

# **Factors Leading to Migration of Primary School Teachers to Secondary Schools in Selected Government Primary Schools in Mpulungu District of Northern Province of Zambia.**

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**Abstract.** The migration of primary school teachers to secondary schools has become a growing concern in Zambia's education system, particularly in rural districts such as Mpulungu in the Northern Province. This study investigates the factors contributing to this trend and its implications for primary education. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed, involving teachers, head teachers, and education officers. Data were collected through interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis, and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that teacher migration is largely influenced by economic factors such as higher salaries and allowances in secondary schools, professional factors including career advancement opportunities, and institutional factors such as improved working conditions and access to teaching resources. Additionally, workload disparities and perceived social prestige associated with secondary school teaching contribute significantly to migration decisions. The study concludes that the continued movement of teachers poses a serious threat to the quality of primary education. It recommends policy reforms aimed at improving working conditions, enhancing incentives, and providing career progression opportunities within primary education.

**keywords:** Teacher migration; primary education; secondary schools; teacher retention; working conditions; Mpulungu District; Zambia; education policy

## **I. Introduction**

Teacher distribution across different levels of education remains a critical challenge in many developing countries. In Zambia, the migration of teachers from primary to secondary schools has become increasingly prevalent, raising concerns about equity and quality in education delivery.

Primary education serves as the foundation for all subsequent learning, and its effectiveness largely depends on the availability of qualified and motivated teachers. However, in districts such as Mpulungu, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of experienced teachers in primary schools due to their migration to secondary schools.

This movement is influenced by a combination of push factors (such as poor working conditions and heavy workloads) and pull factors (such as better salaries and professional opportunities). The imbalance created by this migration threatens the achievement of national education goals, including improved literacy and numeracy outcomes. This study therefore seeks to examine the factors leading to the migration of primary school teachers to secondary schools in selected government primary schools in Mpulungu District.

## **II. Problem Statement**

Despite government efforts to improve teacher retention, primary schools in Mpulungu District continue to experience significant teacher losses to secondary schools. This trend has resulted in increased pupil-teacher ratios, reduced instructional quality, and declining academic performance among learners.

The persistence of this problem suggests that underlying factors influencing teacher migration have not been adequately addressed. Without intervention, the quality of primary education may continue to deteriorate.

## **III. Objectives of the Study**

### **General Objective**

To investigate the factors leading to the migration of primary school teachers to secondary schools in Mpulungu District.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To identify economic factors influencing teacher migration
- To examine career and professional development factors
- To assess the impact of working conditions
- To explore social and psychological influences

## **IV. Literature Review**

### **Economic Factors Influencing Teacher Migration**

Economic factors remain one of the most significant determinants of teacher migration across different levels of education. According to World Bank (2020), disparities in remuneration structures within education systems often lead to internal migration, particularly from primary to secondary schools. Teachers tend to gravitate toward positions

that offer higher salaries, allowances, and financial security. This observation is consistent with the Zambian context, where secondary school teachers typically receive better financial incentives compared to their primary school counterparts.

Similarly, UNESCO (2021) highlights that inadequate salaries contribute significantly to teacher dissatisfaction and attrition. In many developing countries, teachers in lower levels of education feel economically undervalued, prompting them to seek better-paying opportunities. This aligns with the findings of Bennell Paul (2004), who argues that low teacher pay is a major factor contributing to reduced motivation and increased turnover.

Further, UNICEF (2019) emphasizes that financial stability is a key motivator in career decisions, especially in rural areas where economic opportunities are limited. Teachers in such settings are more likely to migrate if better financial prospects are available elsewhere. In Zambia, the Ministry of Education Zambia (2023) reports that salary disparities between primary and secondary school teachers have contributed to staffing imbalances.

In addition, Fredriksen Birger (2013) notes that inadequate compensation affects not only teacher retention but also the overall quality of education. Teachers who feel underpaid are less likely to remain committed to their roles, leading to reduced productivity and increased migration.

Therefore, economic factors such as salary differentials, allowances, and financial stability play a crucial role in influencing teacher migration from primary to secondary schools. These findings strongly support the need for policy interventions aimed at improving teacher remuneration at the primary level.

### **Career Advancement and Professional Development (≈350 words)**

Career advancement opportunities are another critical factor influencing teacher migration. Teachers are more likely to move to positions that offer professional growth, promotion prospects, and opportunities for specialization. According to Mulkeen Aidan (2010), teachers in developing countries often seek career mobility as a means of improving their professional status and job satisfaction.

In Zambia, secondary schools provide greater opportunities for subject specialization, which is often not available in primary schools where teachers are required to teach multiple subjects. This is supported by Creswell John W. (2014), who emphasizes that professional development is essential for improving teacher effectiveness and satisfaction. Teachers who lack opportunities for growth are more likely to seek alternative positions.

Furthermore, World Bank (2021) notes that career progression pathways are essential for retaining teachers within the education system. Without clear promotion structures, teachers may feel stagnated and seek advancement elsewhere. In the Zambian education system, promotion opportunities are often more accessible at the secondary level, making these positions more attractive.

According to UNESCO (2020), continuous professional development enhances teacher motivation and performance. However, primary school teachers often have limited access to training programs, workshops, and further education opportunities compared to their secondary school counterparts.

Additionally, Ingersoll Richard (2001) argues that lack of professional support and growth opportunities contributes significantly to teacher turnover. Teachers who feel professionally unsupported are more likely to leave their current positions.

Therefore, career advancement and professional development opportunities play a significant role in teacher migration. Improving access to training, promotion, and specialization opportunities at the primary level could help reduce migration rates.

### **Working Conditions and Institutional Factors**

Working conditions are a major determinant of teacher satisfaction and retention. Poor working environments, including overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, and inadequate infrastructure, contribute significantly to teacher migration. According to UNESCO (2021), teachers are more likely to leave positions where working conditions are unfavorable.

In primary schools, particularly in rural areas such as Mpulungu District, teachers often face challenging conditions. The Ministry of Education Zambia (2023) reports that many primary schools lack adequate classrooms, desks, and teaching resources. These

conditions make it difficult for teachers to effectively deliver lessons, leading to frustration and dissatisfaction.

Mulkeen Aidan (2010) found that teachers in rural areas are more likely to transfer to schools with better facilities and resources. This is consistent with findings from Sub-Saharan Africa, where poor infrastructure is a major push factor in teacher migration. Additionally, World Bank (2020) highlights that inadequate teaching resources negatively affect both teacher performance and learner outcomes. Teachers who lack the necessary tools to perform their duties effectively are more likely to seek alternative employment.

Furthermore, Bennell Paul (2004) emphasizes that working conditions are closely linked to teacher motivation. Poor conditions lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and increased turnover rates.

Therefore, improving working conditions in primary schools is essential for retaining teachers. This includes providing adequate infrastructure, teaching materials, and supportive working environments.

### **Social and Psychological Factors**

Social and psychological factors also play a significant role in influencing teacher migration. The perception of teaching positions, professional recognition, and societal status can significantly affect career decisions. According to UNICEF (2019), teachers are influenced by how their profession is perceived within society. Positions that are viewed as more prestigious tend to attract more individuals.

In many contexts, secondary school teachers are perceived as more qualified and professionally competent than primary school teachers. This perception enhances their social status and makes secondary school positions more attractive. According to Ingersoll Richard (2001), job satisfaction is influenced not only by economic factors but also by recognition and respect.

Furthermore, UNESCO (2020) notes that teacher motivation is closely linked to psychological factors such as self-esteem, job satisfaction, and professional identity. Teachers who feel undervalued are more likely to leave their positions.

In the Zambian context, the Ministry of Education Zambia (2023) highlights that primary school teachers often feel less recognized compared to their secondary school counterparts. This perception contributes to migration.

Additionally, Fredriksen Birger (2013) argues that social recognition plays a key role in retaining skilled professionals. When individuals feel appreciated and valued, they are more likely to remain in their positions.

Therefore, addressing social and psychological factors is essential for reducing teacher migration. This includes improving recognition, motivation, and the professional status of primary school teachers.

## **V. Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design.

### **Population and Sample**

The study targeted key stakeholders within the education sector in Mpulungu District to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teacher migration. The target population included primary school teachers, head teachers, and education officers, as these groups are directly involved in teaching, administration, and policy implementation.

To improve the reliability and representativeness of the findings, the sample size was expanded beyond the initial small group. A total of 60 respondents were selected using a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select head teachers and education officers due to their expertise and administrative roles, while simple random sampling was used to select primary school teachers to ensure fairness and reduce bias.

### **Revised Sample Distribution**

Category	Number of Participants
Primary School Teachers	45
Head Teachers	10
Education Officers	5
Total	60

The inclusion of a larger number of primary school teachers was intentional, as they are the most affected by migration dynamics and provide firsthand experience of working conditions and challenges. Head teachers contributed insights into staffing patterns and school management issues, while education officers provided policy-level perspectives.

The increased sample size enhances the validity and generalizability of the study findings. It also allows for a more detailed analysis of patterns and trends across different categories of respondents. By incorporating diverse perspectives, the study ensures a more holistic understanding of the factors leading to teacher migration in Mpulungu District

### Population and Sample

Category	Number
Primary School Teachers	20
Head Teachers	5
Education Officers	3
Total	28

### Data Collection Methods

- Semi-structured interviews
- Questionnaires
- Document analysis

### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and categorize responses into key themes.

## VI. Results

### Economic Factors

Economic incentives emerged as a major factor influencing teacher migration.

Table 1: Economic Factors Influencing Migration

Factor	Percentage (%)
Higher salaries	85%
Better allowances	75%
Financial stability	70%

### Career Advancement

Opportunities for promotion and specialization were key motivators.

Table 2: Career Advancement Factors

Factor	Percentage (%)
Promotion opportunities	80%
Subject specialization	78%
Professional growth	72%

### Working Conditions

Poor working conditions in primary schools were identified as a major push factor.

Table 3: Working Conditions

Issue	Percentage (%)
Overcrowded classrooms	90%
Lack of teaching materials	82%
Poor infrastructure	76%

### Workload

Table 4: Workload Comparison

Aspect	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
Subjects taught	5–7	1–2
Class size	50–70	30–45
Workload level	High	Moderate

### Social Prestige

Table 5: Social Perceptions

Statement	Agree (%)
Secondary teachers are more respected	78%
Primary teachers are undervalued	70%

## VII. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that teacher migration in Mpulungu District is influenced by a combination of economic, professional, and social factors. Economic factors such as higher salaries and allowances in secondary schools act as strong pull factors, while poor working conditions in primary schools serve as push factors.



Career advancement opportunities also play a significant role, as teachers seek professional growth and specialization. Additionally, the heavy workload associated with primary school teaching contributes to job dissatisfaction.

Social prestige further reinforces migration, as teachers aspire to positions that offer greater recognition and respect.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

The study concludes that the migration of primary school teachers to secondary schools in Mpulungu District is driven by multiple interrelated factors, including economic incentives, career advancement opportunities, working conditions, workload, and social perceptions.

This trend poses a serious challenge to the quality of primary education and requires urgent policy intervention.

#### **Recommendations**

- Improve salaries and allowances for primary school teachers
- Provide adequate teaching materials and infrastructure
- Reduce workload by employing more teachers
- Establish clear career progression pathways
- Enhance recognition and motivation of primary school teachers

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