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POLICY BRIEF

Human Resource Practices and Teachers' Turnover in Government-Aided Secondary Schools: A Policy Brief for Rubirizi District, Uganda

[version 1; peer review: awaiting peer review]

Tukur Muhammad ¹, Edward Nyesigab², Lucy Aja ³, Lubega Mohammad ⁴, Aquila Modupe Otitoju ⁵, Mbabazi Asiati⁶, Turyamureeba Silaji⁷, Kunle Ashrifu ⁸

¹Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education, Kampala International University - Western Campus, Bushenyi, Western Region, Uganda

²Department of Foundations, Faculty of Education, Kampala International University - Western Campus, Bushenyi, Western Region, Uganda

³Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education, Kampala International University - Western Campus, Bushenyi, Western Region, Uganda

⁴Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education, Kampala International University - Western Campus, Bushenyi, Western Region, Uganda

⁵Department of Humanities, Faculty of Education, Kampala International University - Western Campus, Bushenyi, Western Region, Uganda

⁶Department of Foundations, Faculty of Education, Kampala International University - Western Campus, Bushenyi, Western Region, Uganda

⁷Department of Foundations, Faculty of Education, Kampala International University - Western Campus, Bushenyi, Western Region, Uganda

⁸Department of Foundations, Faculty of Education, Kampala International University - Western Campus, Bushenyi, Western Region, Uganda

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Abstract

This policy brief sets out how human resource practices influence the turnover of teachers in government-aided secondary schools in Rubirizi District, Uganda, and how these practices can be improved to enhance turnover, which, in turn, could improve retention. It is part of the larger master's dissertation following the research study. The policy outcomes and implications of the study are as follows: reduced teacher turnover, lower recruitment and replacement costs, stable staffing for core subjects, and improved instructional consistency; enhanced student learning through continuity in instruction, better classroom management, and more experienced teachers; improved school governance with stronger leadership pipelines, clearer performance expectations, and more collaborative school cultures;

long-term cost efficiency through reduced turnover-related expenses and more effective use of professional development. Also, the Rubirizi District Education Office would gain from focused, district-wide human resource policies and capacity-building for school leaders. At the national level. This policy brief, therefore, makes a very clear case that only robust human resource practices that cover effective recruitment, induction, and continuous professional development, fair remuneration and working conditions, clear career progression, strong leadership, and management based on data can reduce turnover and strengthen the district's education system. The findings propose policy recommendations to enhance recruitment and placement, which include: aligning the postings with the subject demand and geographic need; creating transparent prioritization for hard-to-staff schools; improving the selection process to identify candidates with high retention potential induction, supervision, and professional development; standardizing induction programs for new teachers with mentorship and networking an experienced staff; ongoing subject-specific professional development linked to classroom practice and student outcomes; improved remuneration, benefits, and working conditions, with advocacy for timely, and predictable salary payments; review allowances reflecting workload and rural postings; investment in school infrastructure and classroom resources to reduce working-condition strains; and implementation of workload management strategies.

Keywords

Teacher turnover, human resource practices, government-aided secondary schools, Rubirizi District, staff retention, teacher professional development, remuneration, working conditions, leadership, education policy, Uganda

Corresponding author: Tukur Muhammad (tukurmuhammad.tm@kiu.ac.ug)

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Introduction

The secondary education sector in Uganda has been characterized by persistent teacher shortages, an uneven distribution of qualified staff, and high rates of turnover, which disrupt continuity, the quality of instruction, and student outcomes. In Rubirizi District, government-aided secondary schools suffer resource constraints, depend on motivated leadership, and have to reconcile national policies with local needs. This high turnover results in the loss of institutional memory, higher recruiting and training costs, lower student achievement, and problems with school governance and policy implementation (Admore et al., 2026; Elbery, 2026; Jebbar & Holme, 2026; Mulkeen, 2007; SONG, 2025).

Turnover rate: the percentage of teachers who leave a school or district for any reason—resignation, transfer, retirement, or termination during the course of a single school year. In this way, human resource (HR) practices are a set of activities related to recruitment, onboarding, professional development, compensation, workload management, performance management, promotion, and workplace climate (Bhaurao, 2025; Bahadur et al., 2026; Marosi-Torda & Marosi-Torda, 2026).

Government-aided schools are considered to be public-private partnerships, in the sense that the government provides core funding and policy guidance, while also allowing some autonomy in terms of management and budgeting (Wachira, 2026). On one hand, remuneration and benefits could fall within the purview of compensation gaps and irregular salary payments, which in turn could impact morale and retention decisions (Alter, Walker, & Landers, 2013; Copelin, 2026).

Workload and working conditions: large classes, administrative duties, and resource constraints add to the job strain. **Career progression:** opportunities for promotions that are not clear or offered infrequently can trigger migration to other schools or sectors (Manato, 2026; Moroe, Nkosi, & Sebothoma, 2025; Olson & Hopkins, 2026). Thus, leadership and supervision: retention is high where the leadership is supportive, and the decision-making process is transparent (Gecewicz & Hodges, 2026; Manato, 2026; Olson & Hopkins, 2026).

Organizational culture: attachment is influenced by collaborative environments, recognition, and alignment with the school mission (Kareem, Patrick, & Prabakaran, 2025). Therefore, since teacher retention can be viewed as a critical lever for instructional quality, continuity, equity, and effective policy delivery in Rubirizi and Uganda at large, the scenario is thus described. It can further be argued that strengthening HR practices at the district level will lead to cost savings, create more stable learning environments, and facilitate better policy implementation at both district and national levels (Muhammad, Aja, Zahara Ssali, Lubega, & Otiotoju, 2025; Odongo, Kobusingye, & Kibanja, 2025; Yan, Zhang, Ji, & Li, 2026).

Policy outcomes and implications: Expected outcomes if human resource practices are strengthened

The results were grouped as follows: Reduced teacher turnover brought about low recruitment and replacement costs, stable staffing for core subjects, and improved instructional consistency. Enhanced student learning was evidenced by continuity in instruction, better classroom management, and more experienced teachers. Improved school governance included stronger leadership pipelines, clearer performance expectations, and more collaborative school cultures. Thirdly, fiscal prudence was long-term cost efficiency through reduced turnover-related expenses and more effective use of professional development. Also, the implications for policy and practice. Also, there is district-level implications: Rubirizi District Education Office (DEO) would benefit from targeted, district-wide HR policies and capacity-building for school leaders. So, national-level implications: alignment of teacher deployment, remuneration, and performance management with district realities; sustainable funding for HR initiatives in government-aided schools.

Equity implications: provide support to rural and hard-to-staff schools so that disparities in teacher retention do not increase. **Monitoring and accountability:** set up strong data systems to monitor turnover, HR interventions and their outcomes so that policies can be improved.

Policy recommendations and implications: A strengthen recruitment and placement

The Policy recommendations to enhance recruitment and placement based on the findings of this study are to Align postings with subject demand and geographic need Create transparent prioritization for hard-to-staff schools Improve selection processes to identify candidates with high retention potential (commitment to rural postings, adaptability, professional values). Other recommendations include: strengthen induction, support, and professional development; roll out standard induction programs for new teachers, with mentoring and networking opportunities among experienced staff; deliver ongoing, subject-specific professional development tied to classroom practice and student outcomes; create a district-wide professional development calendar with protected time for teachers and measurable outcomes.

Similarly, there should be increased remuneration and benefits. **In this case, the workers should also demand timely and predictable payment of salaries,** review allowances to reflect the workload and rural postings, and invest in school infrastructure and classroom resources to minimize the strains of working conditions; implement workload management strategies such as reasonable class sizes, shared administrative duties, and support staff where possible. Other recommendations include clarifying and expanding career progression; developing clear career paths for teachers (e.g., senior teacher, subject lead, master teacher) with defined criteria and transparent promotion procedures; and linking professional development to advancement opportunities and recognition. Strengthen leadership and school governance: provide headteachers and deputies with leadership development programs that focus on people management, performance feedback, and servant leadership. Support school-based teams in making collaborative decisions and engage teachers in policy implementation. Establish fair performance appraisal systems with constructive input and developmental support.

Ensure that robust human resource data systems are built and evidence is used for policy: create or strengthen district human resource information systems to monitor recruitment, retention, and turnover by school and subject; also publish turnover metrics and other human resource indicators to inform the revision of policies on resource allocation; data should be used to identify high-risk schools and develop targeted interventions; communities and teachers should be involved in the design of policies; teacher associations, parent-teacher councils, and community stakeholders should be involved in the retention strategy; create a feedback mechanism where teachers can express their worries and contribute to the plan for implementation. **Implementation considerations: phased approach-** start with the most needy schools, and as capacity and funding allow, scale up; resource alignment- coordinate with national budgets, district funds, and donor support to ensure sustainability; cost-benefit framing- document projected savings from reduced turnover against upfront human resource investments; risk management- monitor policy risks and make adjustments to avoid unintended incentives or inequities.

Conclusion

High rates of teacher turnover in government-aided secondary schools in Rubirizi District lead to low quality of instruction, poor student outcomes, and instability within the school. This policy brief argues that high teacher turnover in Rubirizi District can only be reduced and education outcomes improved with strong human resource management (HRM) practices, including effective recruitment, induction and continuous professional development, fair pay and working conditions, opportunities for career growth, good leadership, and management based on information. The recommended actions should be phased, well resourced, and involve all stakeholders in Rubirizi District to improve teacher retention and create a conducive learning environment that contributes to the national goal of equitable and high-quality secondary education in Uganda. Regular monitoring and making changes based on evidence will also be required to sustain and further improve the impact of the intervention on appropriate policies for teachers and students.

Ethics approval

The study titled: Human Resource Practices and Teachers' Turnover in Government-Aided Secondary Schools: A Policy Brief for Rubirizi District, Uganda. The study was a master's dissertation, Policy recommendations, which was approved on **23/04/2025** by Kampala International University's Research and Ethics Committee (REC) with approval number: **KIU-2025-844**. In addition, the study was conducted according to the norms and standards of the Ugandan National Research Ethics Guidelines.

Accordance

Our study was conducted in agreement with the customs and values of the National Research Ethics Guidelines.

Data availability statement

The investigators acknowledged that there were no data related to this study, because the study used secondary data. Thus, no data are associated with this article.

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