over teachers' daily attendance at the school level. This issue encourages corruption within the school, as well as local and central education offices. While teacher recruitment, transfer and discharge require approval of the central education office (i.e. district, provincial or national education authorities), school administrators use it as leverage assigning ghost teachers on payrolls. Such practices not only demotivate and discourage the teachers who teach in schools every day, but also increase the workload. Consequently, heavy workload, unequal work distribution, and administration corruption force them to either switch or leave teaching profession.

The findings also indicated that Parent Teacher Committees do not function in most of the schools. Thus, there's a lack of communication between school teachers and students' parents – or as a whole, local community. Meanwhile, the research respondents expressed their concerns regarding the threats schools continuously receive from active Taliban factions.

In sum, I believe it is very hard to fulfill the higher order needs of self-esteem and self-actualization in the context of the teaching profession in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, administrators, policy makers, and school head teachers should facilitate teachers' lower order or

basic needs (physiological, safety and social) to avoid the high teacher attrition rate in the country.

Recommendations

This study findings reveal that the factors for teacher attrition cannot be addressed only by Ministry of Education or schools but require collective efforts by all stakeholders including the MoE, various line ministries, national and international organizations working in the education sector, donors community, private sector, media and especially the Afghan people (including elders, influential, experts, religious scholars and general public). The stakeholders, in fragile context like Afghanistan, need to coordinate their efforts to retain teachers through ensuring their safety and wellbeing; and create a respectful, friendly and corruption free learning environment.

In addition, the education system needs to be accountable to communities as well as responsive to the learning needs of their children. Sustaining teachers, assuring their ongoing professional development, considering their socio-economic needs and deploying them to possible near the school, and assigning them fair amount of work are some of the pivotal issues for addressing teacher attrition.

I have presented the recommendations in two separate sub sections. In the first part, I suggest some recommendations on the basis of study findings and review of some of the related literature. The second section summarizes the recommendations of study sample (both Current and Former teachers) in response to the survey questions.

Section I

This section is comprised of four major recommendations. The first is policy reform in the MOE with respect to increase in the salary scale of teachers, provision of health insurance, and safety measures, better retirement benefits and teacher recruitment and deployment. Second, it is suggested to reframe the school and local level education organizational structure to provide quality and consistent monitoring, evaluation and supervision over teacher performance inside schools. Third, it is highly recommended providing teachers with ongoing professional development opportunities that are responsive to individual teachers' needs. Fourth, stakeholder involvement is a vital factor that supports teacher retention. I recommend schools to ensure parents and community involvement in school development and teacher support initiatives.

i) Policy Reform

Ministry of Education should engage in regular and constructive dialog about policy reforms with its partners. Education sector is with highest number of civil servants in the country compared to the other sectors. MoE should establish an "Independent Teacher Commission" within its structure to advocate for and manage all teacher support related activities. One of the main responsibilities of the commission should be to work together with teachers' unions and civil society at national, regional and international levels to increase funding for the education sector both from domestic resources (Ministry of Education) as well as from the international donors for an increased and long-term support for both raise in teacher salaries and increase in number of teachers' recruitment and training costs.

The commission should also coordinate its efforts with all stakeholders including, the teachers, civil societies, and government and donor communities to review and reform a salary-scale policy for the teachers, at least, to suffice their basic needs. The salary levels should be

decided nationally through a properly organized collective bargaining process with teachers' unions, using comparisons with other similar professions in the country and considering the cost of living. The commission should also work to include some supplementary benefits in the salary policy for teachers who are assigned to teach in the remote areas while, of course, having access to fewer facilities compared to the schools in the cities. In order to keep the teachers motivated, education policy makers and/or the MoE leadership should also ensure that schools include more promotional levels to allow teachers to raise the pay scale and reward them for good performance.

Ministry of Education, as an employer, should work together with the Ministry of Public Health to figure out providing some sort of health coverage for the schoolteachers. Offering even a basic health package will be the most appealing employment benefit due to the high cost of health care to the teachers and will contribute to higher retention rates.

MoE with assistance from Ministry of Finance (MoF) needs to introduce an effective model for timely teacher reimbursement. The M-Paisa Service can be a good example of such models. M-Paisa is the first mobile money transfer product introduced by Roshan Private Communication Company in Afghanistan in 2008. M-Paisa provides an essential service to the unbanked especially in remote schools where the ability to send funds securely and conduct basic financial transactions is low. The transfer of funds in M-Paisa is through Short Message Service (SMS) using a mobile phone and an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system –The IVR based menu is available to customers in Dari, Pashto and English. Currently, M-Paisa is working in 230 cities and towns in 34 provinces. (Roshan website, 2011, M-Paisa tab)

MoE also needs to review its Human Resources Policy to decentralize to the school or at least District Education Department (DED) level. Based this reform, the DEDs should advertise

and recruit teachers locally, which will result in a relatively even teacher distribution. In the far remote areas, recruiting of even the inexperienced teachers locally and then provide them in-service training can be more effective compare to deploying experienced teachers from other provinces and/or from the capital city, as they will quit the profession as soon as other employment opportunities present themselves. However, deployment of female teachers to remote areas is absolutely not feasible.

Other key policy reform area is streamlining the ‘teacher transfer process’. The primary focus of the reform should be a simplification of the teacher transfer process from one location to another or between schools in the same location. This reform will help to post teachers in the nearest possible schools and minimize the separation of husbands, wives, and children for unreasonable periods of time. This modification will also help to retain a large number of female teachers who leave their job due to this factor.

To summarize, a variety of teacher recruitment strategies needs to be employed at various points in the education pipeline. Some of these strategies are the followings:

- Simplify or streamline recruitment and transfer processes that teachers do not discourage from joining the teaching profession.
- Decentralize recruitment process at least to district level to enable them recruit locally and deploy the teacher to the near schools to their home locations – as generally transportation is not provided to them.
- Provide additional compensation and recognition to the teachers in difficult postings – e.g. Kabul is a big city and without transportation going from one part of the city to another is difficult for the teachers, especially for females.

ii) Organizational restructuring

The MoE need to improve its monitoring, supervision, and evaluation system. This improvement includes gathering and populating all information about the teachers in all public schools. The information, then, need to be coordinated with the Independence Administration Reform and Civil Services Commission Human Resources database to make sure the teacher not double registered by any other governmental institution in the country. As a licensing agency, the MoE, should also have close supervision from the private school for quality assurance as well as to hinder the recruitment of public school teacher by these schools.

Furthermore, MoE needs to increase its supervision of the public schools to make sure all teachers are on duty. Supervision visits need to be conducted on a timely basis to avoid any misconduct by school management. Misconduct to be avoided includes teacher absenteeism, ghost teachers, assigning unequal work to some teachers, and double registration.

iii) Teacher Support

Continued professional development programs will be more effective alongside the promotion system to ensure development opportunities are provided for future education leaders and managers. Teacher training capacity – both pre- and in-service – needs to be increased in the country. MoE should work with Afghan government, education partners, and donors to ensure teachers are provided with an adequate length and quality of training, which can enable them to deliver quality education. “If we want to retain new teachers, we must introduce them to the profession humanely, in ways that engender self-esteem, competence, collegiality, and professional stature” (Croasmun, J. et al., 1997). Thus, long-term donors’ commitment needs to be obtained for assisting MoE for designing and implementing teacher training programs.

Pre-service and in-service teacher training colleges and teacher education institutions should also coordinate their training and continue professional development programs so that newly qualified teachers and already employed teachers are able to benefit from knowledge of new methodologies and content and government should be able to deliver the same quality of education across the country. The introduction of such professional development programs for beginning teachers should be a high priority while other experienced teachers and school administrators also need to be equipped with related knowledge and skills to act as effective tutors to the new teachers and efficient administrator of teacher management respectively.

At the very least, ministries of education should engage in regular and constructive dialogue about education evaluation and reforms with teachers' union representatives, civil society, education partners, and donors – to develop a holistic position about providing professional development, quality education issues and practices – which will noticeably help in decreasing the attrition rate caused by lack of teaching skills and knowledge.

iv) Stakeholder involvement

Teacher attrition is a multi-factor phenomenon; thus it requires collective action by all stakeholders. Creating a safe and secure learning environment is one of the factors for teacher retention. Hence, MoE should create a partnership to mobilize resources for providing a good teaching and learning environment (classroom, office space, equipment, teaching materials). The local government should also be very instrumental to gain the support of local resources to address the critical needs of their school.

The establishment of functional Parent Teacher Committee (PTC) is another effective approach to mitigate tension between the students and teachers and sometime between teachers and parents. The committee will work both on academic issues as well as student personal issues. The schools should also develop a mechanism to protect teacher from direct confrontation with the students and their families. As the findings reveals, many teachers considered abusive behavior as one of the main factor for departing their profession.

A general awareness program is another effective mechanism to mobilize efforts for addressing teacher attrition. These programs can be implemented through various outlets including TVs, radios, newspapers, and/or mosques. Such programs have been proved as an effective way of communicating community problem to the government, aid organizations and to the society. These programs significantly contribute in addressing education sector problem including the factors for teacher attrition. A good example of such awareness program is Twaweza project in East Africa. The project focuses on citizen engagement to inform their problems, limitations, and resources (Twaweza, n.d). The project helps to give voice and agency to the people and also held the government accountable.

I believe that community participation and mobilization play a critical role in teachers' performance, their safety, addressing their locally related concerns, and, most importantly, teacher motivation.

Section II

In the survey questionnaire, I asked both the Current and the Former teachers to propose their recommendation for Ministry of Education, Schools, Parents, and other relevant organizations and other stakeholders in order to address teacher attrition. The following table

shows the summary of recommendation provided by 50 out of 62 respondents.

Table 5: Summary of recommendation provided by the participants in survey questionnaires

Recommendations			
	Current Teachers	Former Teachers	Total
Ministry of Education			
Increase teacher pay and ensure timely remuneration	14	10	24
Provide Professional Development training to prepare teacher for classroom environment, especially for the novice teachers.	13	9	22
Provide at least basic health insurance to the teachers	4	5	9
Provide housing (shelter) for the teachers, as most of the teachers spend a big portion of their salaries for paying house rent.	3	4	7
Deploy teachers to a possible near schools to their home location due to lack of transportation facilities	5	2	7
Assign teacher appropriate workload	2	2	4
Deploy teachers based on schools' needs to avoid deploying teachers with similar subject of study to one school as it creates problem to other teachers who are few in their subjects	3	1	4
Create a database to record the instances and factors for teacher attrition	-	1	1
Protect teachers from abusive acts by some students and their families		1	1
Standardized and limit the number of students in the classrooms	3	1	4
Create a system to enable teachers share their concerns and problems directly with the ministry officials	1	1	2
Provide scholarships and exchange programs for teachers for building their capacity	3	-	3
School			
Ensure fair distribution of responsibilities regardless of any preferences and favoritism to create a professional and friendly school environment	14	8	22
Pay attention to each individual teacher problems especially in teaching	3	-	3
Avoid imposing administration work on teachers	-	1	4

Identify and provide teachers professional development opportunities (especially to the novice teachers)	3	6	9
Assign teachers to teach the subjects that are related to their subject of study and/or qualification	8	2	10
Maintain contact with the parents to discuss the students problems with them on a regular basis	2	1	3
Provide more incentive and praise the experienced teachers for their extra contribution to the school and learning process.	8	5	11
Parents			
Pay attention to their children education and be aware of their daily actions. In many cases, teacher left their profession or at least demotivated due to the students and their parents' improper behavior	22	6	28
Remain in contact with the school about their children attendance, behavior, and performances – their behavior both with their teachers and their classmates	17	5	22
Cooperate with school for improving their children learning and better education	2	2	4
Avoid threatening or imposing on teachers to give better grades to their children (parents should respect the teachers and their decision)	4	4	8
Other organizations			
Security institutions should ensure the teachers safety and secure the schools. Teachers do not feel secure as insurgents attack the schools on the day-to-day basis.	8	5	13
Provide good teaching and learning environment (classrooms, lab, play ground, equipment, computer, Internet, teaching materials etc.) – even in the capital in many schools teacher are teaching in open area, under tents and/or at least lacking the basic necessities for school.	11	5	16
Create trustee fund for improving teachers living condition on a national level	-	1	1
Increase awareness programs about importance of education and respecting teachers through religious scholars, media and community elders.	6	1	7
Taliban should stop killing teachers and destroying schools – they are part of this society and should help to educate our children for a peaceful and prosperous society.	1	-	1
Local governments should create a system to garner support from various local organizations in order to address the critical needs of	2	-	2

education system			
Other comments			
Ministry of Education should increase MoE annual budget	2	-	2

As discussed in the above section, the major implications for addressing the problems identified by the research findings include policy reform, structural reframing (i.e. School level and the MOE), financial (cost of provision of support and resources), and administrative and stakeholders' involvement. It is also noted that, since I did this research in Kabul focusing on small-scale sample, more research is needed, especially in semi-urban and rural areas, to explore causes of teacher attrition and challenges which it presents.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Questionnaire Current Teachers

Data Collection Questionnaire Current Teachers in Public Schools

Full Name [optional]:		Gender:	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>
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School Name:		Location (district):	
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Ethnic Group:	Pashton <input type="checkbox"/>	Tajik <input type="checkbox"/>	Hazara <input type="checkbox"/>	Uzbek <input type="checkbox"/>
	Turkmen <input type="checkbox"/>	Aimak <input type="checkbox"/>	Baloch <input type="checkbox"/>	Pashai <input type="checkbox"/>
	Gujjar <input type="checkbox"/>	Arab <input type="checkbox"/>	Brahui <input type="checkbox"/>	Other_____

Age:				
Marital Status	Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/>			
Academic Degree:	Baccalaureate <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> Master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/>			
Major:	Baccalaureate	Bachelor	Master	PhD
Employment Date Or Years of Service as a teacher:	____/____/____ (DD/MM/YYYY) Years: _____			

Question 1. What subjects do you teach now?

Subject	Level (grade)	Number of hours per week	Approximate number of students	Is the subject relevant to your subject of study?
a.				
b.				
c.				
d.				
e.				
f.				
g.				

Question 2. Do you want to continue teaching profession? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please specify all the factors from the following list that influence your stay in teaching profession. Please rank each factor from 1 to 5 (1 = most important and 5 = least important factor).

Factors	Please circle your answer for each factor				
a. Adequate salary	1	2	3	4	5
b. Proximity of school to my home location	1	2	3	4	5
c. Me and my spouse work together	1	2	3	4	5
d. I like teaching than other professions	1	2	3	4	5
e. My family prefers me continuing my teaching profession	1	2	3	4	5
f. I don't have economic problems and just want to serve my people through teaching	1	2	3	4	5
g. I can also take care of my family with the teaching profession	1	2	3	4	5
h. I can have a second job with teaching profession (working in other schools, learning centers, etc.) and further help my family economically.	1	2	3	4	5
Please specify any other reasons that you deem necessary, factors that are not listed above.					
i.	1	2	3	4	5
j.	1	2	3	4	5
k.	1	2	3	4	5
l.	1	2	3	4	5

Question 3. What factors would influence you to leave teaching profession? Please rank each factor from 1 to 5 (1 = most important and 5 = least important factor).

Factors	Please circle your answer for each factor				
a. Teachers' salary is very low	1	2	3	4	5
b. Long distance of school from my home location	1	2	3	4	5
c. My family live in another province or deployment to other province(s)	1	2	3	4	5
d. Professional needs – lack of professional development opportunities for teachers	1	2	3	4	5
e. Unequal work distribution or dual behavior of my supervisor or school principal	1	2	3	4	5
f. Heavy workload of teaching	1	2	3	4	5
g. Late payment of salary	1	2	3	4	5
h. Disrespectful behavior of some students and/or their parents	1	2	3	4	5
i. Family problems (including child rearing)	1	2	3	4	5
Please specify any other reasons that you deem necessary, factors that are not listed above.					
j.	1	2	3	4	5
k.	1	2	3	4	5
l.	1	2	3	4	5

Question 4. During your tenure as a teacher, have you witnessed your fellow teachers leaving teaching profession? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, what do you think were the driving factors for them to leave teaching profession? Please mark all those factors apply.

Factors	Please mark all those apply (✓)
a. Teachers' low salary	
b. Problems in teaching due to lack of professional development opportunities for the teachers	
c. Unequal work distribution or dual behavior of their supervisors and/or school principal	
d. Heavy workload of teaching and administration work	
e. Late reimbursement their of salaries	
f. Long distance of school from their home locations	
g. Family problems (child rearing and/or family restriction especially for female teachers)	
h. Deployment of teachers to remote schools in other provinces	
i. Long distance of school from teacher home location within the province and lack of transportation	
Please specify any other reasons that you deem necessary, factors that are not listed above.	
j.	
k.	
l.	

Question 5. In your opinion, what are the alternative jobs to the teaching profession? Please mark (✓) your response in the following listed alternative jobs/work or add other possible careers to the list.

a. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
b. Private Sector (business or private companies)	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
c. Private schools	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
d. Staying home and taking care of children and/or house work (especially for female teachers)	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
e. Pursue higher education	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
Please specify any other alternatives that you know of, other careers that are not listed above.	
f.	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
g.	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
h.	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()

Please provide your specific recommendations to the following entities focusing on teacher retention.

To Ministry of Education: 1. 2 3
To School: 1. 2 3
To the students' parents: 1. 2 3
To other organizations and stakeholders: 1. 2 3
Any other comments and/or Suggestions: 1. 2 3

Date: _____

Thank You

Annex 2. Questionnaire Former Teachers

Data Collection Questionnaire Former Teachers in Public Schools

Full Name [optional]:		Gender:	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
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Your Previous School Name:		Location (district):	
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Ethnic Group:	Pashton <input type="checkbox"/>	Tajik <input type="checkbox"/>	Hazara <input type="checkbox"/>	Uzbek <input type="checkbox"/>
	Turkmen <input type="checkbox"/>	Aimak <input type="checkbox"/>	Baloch <input type="checkbox"/>	Pashai <input type="checkbox"/>
	Gujjar <input type="checkbox"/>	Arab <input type="checkbox"/>	Brahui <input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

Age:				
Marital Status	Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/>			
Academic Degree:	Baccalaureate <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> Master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/>			
Major:	Baccalaureate	Bachelor	Master	PhD
Employment Date Or Years of Service as a teacher:	___/___/___ (dd/mm/yyyy)		When did you leave the teaching profession?	
	Years: _____		Years _____ and Months _____	

Question 1. What subjects did you teach?

Subject	Level (grade)	Number of hours per week	Approximate number of students	Is the subject relevant to your subject of study?
a.				
b.				
c.				
d.				
e.				
f.				
g.				
h.				

Question 3. What factors influenced you to leave teaching profession? Please rank each factor from 1 to 5 (1 = most important and 5 = least important factor).

Factors	Please circle your answer for each factor				
a. Low salary	1	2	3	4	5
b. Long distance of school from my home location	1	2	3	4	5
c. My family lived in another province or deployment to other province(s)	1	2	3	4	5
d. Professional needs – lack of professional development opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
e. Unequal work distribution or dual behavior of my supervisor or school principal	1	2	3	4	5
f. Heavy workload of teaching and administration work	1	2	3	4	5
g. Late payment of salary	1	2	3	4	5
h. Disrespectful behavior of some students and/or their parents	1	2	3	4	5
i. Family problems (including child rearing and family restriction)	1	2	3	4	5
Please specify any other reasons that you deem necessary, factors that are not listed above.					
j.	1	2	3	4	5
k.	1	2	3	4	5
l.	1	2	3	4	5

Question 4. During your tenure as a teacher, have you witnessed your fellow teachers leaving teaching profession? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, what do you think were the driving factors for them to leave teaching profession? Please mark all those factors apply.

Factors	Please mark all those apply (✓)
a. Teachers' low salary	
b. Problems in teaching due to lack of professional development opportunities for the teachers	
c. Unequal work distribution or dual behavior of their supervisors and/or school principal	
d. Heavy workload of teaching and administration work	
e. Late reimbursement their of salaries	
f. Long distance of school from their home locations	
g. Family problems (child rearing and/or family restriction especially for female teachers)	
h. Deployment of teachers to remote schools in other provinces	
i. Long distance of school from teacher home location within the province and lack of transportation	
Please specify any other reasons that you deem necessary, factors that are not listed above.	
j.	
k.	

1.	
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Do you have an employment now? Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please answer the following questions.

Your current job:		Employer:	
Please list three main reasons that you preferred your current job compare to the teaching profession.			
1.			
2.			
3.			

Question 5. In your opinion, what are the alternative jobs to the teaching profession? Please mark (✓) your response in the following listed alternative jobs/work or add other possible careers to the list.

a. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
b. Private Sector (business or private companies)	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
c. Private schools	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
d. Staying home and taking care of children and/or house work (especially for female teachers)	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
e. Pursue higher education	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
Please specify any other alternatives that you know of, other careers that are not listed above.	
f.	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
g.	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()
h.	Mostly () Sometime () Rarely () Never ()

Please provide your specific recommendations to the following entities focusing on teacher retention.

To Ministry of Education:
1.
2
3

To School: 1. 2. 3.
To the students' parents: 1. 2. 3.
To other organizations and stakeholders: 1. 2. 3.
Any other comments and/or Suggestions: 1. 2. 3.

Date: _____

Thank You

Annex 3. Interview Guiding Questions

Annex 4. Interview Guideline

Annex 5. Interview Consent Form



Informed Consent

My name is Hassan Aslami. I am researcher from the Education Policy and Leadership program at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, U.S.A. My research focuses on Teacher Attrition: Why Secondary School Teachers Leave the Profession in Afghanistan.

I am interested to use questionnaires as well as interview teachers who are currently teaching and those who left teaching profession. I will conduct the study with those that are willing to participate in a semi-structured interview and/or respond the questionnaire. The filling of the questionnaire should take around 20 minutes. This study will conduct in six secondary schools in Kabul province, Afghanistan.

- The information shared during these sessions will be kept confidential.
- Every effort will be made to maintain the anonymity of the participants. The institution where you work will not be identified by name; details that might make it easy to identify it will be changed. In addition I will use pseudonyms to refer to all participants, and characteristics that could be used to identify you will be altered.
- Summary of the results of the study will be available upon request. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to discontinue or refuse participation at any time. You have the right to review the materials connected with your interview.

If you have any questions about my research or your participation in it, you are encouraged to contact one of me: haslami@educ.umass.edu, USA Cell-phone 01-413-362-5058; Afghanistan Cell phone: 0093 799 30458. Thank you for your time and your willingness to participate.

Hassan Aslami -----

You have been given two copies of this informed consent. If you agree to participate, both should be signed. You may keep one copy for your records; I will keep the other copy on file. Your signature indicates that you:

- Have read and understand the information provided.
- Willingly agree to participate in the study.
- Understand that you may withdraw from participation in the study at any time.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____