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Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Cameroon's Public Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT: Teacher recruitment and retention remain among the most pressing challenges confronting Cameroon's public education system, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions where persistent teacher shortages continue to undermine educational quality and equity. This study examined the factors influencing teacher recruitment and retention in Cameroon's public schools and proposed strategies for strengthening the sustainability of the teaching workforce. The study was guided by two objectives: to analyze the underlying causes of teacher shortages and brain drain, and to recommend policy interventions that enhance teacher motivation and retention. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach using a convergent parallel design that combined quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 298 participants, comprising 260 teachers, 26 school administrators, and 12 regional and divisional education officials, were selected through multi-stage sampling from public secondary schools in the North, Centre, and South West Regions of Cameroon. Data were collected using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings revealed that 83.8% of teachers and 57.1% of school administrators agreed that recruitment practices significantly influence teacher retention. Low salaries (98.1%), poor working conditions (85.4%), limited opportunities for professional development (83.8%), inadequate teaching resources (76.1%), and weak government support and policies (65.8%) emerged as the principal drivers of teacher shortages, attrition, and brain drain. Respondents further indicated that improved incentives, competitive remuneration, career advancement opportunities, timely integration into the public service, and enhanced working conditions would substantially reduce teacher migration and improve retention. The study concludes that addressing teacher recruitment and retention in Cameroon requires a comprehensive policy framework that combines financial incentives with improved professional support, equitable teacher deployment, transparent recruitment procedures, continuous professional development, and strengthened educational governance. Grounded in Human Capital Theory and Job Embeddedness Theory, the study argues that investing in teachers as valuable human resources is essential for improving educational quality and achieving sustainable national development. It recommends increased government investment in teacher welfare, decentralized recruitment mechanisms, improved infrastructure, targeted incentives for teachers serving in rural and conflict-affected communities, and strengthened institutional support systems to ensure a stable, motivated, and effective teaching workforce.

KEYWORDS: Teacher recruitment, teacher retention, public schools, brain drain, teacher shortages, educational policy, Cameroon, Human Capital Theory, Job Embeddedness Theory.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher recruitment and retention are critical challenges facing public education systems globally, and Cameroon is no exception. In recent years, the country's public Secondary schools have experienced acute shortages of qualified teachers, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, severely impacting the quality of education (UNICEF 2024). According to UNESCO (2022), sub-Saharan Africa requires nearly 15 million additional teachers to meet universal primary and secondary education goals by 2030, with Cameroon contributing significantly to this demand. The difficulty in attracting and retaining competent teachers is rooted in multiple factors, including poor working conditions, delayed salaries, limited career advancement opportunities, and inadequate professional support (Tambo, 2012).

In Cameroon's public sector, teacher recruitment is often characterized by centralized bureaucratic procedures that delay the placement of graduates, while contractual systems have introduced precariousness into the profession. As a result, many newly recruited teachers either abandon their posts or migrate to private institutions or other professions for better conditions (Njoh, 2019). Moreover, retention is particularly low in rural areas where infrastructure, housing, and access to social services are minimal, discouraging long-term commitments from teachers (Mbua, 2003). Effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies are essential for improving educational quality and achieving national development goals. These strategies must consider both extrinsic motivators, such as fair remuneration and working conditions, and intrinsic factors like professional autonomy, recognition, and continuous training. Developing a localized, context-specific framework for teacher recruitment and retention can contribute to more equitable education across regions and enhance the sustainability of Cameroon's education system (Ngwana, 2011). This paper therefor explores the current state of teacher recruitment and retention in Cameroon's public schools, identifies the underlying challenges, and proposes strategic interventions tailored to the national and local contexts.

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Teacher recruitment and retention remain critical challenges in Cameroon's public education system, affecting the quality of learning and student outcomes. Despite government efforts to expand access to education, many schools, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, face severe teacher shortages due to poor working conditions, delayed salaries, and limited career advancement opportunities (Tambo, 2018). The "brain drain" phenomenon further exacerbates this issue, as qualified teachers migrate to urban centers or abroad in search of better remuneration and professional growth (Fonkeng & Tambe, 2019).

Additionally, the political instability especially in the Anglophone regions, has disrupted education, leading to school closures and teacher displacement (Nkengbeza, 2021). The lack of motivation among educators, stemming from inadequate infrastructure, large class sizes, and insufficient training, further contributes to high attrition rates (Ngwe, 2020). Effective policy interventions—such as competitive salaries, housing incentives, continuous professional development, and improved school leadership—are essential to attract and retain skilled teachers. This study examines the root causes of teacher shortages in Cameroon's public schools and proposes evidence-based strategies to enhance teacher motivation and retention, ensuring a stable and qualified teaching workforce for sustainable educational development.

Review of Related Literature

In this section, we aim to define and contextualize key concepts used in the study, including recruitment, retention, teacher shortages, and brain drain. Additionally, relevant theoretical frameworks will be explored. These include Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which views education and training as valuable investments that enhance productivity and retention, and Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001), which highlights the importance of social and professional connections, organizational fit, and the perceived cost of leaving, as crucial factors in understanding employee retention.

Recruitment

Recruitment is the process of identifying, attracting, interviewing, selecting, and hiring individuals for a job. It involves a series of steps designed to ensure that the most qualified and suitable candidates are brought into an organization to fulfill specific roles (Armstrong, 2014). Recruitment is a critical component of human resource management, particularly in the education sector, where the availability and quality of teachers directly affect learning outcomes and national development. In the public education sector, teacher recruitment refers to the systematic process by which governments or educational institutions source and appoint teachers to fill vacancies in schools. Effective recruitment ensures that schools are staffed with qualified, motivated, and competent personnel who meet the academic and professional standards required for teaching (UNESCO, 2022). The recruitment process typically includes advertising vacancies, evaluating applications, conducting interviews, and final appointments based on merit and policy guidelines.

In the Cameroonian context, the recruitment of government teachers is managed centrally by the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform (MINFOPRA) and the Ministry of Basic or Secondary Education. Candidates are usually recruited through a competitive national examination known as the "Concours," which is open to qualified graduates from teacher training institutions such as ENS (École Normale Supérieure) or ENIEG (École Normale des Instituteurs de l'Enseignement Général).

The recruitment of government teachers in Cameroon's public schools follows a centralized, multi-agency competitive examination process, primarily organized under the Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform (MINFOPRA) and the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB), particularly for primary/nursery levels, or the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) for secondary levels. They recruitment of Government teachers in Cameroon follows the following process:

Firstly, is Needs assessment and quotas: Each year, educational ministries assess staffing needs regionally, focusing on under-resourced or conflict-affected areas. These quotas are set in collaboration with PAREC (Programme d'Appui à la Réforme de l'Éducation au Cameroun), supported by the World Bank, to fill gaps especially in schools with high student-to-teacher ratios (e.g. over 100 pupils per fewer than 3 teachers) parec-cameroun.net+1parec-cameroun.net+1.

Secondly Competitive examination ("concours"): Candidates must hold qualifications such as the CAPIEMP (Certificate of Grade-One Primary Teacher) or equivalent. Age limits typically apply (under 40 years). Competitive written and sometimes oral exams are held, often centrally in Yaoundé or regional capitals parec-cameroun.net+3Kamerpower+3prepclasscm.com+3. For instance, in September 2022, Cameroon opened a recruitment of 3,000 primary school teachers to ensure at least three staff per school of 100 pupils, per UNESCO ratios parec-cameroun.net+3camerounactuonline.com+3cameroondesks.com+3. Then Job posting and candidate choice: Candidates apply and may indicate preferred placement schools—especially needy schools. If quotas are filled, reassignments to other needy schools in the region occur prepclasscm.com.

Again Selection and Deployment: Successful applicants are appointed as contract teachers under a multi-year programme (e.g. PAREC 2019–2026 intending to recruit 18,000 contract teachers). Deployment prioritizes schools meeting the criteria for acute shortages parec-cameroun.net+1parec-cameroun.net+1. In 2021, the second phase of recruitment saw an order approving the hiring of 3,000 CAPIEMP-holders for primary education, deployed to high-need schools Kamerpower+2parec-cameroun.net+2prepclasscm.com+2.

Finally, Registration and Integration: After appointment, teachers must be registered with MINFOPRA to get a civil service number. This bureaucratic process can take months to years, during which appointees receive no salary. Delays of up to 3 years are common, with salary arrears paid in lump sums once approved Kamerpower+2ResearchGate+2Kamerpower+2.

However, the recruitment system in Cameroon faces significant challenges. It is often characterized by long bureaucratic delays, lack of transparency, and political interference (Ngwana, 2011). Many trained teachers wait for years before being integrated into the public service due to administrative bottlenecks and limited financial resources. Additionally, the centralization of the recruitment process contributes to an unequal distribution of teachers, with rural and conflict-affected regions suffering the most from teacher shortages (Njoh, 2019). Another major concern is the increasing reliance on contractual teachers, who are often poorly paid and lack job security. This has led to widespread dissatisfaction, low morale, and high attrition rates among teaching staff (Tambo, 2012). To improve recruitment, Cameroon needs to decentralize hiring procedures,

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enhance transparency, and adopt more inclusive and merit-based approaches that address regional disparities and promote equity in education delivery.

Retention

Retention refers to the ability of an organization to keep its employees over a period of time. In education, teacher retention is the continued employment of teachers in schools or within the profession over successive academic years (Ingersoll, 2001). High teacher retention rates are often associated with stable learning environments, improved student performance, and institutional continuity, while low retention often results in teacher shortages, increased recruitment costs, and diminished educational quality (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

In Cameroon, the retention of government secondary school teachers remains a complex issue influenced by various socio-economic, political, and institutional factors. Many teachers, especially those posted to remote or conflict-affected areas like the North West and South West Regions, face challenges such as insecurity, poor infrastructure, limited professional development opportunities, and delayed salaries, which contribute to high attrition rates (Tchombe, 2000; World Bank, 2022).

The Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) has struggled with both recruitment and retention due to limited state resources and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Some teachers wait several years for formal integration or confirmation into the public service, during which time they may not receive full salaries or benefits. Additionally, there are disparities in the distribution of teachers, with urban areas being more attractive than rural ones due to better living conditions and opportunities for supplementary income (Fonkeng & Tamajong, 2009).

Moreover, limited promotion prospects, lack of housing, and inadequate motivation mechanisms such as performance-based incentives further weaken teacher morale and retention. While government initiatives like the recruitment of contract teachers (PTAs and temporary staff) have attempted to fill gaps, these measures often fail to retain qualified personnel long-term due to job insecurity and low remuneration (Ngimbous, 2019).

Teacher Shortages In Cameroon

Cameroon faces severe teacher shortages—public schools often operate understaffed, even though many qualified teachers remain unemployed. For instance, in primary education there are roughly 55,266 teachers serving 3 million pupils across 11,000 state primary schools—resulting in an average pupil-teacher ratio of **1:54**, well above the UNESCO recommendation of 1:45. As for secondary schools, Cameroon faces acute shortages of qualified secondary school teachers, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions. Structural adjustment programs in the early 1990s slashed salaries—20% in 1993, 50% in 1994—and defunded teacher training programs from 1995 onwards, triggering long-term decline in motivation and staffing levels.

In primary schools temporary recruitment policies have led to contradictions: in the mid-1990s, about 20,000 teachers graduated from normal schools, but only 1,700 were fully integrated, with over 14,000 hired as contract teachers earning low monthly wages (≈ 56,400 CFA (~€86) for 10 months per year), and over 4,000 left unemployed. Working conditions—especially in rural or conflict zones—are onerous. Teachers posted to remote areas often endure inadequate housing, poor infrastructure, teaching multiple subjects beyond their training, high workloads, and long separations from. Overcrowded classes of 80+ students per class further exacerbate stress, reducing job satisfaction.

In secondary schools, Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) across Cameroon averages **53:1**, but remote areas often reach ratios of 150:1 or more, rendering effective teaching nearly impossible Less than **50% of teachers** have received formal initial training, forcing schools to rely heavily on untrained PTA or contract teachers—who often lack certification or pedagogical skills Absenteeism and abandonment are also widespread (Cameroon economic up date). As of late 2024, the Ministry of Secondary Education reported that **3,637 secondary school teachers** had abandoned duty, with **1,509 reported missing** in November alone; others cited insecurity or relocating abroad for work (Mimi Mefo Info).

Compounding factors include overcrowded classrooms (often with 60–80+ students per class), poor infrastructure, lack of textbooks and teaching materials, and poor working conditions, especially in remote postings—leading to low morale and high attrition

The Anglophone Crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions disrupted education dramatically. By mid-2019, about **90% of primary schools** and **77% of secondary schools** were closed in those regions, leading to massive teacher absenteeism and school shutdowns. Teachers faced threats including kidnappings; in one incident 11 were abducted from a school in Kumbo (Education International).

Brain Drain Of Teachers

Cameroon's brain drain is acutely affecting educators. A **DW report (Feb 2024)** revealed that more than **6,000 teachers, doctors, and nurses left public service within just three months**, many seeking better pay and stability abroad, especially in Canada and Europe (Deutsche Welle+1InfoMigrants).

Economic incentives and low salaries are key drivers. Minimum wages hover around €55 per month, with average earnings at €450. A young graduate teacher may earn about €220 monthly—up to **ten times less** than abroad—despite comparable qualifications Africa Blogging. Moreover, Cameroon's structural adjustment programs in the 1990s led to deep salary cuts—20% in 1993 and 50% in 1994—and reduced teacher training budgets from 1995 onward, eroding morale and career stability (Education International).

Underlying Causes & Effects would include **Poor remuneration**: Chronic salary shortfalls, delays, and unequal pay compared to other nations push teachers toward migration (Education International+1). Again **Weak job security**: Prolonged delays in integrating teachers into civil service lead to demotivation and high turnover (Education International). More so **Harsh working conditions**: Overcrowded classes, teaching out-of-field, poor infrastructure—especially in rural and conflict zones—lead to burnout teachertraining237.blogspot.comResearchGate. And finally **Security crisis**: The Anglophone conflict has forced widespread school closures and teacher threats, undermining retention (Wikipedia+1Reddit+1).This leads us to looking at the theories involved which include Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), and Job Embeddedness Theory (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Job Embeddedness Theory

The challenge of teacher recruitment and retention remains a critical concern in many developing countries, including Cameroon. Persistent teacher shortages, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas, combined with rising levels of teacher attrition and brain drain, threaten the quality of

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education in public schools (World Bank, 2022). In addressing this issue, scholars and policymakers have increasingly turned to organizational theories to understand and inform strategies for keeping teachers in the profession. One such influential framework is the **Job Embeddedness Theory**, proposed by Mitchell et al. (2001), which provides a holistic view of why employees stay in their jobs beyond traditional job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Job Embeddedness Theory (JET) was introduced by Mitchell et al. (2001) as a model to explain the "why" behind employee retention, going beyond job satisfaction and organizational commitment. According to the theory, people stay in their jobs due to a combination of forces that embed them within their organizations and communities. These forces are captured through three core dimensions:

1. **Links**: The connections an employee has with other people or activities, both at work (colleagues, teams, mentors) and outside work (family, community networks).
2. **Fit**: The extent to which an employee perceives compatibility with their job, organization, and surrounding community—i.e., whether their values, career goals, and personal needs align with their work and location.
3. **Sacrifice**: The perceived cost of leaving the job, such as loss of benefits, stability, social networks, or professional opportunities.

These dimensions operate in both **organizational** and **community** contexts. Unlike traditional turnover models that focus only on dissatisfaction or better alternatives, JET recognizes that employees can remain in jobs even if they are somewhat dissatisfied, due to the strength of their embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001).

In the context of Cameroon's public schools, especially in underserved rural and conflict-affected regions, the Job Embeddedness Theory offers critical insights into why teachers leave or remain in their positions. The challenges in Cameroon include poor working conditions, delayed salaries, inadequate housing, insecurity in Anglophone regions, limited professional development, and inequalities between contract and civil service teachers (Fonkeng & Tamajong, 2009; Ngimbous, 2019). Understanding job embeddedness allows you the reader and policymakers to design strategies that improve not just pay and workload, but also social and community integration, professional identity, and long-term commitment. It has the following implications to the study:

Promoting Strong Organizational and Community Links: During recruitment, efforts should be made to foster immediate connections between newly posted teachers and their colleagues, school leaders, and local communities. Teacher induction programs, mentorship systems, and involvement in community development can create early social ties, increasing their sense of belonging. Teachers with strong relationships at their schools and in surrounding areas are more likely to stay, even when facing professional challenges (Kyndt et al., 2009).

Hiring Teachers with High Community Fit: Fit matters. Recruitment strategies should consider not just qualifications but also the likelihood of a teacher integrating well into the local environment. For example, recruiting from local teacher training colleges or prioritizing candidates from the same linguistic, cultural, or regional background as the posting area can promote a better fit. Teachers who feel culturally and socially aligned with their school communities are more committed and less likely to transfer or leave the system (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Incentives Linked to Long-Term Community Engagement: Job embeddedness suggests that recruitment should emphasize long-term attachment. Offering housing near schools, providing spousal employment support, and including teachers in local decision-making (e.g., school councils) enhance both links and sacrifice dimensions. These measures make it harder, practically and emotionally, for teachers to leave once they are embedded.

Strengthening Links through Professional Development and Collaboration: Teachers who are connected to their peers through networks such as subject-based associations, pedagogic groups, or peer-learning communities are more likely to feel supported and engaged. Regular in-service training, exchange programs, and school-based collaboration projects reinforce organizational links and professional identity (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Improving Job and Community Fit through Role Customization: Adjusting job roles to align with teacher strengths and preferences increases their sense of fit. For example, allowing teachers to contribute in areas of interest (e.g., leading sports, clubs, or special programs) helps match personal goals with institutional roles. Additionally, involving teachers in school planning enhances their sense of purpose and alignment.

Increasing the Sacrifice of Leaving: Retention efforts can highlight and strengthen what teachers would lose by leaving. This includes securing benefits such as pension rights, promotion opportunities, housing loans, scholarships for further studies, and health insurance. Schools can also develop recognition programs that build emotional attachment, such as "teacher of the month" awards or service milestones celebrations.

In high-risk zones like the Northwest and Southwest, additional retention strategies could involve security allowances, trauma support, and mental health services to minimize flight from the profession due to fear or stress (Tchombe, 2000).

The Job Embeddedness Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and improving teacher recruitment and retention in Cameroon's public schools. By focusing on the interwoven factors of **links**, **fit**, and **sacrifice**, the theory encourages policymakers and school leaders to look beyond surface-level incentives and invest in deeper, more sustainable forms of engagement. When teachers are socially connected, professionally aligned, and aware of the value of staying, they are more likely to remain committed—even in the face of adversity. Implementing embeddedness-informed strategies can be a powerful step toward stabilizing Cameroon's teaching workforce and improving the quality of education nationwide.

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964)

Human Capital Theory (HCT), introduced by economist Gary Becker in his seminal work Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education (1964), is a foundational concept in labor economics and educational policy. At its core, the theory posits that individuals and societies derive economic benefits from investing in human capabilities—such as education, training, health, and skills development—much like investments in physical capital. Becker argued that individuals enhance their productivity and earnings potential through education and training, thereby contributing to national economic growth.

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Becker (1964) emphasized that human capital is not innate but rather developed through deliberate investments. These investments include formal education, on-the-job training, and other learning experiences. The theory assumes that individuals are rational actors who invest in education to improve their productivity and employability. From a macroeconomic perspective, a nation's growth and competitiveness are strongly tied to the quality and quantity of its human capital.

According to HCT, governments and employers should view education as a critical investment rather than an expense. Education not only yields private returns to individuals in the form of better wages and job prospects but also generates public benefits such as improved health, reduced crime rates, and higher civic participation (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018).

In the educational sector, teachers are both the products and facilitators of human capital. The knowledge and skills imparted to students directly affect a nation's long-term economic and social development. Investing in teacher training, remuneration, and working conditions is thus a strategic decision to build and sustain quality human capital.

Becker's theory implies that when the teaching profession is not adequately incentivized or supported, the quality of human capital development is compromised. This point is particularly relevant to developing countries like Cameroon, where teacher shortages, poor working conditions, and low motivation undermine the effectiveness of the educational system. The Implications for Teacher Recruitment and Retention in Cameroon's Public Schools is as follows:

Recognizing Teaching as a Human Capital Investment: In Cameroon, the recruitment of teachers has often been reactive and politically influenced rather than strategically aligned with long-term human capital goals (World Bank, 2020). The Human Capital Theory calls for a shift in perspective: teacher recruitment should be seen as an investment in national development. When teachers are qualified, motivated, and retained, student outcomes improve, feeding into a more educated, productive workforce.

Emphasizing Pre-service Training: HCT advocates for strong investments in pre-service education, recognizing it as a foundation for quality teaching. However, in Cameroon, many teachers—especially in rural or conflict-affected areas—are recruited without adequate training. This not only diminishes the quality of instruction but leads to high attrition rates due to lack of preparedness and job dissatisfaction (Tchombe, 2010). Ensuring that all recruited teachers undergo robust training before deployment will strengthen their capacity and commitment.

Selective Recruitment Based on Merit: Human Capital Theory implies that recruitment should prioritize competence and potential over political or ethnic considerations. In Cameroon, merit-based recruitment has often been undermined by corruption and nepotism, affecting both teacher quality and morale (Transparency International Cameroon, 2017). Implementing a transparent and competitive recruitment process would attract capable individuals and increase the prestige of the teaching profession.

Incentivizing Continuous Professional Development: One of the core assumptions of HCT is that skills depreciate over time without continuous investment. Teachers, like professionals in any field, need opportunities for ongoing learning. In Cameroon, however, many teachers do not have access to regular in-service training or promotions based on performance. This stagnation leads to professional fatigue and attrition (Ngome, 2003). A structured system of professional development, linked to salary increments and career progression, can retain talent and enhance teaching effectiveness.

Improving Remuneration and Working Conditions: Human Capital Theory emphasizes the relationship between compensation and productivity. Inadequate salaries and poor working environments diminish the perceived return on investment for teachers. In Cameroon, many public school teachers face delayed salaries, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of teaching materials—especially in rural and crisis-affected areas (UNESCO, 2021). Improving teacher welfare through timely payment, housing, and adequate teaching resources would signal that the state values its human capital assets.

Deploying Teachers Strategically: According to HCT, resources (including human capital) should be allocated efficiently. In Cameroon, there is a serious imbalance in teacher deployment—with urban areas being overstaffed and rural areas grossly understaffed (MINEDUB, 2019). This inefficient allocation reduces the overall return on investment in teachers. A data-driven deployment strategy that ensures equitable distribution of qualified teachers would maximize the impact of educational investments.

Based on Human Capital Theory, the following strategies could enhance teacher recruitment and retention in Cameroon's public schools: Institutionalize competitive and transparent recruitment processes. Increase investment in teacher education and pre-service training. Introduce financial and non-financial incentives for teachers in hard-to-reach areas. Create a framework for continuous professional development. Improve teacher remuneration, health insurance, and pension schemes. And Strengthen data systems for monitoring teacher supply, demand, and deployment. The Human Capital Theory of Becker (1964) provides a compelling framework for understanding the centrality of teachers in national development. In Cameroon, aligning teacher recruitment and retention strategies with HCT principles means recognizing teachers not merely as labor but as essential human capital assets. Investing in their education, welfare, and career development is not only a moral obligation but an economic imperative for sustainable growth and social stability.

Statement of the Problem

Cameroon's public education system is grappling with persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, particularly in rural and underserved regions. Despite government efforts to expand access to basic education, the shortage of competent teachers continues to undermine the quality and equity of learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2022). Recruitment practices in Cameroon are often centralized, bureaucratic, and slow, leading to delays in teacher deployment and an uneven distribution of personnel across the country (Ngwana, 2011). Many newly trained teachers remain unemployed for years, while existing schools operate with acute staff shortages.

The Cameroonian educational system faces significant structural and operational challenges that hinder its effectiveness and equity. According to UNESCO (2022), Cameroon has one of the highest pupil-teacher ratios in sub-Saharan Africa, with an average of 45:1 at the primary level, exceeding the recommended standard of 25:1. This overcrowding reflects severe teacher shortages, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions, where qualified educators are either unwilling to serve or lack support to remain in post (World Bank, 2021).

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Infrastructure is another critical issue. A 2020 Ministry of Basic Education report revealed that over 40% of public primary schools in Cameroon lack access to clean water, electricity, and proper sanitation. Moreover, classrooms are often dilapidated, overcrowded, or held in temporary structures, especially in underserved areas. The ongoing sociopolitical crisis in the North West and South West regions has further crippled the system, leading to the closure of over 4,000 schools and affecting more than 600,000 children (UNICEF, 2021). Additionally, issues such as poor teacher motivation, delayed salaries, corruption in school management, and limited access to inclusive education further compound the system's fragility. These challenges collectively contribute to low literacy rates, school dropout, and declining education quality across Cameroon.

Furthermore, retention of teachers has become a major concern. Teachers frequently abandon their posts due to poor working conditions, inadequate remuneration, lack of housing and basic infrastructure, and limited opportunities for career advancement and professional development (Mbua, 2003). These issues are more pronounced in rural and conflict-affected areas, such as the North West and South West regions, where insecurity adds to the difficulties of staying in the profession (Njoh, 2019). Consequently, many experienced educators migrate to urban centers, leave the profession entirely, or seek better opportunities in private schools or abroad. This persistent crisis in teacher recruitment and retention threatens the achievement of national education goals and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Without a clear, context-sensitive strategy to attract, deploy, and retain teachers, especially in marginalized areas, Cameroon's public education system may continue to suffer from teacher shortages, high attrition rates, and poor learner outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive examination of current policies, working conditions, and support systems for teachers in the public sector.

Research Objective

The objectives of this study are twofold.

a) First, to analyze the underlying causes of teacher shortages and brain drain in Cameroon's public schools, with a focus on systemic, socio-economic, and geographic factors influencing teacher attrition.
b) Second, the study seeks to develop practical policy recommendations aimed at enhancing teacher motivation and improving retention strategies.

These objectives are intended to support educational stakeholders in designing targeted interventions that address both recruitment inefficiencies and the long-term sustainability of the teaching workforce, particularly in underserved and rural areas of Cameroon.

METHODOLOGY

In order to properly digest this study on "Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Cameroon's Public Schools", the researcher combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to ensure depth, reliability, and contextual relevance. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, specifically a convergent parallel design, which allows for the collection and analysis of botqualitative and quantitative data concurrently. The rationale behind this design is to triangulate data and provide a comprehensive understanding of teacher recruitment and retention strategies in Cameroon's public schools. Quantitative data will provide statistical (numbers, statistics) insights into the extent of teacher shortages, retention rates, and distribution, while qualitative data (opinions, feelings, descriptions) will capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and strategies of key stakeholders involved in teacher management. The study will be conducted in selected public schools across the **Centre, Southwest, and Far North regions of Cameroon**, which represent diverse socio-political, economic, and geographical realities. This ensures a holistic representation of the teacher recruitment and retention challenges across the country. The target population of this study would include: Teachers (both retained and newly recruited), School administrators (principals, vice principal), Regional and divisional education officials from MINESEC.

Data Collection Instruments

Data was collected using a questionnaire, interview and the analysis of documents. Structured questionnaires will be administered to teachers and school administrators to collect quantitative data on: Recruitment pathways, Retention rates, Incentives, Work satisfaction and Transfer patterns. The questionnaire will include closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with: Regional education officials and Ministry officials. The interview guide explored: Recruitment policies and bottlenecks, Incentive structures, Professional development opportunities and Perceptions of teacher attrition causes. Document Analysis was also very important in the collection of data. Official documents, policy papers, teacher recruitment circulars, budgetary allocations, and MINESEC annual reports were analyzed to understand the institutional frameworks and trends in recruitment and retention.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique will be employed:

- **Stage 1 – Regional Selection**: Three regions will be purposively selected based on teacher recruitment and retention challenges.
- **Stage 2 – School Selection**: Within each region, 5 public secondary schools will be selected using stratified random sampling.
- **Stage 3 – Participant Selection**:
    - 20 teachers per school (random sampling)=260
    - 2 administrator per school (purposive sampling)=26
    - 2 regional and 2 divisional education officials (purposive sampling)=12

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Total sample size =298 participants

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Region, School, and Category

SN	REGION	SCHOOL	No OF TEACHERS	No OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS	REGIONAL EDUCATION OFFICIERS	DIVISIONAL EDUCATION OFFICIALS	
	NORTH REGION						
1		Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Garoua	20	2	2	2	
2		Government High School (GHS) Garoua Djamboutou	20	2			
3		Lycée de Djalingo	20	2			
4		Government Secondary School Ntangoh	20	2			
	CENTRE REGION						
1		General Leclerc High School	20	2	2	2	
2		Lycée de Mballa II	20	2			
3		Lycée de Nkolondom	20	2			
4		Lycée bilingue d'Emana	20	2			
1	**SOUTH WEST REGION**	Government Secondary School (GSS) Bisoro Balue	20	2	2	2	
2		GBHS Muyuka (Government Bilingual High School, Muyuka)	20	2			
3		GBHS KUMBA	20	2			
4		GBHS Limbe	20	2			
5		Lycee Molyko	20	2			
	TOTAL	**TOTAL**	**260**	**26**	**6**	**6**	**298**

Source: Field work September 2025

FINDINGS

Table 2: **Teachers' Responses on Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Cameroon's Public Schools (N = 260)**

SN	Item		S A	A	SD	D	A/SA	SD/D
1	Low salaries are a major cause of teacher shortages in Cameroon.	260	176 (67.7%)	79 (30.4%)	0 (00.0%)	5 (9.9%)	255 (98.1%)	5 (9.9%)
2	Poor working conditions (e.g., overcrowded classrooms, heavy workload) contribute to teachers leaving the profession.	260	139 (53.7%)	83 (31.9%)	8 (3.1%)	30 (11.5%)	222 (85.4%)	38 (9.9%)

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3	Limited opportunities for professional development influence teachers' decisions to leave.	260	136 (52.3%)	82 (31.5%)	27 (10.4%)	15 (5.8%)	218 (83.8%)	42 (16.2%)
4	Government policies and lack of support contribute to teacher migration (brain drain)	260	133 (51.2%)	38 (14.6%)	38 (14.6%)	51 (19.6%)	171 (65.8%)	89 (34.2%)
5	Inadequate teaching resources and infrastructure reduce teachers' job satisfaction	260	171 (65.7%)	27 (10.4%)	11 (4.2%)	51 (19.6%)	198 (76.1%)	62 (23.8%)
6	Improved incentives and career opportunities would reduce teacher brain drain	260	183 (70.4%)	61 (23.5%)	5 (9.9%)	11 (4.2%)	244 (93.8%)	16 (6.1%)
	Multiple respond set		**938 (60.1%)**	**370 (23.7%)**	**89 (5.7%)**	**163 (10.4%)**	**1308 (83.8%)**	**252 (16.2%)**

In aggregate, **83.8%** of teachers agreed that teacher recruitment influences retention strategies in Cameroon's public schools while **16.2%** disagreed. Specifically, majority 255(98.1%) of the teachers agreed to the fact low salaries are a major cause of teacher shortages in Cameroon. Similarly, 244(93.8%) accepted that improved incentives and career opportunities would reduce teacher brain drain. Also, 222(85.4%) of the teachers accepted that poor working conditions (e.g., overcrowded classrooms, heavy workload) contribute to teachers leaving the profession.
Furthermore, 218(83.8%) of teachers agreed to the fact that limited opportunities for professional development influence teachers' decisions to leave. Also 198(76.1%) of the teachers sampled for the study agreed that inadequate teaching resources and infrastructure reduce teachers' job satisfaction. Finally, 171(65.8%) of the teachers agreed that government policies and lack of support contribute to teacher migration (brain drain) main while 89(34.2%) of the teachers disagreed.

Table 3: **School Administrators' Responses on Recruitment and Retention Strategies in Cameroon's Public Schools (N = 26)**

SN	Item		S A		A	SD	D	A/SA	SD/D
1	Low salaries are a major cause of teacher shortages in Cameroon.	26	14 (53.8%)		3 (11.5%)	6 (23.2%)	3 (11.5%)	17 (65.4%)	9 (34.6%)
2	Poor working conditions (e.g., overcrowded classrooms, heavy workload) contribute to teachers leaving the profession.	26	10 (38.5%)		6 (23.2%)	6 (23.2%)	4 (15.4%)	16 (61.5%)	10 (38.5%)
3	Limited opportunities for professional development influence teachers' decisions to leave.	26	4 (15.4%)		9 (34.6%)	10 (38.5%)	3 (11.5%)	13 (50.0%)	13 (50.0%)
4	Government policies and lack of support contribute to teacher migration (brain drain)	26	11 (42.3%)		5 (19.2%)	8 (30.8%)	2 (7.7%)	16 (61.5%)	10 (38.5%)
5	Inadequate teaching resources and infrastructure reduce teachers' job satisfaction	26	6 (23.2%)		3 (11.5%)	15 (57.7%)	2 (7.7%)	9 (34.6%)	17 (65.4%)
6	Improved incentives and career opportunities would reduce teacher brain drain	26	9 (34.6%)		9 (34.6%)	5 (19.2%)	3 (11.5%)	18 (69.2%)	8 (30.8%)
	Multiple respond set		**54 (23.6%)**		**35 (22.4%)**	**50 (32.1%)**	**17 (10.9%)**	**89 (57.1%)**	**67 (42.9%)**

In aggregate, **57.1%** of the school administrator's agreed that teacher recruitment influences retention strategies in Cameroon's public schools while **42.9%** of them disagreed. Specifically, majority 18 (69.2%) of the school administrators agreed to the fact that improved incentives and career opportunities would reduce teacher brain drain. Similarly, 17(65.4%) of them accepted that low salaries are a major cause of teacher shortages in Cameroon. Also, 16(61.5%) of the school administrator's accepted that poor working conditions (e.g., overcrowded classrooms, heavy workload) contribute to teachers leaving the profession.
Furthermore, another 16(61.5%) of the school administrators agreed to the fact that government policies and lack of support contribute to teacher migration (brain drain). Half 13(50.0%) of the school administrators sampled for the study agreed that limited opportunities for professional development influence teachers' decisions to leave while another half 13(50.0%) disagreed. Finally, majority 17 (65.4%) of the school administrators disagreed to the fact that inadequate teaching resources and infrastructure reduce teachers' job satisfaction while 9 (34.6%) of them agreed.

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DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that teacher recruitment and retention remain major challenges within Cameroon's public schools. The results obtained from both teachers and school administrators indicate that several interconnected factors contribute significantly to teacher shortages, teacher migration, and low retention rates in the education sector. In general, the majority of respondents agreed that recruitment conditions directly influence teachers' willingness to remain in the profession.

The study established that low salaries are one of the most significant causes of teacher shortages in Cameroon. An overwhelming majority of teachers (98.1%) agreed that poor remuneration discourages many qualified individuals from entering or remaining in the teaching profession. Similarly, 65.4% of school administrators supported this view. This finding suggests that inadequate salaries reduce teachers' motivation and increase the likelihood of migration to other professions or countries where better economic opportunities exist. The finding is consistent with motivational theories such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which emphasizes salary as an important hygiene factor influencing job satisfaction and retention.

The study further revealed that poor working conditions, including overcrowded classrooms and heavy workloads, contribute greatly to teacher attrition. A majority of teachers (85.4%) and school administrators (61.5%) agreed that unfavorable working conditions push teachers out of the profession. This implies that teachers are more likely to remain in schools where they experience manageable workloads, supportive environments, and conducive teaching conditions. Poor working conditions often lead to stress, burnout, and low morale among teachers, thereby affecting their commitment and effectiveness.

Another important finding was that limited opportunities for professional development influence teachers' decisions to leave the profession. While 83.8% of teachers agreed with this assertion, only 50% of school administrators shared the same opinion. This difference in perception may suggest that administrators underestimate the importance teachers place on career growth and professional advancement. Teachers desire continuous training, promotions, workshops, and opportunities to improve their professional competencies. Where such opportunities are lacking, teachers may feel stagnant and unmotivated.

The findings also demonstrated that government policies and lack of institutional support contribute to teacher brain drain. About 65.8% of teachers and 61.5% of school administrators agreed that weak policy implementation and insufficient support systems encourage teachers to migrate to other sectors or countries. This finding highlights the importance of effective educational policies, transparent recruitment procedures, timely promotions, and adequate administrative support in retaining qualified teachers within the public education system.

Furthermore, the study showed differing perceptions regarding the role of teaching resources and infrastructure in teacher retention. While 76.1% of teachers agreed that inadequate teaching resources reduce job satisfaction, the majority of school administrators (65.4%) disagreed. This variation may be because administrators are more focused on institutional management, whereas teachers directly experience the daily challenges associated with insufficient instructional materials, poor classroom infrastructure, and limited educational resources. The lack of adequate resources can negatively affect teaching effectiveness and reduce teachers' enthusiasm for their work. According to one of the delegates most teachers do not really care about infrastructure, that most teachers leave their jobs because of the search of green pastures. They added that most teachers do not love the teaching job. So they turn to leave for the search of a better life.

Finally, the study found that improved incentives and career opportunities are essential in reducing teacher brain drain. A large majority of teachers (93.8%) and school administrators (69.2%) agreed that better incentives, promotions, and career development opportunities would encourage teachers to remain in the profession. This finding underscores the importance of adopting comprehensive retention strategies that include financial rewards, professional recognition, supportive working environments, and career advancement opportunities.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve teacher recruitment and retention strategies in Cameroon's public schools. These recommendations are aimed at addressing the major challenges identified by both teachers and school administrators.

Firstly, the Government of Cameroon should improve teachers' salaries and financial incentives in order to make the teaching profession more attractive. The findings revealed that low salaries are a major cause of teacher shortages and brain drain. Competitive salaries, rural hardship allowances, housing benefits, and transport allowances should therefore be introduced, especially for teachers serving in remote and conflict-affected areas. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2021), adequate remuneration is essential for improving teacher motivation and retention. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that better teacher welfare contributes significantly to educational quality and workforce stability.

Secondly, the Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) and the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB) should improve teachers' working conditions. Overcrowded classrooms, excessive workloads, and poor school environments discourage teachers from remaining in the profession. The government should recruit more teachers to reduce pupil-teacher ratios and invest in classroom construction, furniture, electricity, and sanitation facilities. In the Cameroonian context, many schools in rural communities still lack basic teaching infrastructure, which negatively affects teacher morale and effectiveness. Darling-Hammond (2017) argues that supportive working environments are essential for teacher retention and professional commitment.

Thirdly, there is a need to strengthen professional development programmes for teachers. Continuous professional training, seminars, workshops, and in-service education programmes should be organised regularly to help teachers improve their pedagogical skills and adapt to modern educational practices. Promotion opportunities should also be transparent and merit-based. This recommendation is important because the study showed that limited career advancement opportunities influence teachers' decisions to leave the profession. According to OECD (2020), professional development enhances teacher satisfaction, competence, and long-term retention.

Furthermore, the government should formulate and implement more effective educational policies that support teachers. Delays in recruitment, promotions, salary payments, and integration into the public service often discourage young teachers in Cameroon. Educational authorities should therefore simplify administrative procedures and ensure timely payment of salaries and benefits. In addition, teachers should be actively involved

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in educational policy formulation and decision-making processes. This will help teachers feel valued and respected within the educational system. UNESCO (2022) notes that inclusive educational governance promotes teacher motivation and institutional trust.

Another recommendation is that the government and educational stakeholders should provide adequate teaching and learning resources in schools. Textbooks, laboratories, computers, libraries, and instructional materials are essential for effective teaching. Teachers who work with insufficient resources often experience frustration and reduced job satisfaction. Public-private partnerships can also be encouraged to support the provision of educational resources, especially in underserved communities.

Finally, special attention should be given to teachers working in crisis-affected regions of Cameroon such as the North West and South West Regions. Security concerns, displacement, and instability have contributed significantly to teacher shortages in these areas. The government should provide security guarantees, psychosocial support, and special incentives for teachers serving in such difficult conditions. This would encourage teachers to remain in the profession and contribute to educational continuity despite the challenges.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies in Cameroon's public schools require a holistic approach that addresses salaries, working conditions, professional development, educational policies, and teacher welfare. Addressing these factors can significantly improve teacher satisfaction, reduce brain drain, and enhance the quality of education in Cameroon's public schools.

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