



Research Paper

Qualitative study of Manpower Attraction and Retention Processes in Education Department in Underprivileged Regions: A case Study of Kurdistan Province

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Abstract

Aim: This article presents the experiences of the attraction and retention processes of school teachers in an underprivileged province. The study population included teachers in Kurdistan Province, of whom, 20 were selected by purposive sampling. The data were collected through a 13-item interview protocol. Qualitative analysis identified six main categories as the main factors that can affect the attraction and retention of teachers in underprivileged regions, namely, altruism, social/occupational identity, inequality and discrimination, administrative corruption, desired support structures, and job requirements. The results showed that the desired support structures should be prioritized to improve attraction and retention of teachers in underprivileged regions, therefore, local cultural values should be better attended. Teachers' welfare and livelihood should improve in this region, so as to sustain human resources the Education Department of such regions.

Keywords: *Attraction and Retention, Teachers, Underprivileged Regions*

Introduction

The problem of recruitment and retention of qualified teachers has persisted in many countries for several decades. The process of recruitment and initial

training of teachers is often associated with national labor market and the relative demand for other jobs; shortcomings are also more severe in some educational regions, which might root in a variety of issues such as increased student population or teachers' unwillingness to serve in these regions (Sibieta, 2020).

The statistics published by the Education Ministry reveal a surplus of 58000 teachers in provincial capitals and privileged areas, while there is a shortage of 50000 teachers in underprivileged areas (Fani, 2014).

Kurdistan is a border province with remote and hard-to-reach areas, and unfortunately does not have enough and efficient manpower to educate deprived students, and the majority of people sent there tend to return. Given that, the researcher's main objective is to identify alternative new effective ways of recruiting and long-term retention of manpower in underprivileged educational areas to achieve equitable access of all areas to educational manpower. Given the study objectives, the researcher seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. What common values, traditions, and concepts do teachers, civil servants, and officials who have been recruited and retained in the underprivileged areas of Kurdistan Province have for serving in the education authority?
2. What experiences and views do the above human resources have about methods of recruitment and retention in education?
3. What is the performance and role of education offices and managers in the retaining and relocation of manpower working in underprivileged areas?
4. What deters teaching job candidates and presently working teachers from serving in underprivileged areas?
5. What supportive and adaptive strategies are needed to recruit and retain in underprivileged areas?
6. What are the strategies for recruiting education manpower in underprivileged areas by recruiting from internal organizational resources?

Methodology

The strategy of ethnography was used in the present qualitative study. The choice of research strategy mainly depends on the study objective, the specific population, spatial constraints, priorities and researchers' training. Vardi and Weitz (2004) argued that ethnographic study has traditionally been associated with anthropology. The study population included all employees of Kurdistan Education Office. The researcher reached theoretical saturation through purposive sampling and interviewing 20 individuals.

Interviews with men were audio-recorded, and those with women were written on paper. The qualitative data were collected and analyzed simultaneously, that is, researcher used an emerging method to collect and analyze the data immediately, and not waiting until all data are collected due to their theoretical value (Bazargan, 2015).

In qualitative studies, the researcher assesses the findings using specific methods and assesses their accuracy and validity through presenting the components described by the interviewees to them (Creswell, 2009). The reliability of each category and unit provided by the researcher was re-assessed by other people. Finally, once agreement was reached, units and categories were encoded. The following strategies were used: prolonged engagement of researchers in the field of study, use of an audio-recorder and camera to record data, triangulation of data, preparing a codebook to produce consensus among encoders, finding heterogeneous evidence, and obtaining participants' feedback after encoding. The output of this stage was analysis of axial and selective codes. In total, 485 initial codes, 47 axial codes, and six selective codes were extracted from the data.

Results

Given the study objectives, the researcher seeks to find answers to the following questions:

The first question assessed common values, traditions, and concepts for teachers in underprivileged areas. Most teachers expressed these criteria, which indicate their high values remain unchanged in different temporal and spatial situations and are not affected by occupational hardships. In other words, their steadfastness is rooted in their sense of altruism in different situations.

The second question extracted factors for recruiting and retaining teachers, which somehow showed their social-occupational identity that has become a role-model for all of them.

The third question assessed the performance and role of education authorities and managers in retaining human resources working in underprivileged areas. Teachers face problems when they attend the offices and pursue their organizational and administrative affairs, which they call administrative corruption. This leads to the teachers' lack of confidence in the administrative offices to resolve their problems and create supportive programs.

The fourth question assessed the deterrents to teachers' serving in underprivileged areas that force them to leave these areas and encourages them to leave service and request transfer to privileged areas and provincial

capitals. This was extracted from the concept of inequality and discrimination.

The fifth question assessed the supportive and adaptive strategies that can lead to recruitment and retention of teachers. The interviewees argued that top bosses and managers should have an empathetic relationship with teachers, be aware of their problems, and take measures to improve their personal and occupational life and resolve their problems.

The sixth question dealt with priorities and criteria for recruitment and retention of teachers in underprivileged areas. The interviewees argued that if teachers are recruited from local residents in the first place, no such problems as housing and extra costs would have been imposed on teachers. Regarding recruitment, lack of proper needs assessment for recruiting women or men makes one gender surplus and the other short, causing problems in retention of teachers.

Discussion and conclusion

Generally, six main categories, including altruism, social-occupational identity, inequality and discrimination, administrative corruption, desirable support structures and job requirements are among the key factors in different temporal and spatial situations and roles that can affect teachers' desire to stay. It can be inferred that administrative and systemic problems should be resolved and teachers should have greater social and welfare support to resolve problems in their recruitment and retention in underprivileged areas.

A study limitation was some participants' fear of directly expressing criticisms of problems in the education department. Similar studies are recommended in other provinces, at national level, and in other organizations.

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