Journal of Education and Educational Research
ISSN: 2957-9465 | Vol. 16, No. 1, 2025

Teacher Turn Over in Private Vocational Schools in Zhanjiang City, China

Yecheng Miao *, Cabrera.Wendell [a]

Angeles University Foundation, Angeles, Philippines

*** Corresponding author:** Yecheng Miao (Email: 690164342@qq.com), [a] cabrera.wendell@auf.edu.ph

Abstract: This study adopts a mixed research method combining semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys to explore the high teacher turnover phenomenon in three private vocational schools in Zhanjiang City, namely Yinfan School, Zhanjiang Finance and Economics Vocational and Technical School, and Zhanjiang Electronic Vocational and Technical School. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with 20 participants, including human resources staff, current teachers, and former teachers, and thematic analysis was conducted. Quantitative data were obtained from 312 in-service teachers via questionnaires, followed by statistical analysis such as descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The research aims to identify the key factors affecting teacher turnover in private vocational schools in Zhanjiang City, so as to provide targeted references for improving teacher stability.

Keywords: Private Schools; Teacher Turnover; Turnover Rate; Mixed Research; Interview Method.

1. Introduction

With the continuous development of education, private schools have become an important part of China's education system. Zhanjiang City has 34 vocational schools, among which 9 are private. However, the high teacher turnover rate in these private vocational schools has seriously affected the stability of teaching quality and the sustainable development of education. From a macro perspective, the instability of the teaching team hinders the formulation of long-term educational development plans and the formation of characteristic educational models in private schools. From a micro perspective, frequent teacher changes have adverse effects on students' learning experience and academic performance.

Relevant data shows that the problem of teacher turnover in private schools is widespread and prominent. The 2024 survey data from the China Private Education Association indicates that the average annual turnover rate of teachers in private schools is as high as 25%, far exceeding the 8% in public schools. In Guangdong Province, the overall teacher turnover rate of private vocational schools in the past five years is much higher than that of public schools. Similar phenomena exist in other regions: in 2024, the average teacher turnover rate of private primary schools in a certain district of Shanghai that purchase degree places reached 28%, nearly twice that of non-purchase degree schools; private higher vocational colleges in southern Jiangsu are facing a serious loss of young and middle-aged teachers.

Existing research on private school teacher turnover has achieved certain results, but there are still controversies. Some studies believe that economic factors represented by salary are the main reasons for teacher turnover, while others emphasize the importance of non-economic factors such as school management and career development opportunities. Against this background, this study takes three private vocational schools in Zhanjiang City as the research objects, collects first-hand data through field investigations, comprehensively analyzes the internal reasons for the high teacher turnover rate, and expects to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for optimizing the teacher structure and improving education quality in Zhanjiang's private vocational schools.

This study is of great significance for improving the teaching quality of private vocational schools. Firstly, it can provide support for stabilizing the teaching team. By identifying the factors causing teacher turnover, schools can formulate targeted retention strategies. Secondly, it helps private schools optimize teaching plans and management systems, enabling them to formulate long-term teaching plans based on a stable teaching team. Finally, reducing teacher turnover can improve students' learning experience, help establish stable teacher-student relationships, and realize personalized teaching, thereby indirectly improving teaching quality.

2. Research Objectives

2.1. General Objective

The overall goal of this study is to identify the factors affecting teacher turnover in private vocational schools in Zhanjiang City.

2.2. Specific Objectives

Calculate the one-year teacher turnover rate of selected private vocational schools in Zhanjiang City, which is expressed as the percentage of departing teachers relative to the average number of employed teachers during the period.

Deeply identify and classify the specific reasons behind the teacher turnover rate in the selected schools.

3. Review of Related Literature

3.1. Factors Affecting Teacher Turnover in Private Schools

3.1.1. Economic Factors

Salary is a key factor affecting teachers' turnover decisions. Studies have shown that if the salaries of private school teachers are not competitive compared with those of public schools or other high-income industries, teachers are more

likely to resign for better economic returns (Liu, 2004). In addition, the imperfect welfare security system of private schools, such as the lack of housing subsidies, medical security, and annuities, intensifies teachers' sense of job insecurity and promotes their flow to units with better welfare benefits (Zhang, 2024). The unstable salary structure and unfair internal distribution in some private schools further exacerbate the loss of excellent teachers. (Wang, 2017)

3.1.2. Career Development Factors

Career development opportunities have a significant impact on teachers' willingness to stay. Private school teachers often face problems such as narrow promotion channels and limited training resources (Zhou, 2019). Some schools have non-transparent promotion standards, overemphasizing teaching achievements while ignoring teachers' comprehensive quality and long-term contributions, making it difficult for hardworking teachers to get promoted. Moreover, the lack of a systematic training system restricts teachers' improvement of teaching skills and knowledge updating, making it difficult to meet their career growth needs and leading to their resignation. Young teachers in private colleges and universities also face career difficulties such as insufficient funding and lack of development mechanisms. (Li, 2023).

3.1.3. School Management Factors

Unreasonable school management policies and poor cultural atmosphere are important reasons for teacher turnover. Complicated teaching management and evaluation systems, such as frequent exam rankings and overly strict teaching norms, put enormous pressure on teachers and hinder their teaching innovation. In addition, complex interpersonal relationships and the lack of democratic management in schools reduce teachers' job satisfaction and sense of belonging. The backward concept of human resource management and imperfect systems in some private schools also affect the stability of the teaching team. (Du, 2019)

3.1.4. Job Satisfaction

There is a significant negative correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and turnover intention. Although the overall professional identity of some university teachers is relatively high, they are dissatisfied with the allocation of teaching tasks and academic research support. For private school teachers, factors such as heavy workload, low salary satisfaction, and insufficient professional recognition lead to low job satisfaction, which in turn increases their turnover intention (Chen, 2017). In Shenzhen international schools, self-development and salary issues affect teachers' job satisfaction, and work participation plays an intermediary role between satisfaction and turnover intention. (Wang, 2012).

3.2. The Impact of Management Policies on Teacher Turnover

A good school culture and management atmosphere are crucial to retaining teachers. Some private schools transfer educational pressure to teachers through strict assessment systems and rigid management methods. Once students' overall scores are unsatisfactory or there are disciplinary violations, teachers are deemed unqualified, which affects their performance and salaries and causes teachers to adopt a perfunctory attitude towards work. On the contrary, humanized management, respect for teachers' professional autonomy, encouragement of teachers' participation in school decision-making, and the establishment of a scientific and reasonable teaching evaluation system can reduce teachers' work pressure and enhance their sense of belonging and loyalty. (Gong & Wu, 2024)

3.3. Suggestions for Reducing Teacher Turnover

To reduce the high turnover rate of teachers, private schools need to take multiple measures. In terms of salary and welfare, schools should adjust salary levels according to market conditions and teachers' performance, and increase various subsidies to improve teachers' economic security. In terms of career development, a fair and transparent promotion mechanism should be established, promotion channels should be broadened, and regular professional training and academic exchange opportunities should be provided for teachers. In terms of school management, it is necessary to optimize the internal organizational structure, innovate the training system, establish a risk management mechanism, and build a scientific and standardized management system. At the same time, the government and society should also give corresponding policy support to strengthen the protection of teachers' rights and interests. (Luo & Li, 2025)

4. Research Methods

4.1. Study Design

This study adopts a mixed research method, integrating qualitative and quantitative research, and uses an exploratory sequential design. Guided by the Job-Demands - Resources (JD - R) model, the study first conducts qualitative interviews to explore the research topic, generate research hypotheses, and then uses quantitative methods to test the hypotheses.

In the qualitative phase, through interviews, in-depth understanding of the research object is obtained, and key themes such as salary and welfare, career development, school management, and job satisfaction are identified to guide the design of the quantitative questionnaire. In the quantitative phase, questionnaire surveys are used to collect data to determine the influence degree of various factors on teacher turnover and verify the qualitative research results. Finally, the results of the two phases are integrated to comprehensively and deeply explore the reasons for teacher turnover in private schools.

4.2. Study Participants

Purposive sampling is used to select research participants. For qualitative interviews, 20 participants are selected from three private vocational schools, including 5 human resources staff, 10 current teachers, and 5 former teachers. Human resources staff are familiar with the school's teacher recruitment and turnover situation; former teachers can provide personal resignation experiences; current teachers can reflect the current job experience that affects turnover intention.

For the quantitative survey, 312 in-service teachers are selected, including 67 from School A, 165 from School B, and 80 from School C, to collect data on their job satisfaction, salary expectations, and career development perceptions. The sample size is calculated using the Raosoft sample size calculator, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The total number of in-service teachers in the three schools is 466, including 80 in School A, 286 in School B, and 100 in School C.

The inclusion criteria for participants are former teachers

who have worked in the selected three private schools and human resources staff responsible for teacher recruitment and management. Teachers who resigned due to force majeure factors such as sudden serious illness and family relocation are excluded. In qualitative research, the sample size is not determined by statistical power but by data saturation. The sample size of 20 people can cover a variety of voices, and data collection will continue until no new themes appear.

4.3. Data Collection Methods

4.3.1. Qualitative Data Collection

The main method of qualitative data collection is semi-structured interviews. Before the interview, the researcher reviews relevant documents of the Ministry of Education on the recruitment requirements and retention policies of private school teachers, designs a detailed interview outline covering salary, personnel management policies, and resignation motivation, and invites 5 experts to verify the outline. A pilot interview is conducted with 3 participants who are not part of the formal sample to adjust and improve the interview outline. During the formal interview, the time is controlled between 10 - 30 minutes, a relaxed atmosphere is created to encourage interviewees to express their views, and the interview content is recorded and transcribed word for word in a timely manner.

4.3.2. Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data are collected through questionnaires. The questionnaire is designed based on key themes from the literature review and qualitative interviews, using a 5-point Likert scale. Before the formal survey, a pilot test is conducted with 30 - 50 in-service teachers who are not part of the formal sample. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to test reliability (the threshold is ≥ 0.7), and exploratory factor analysis is used to test validity. Items with factor loadings < 0.5 or cross-loading are revised or deleted to ensure the scientificity of the questionnaire.

4.4. Data Analysis Methods

4.4.1. Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is used to analyze interview data, combining inductive and deductive coding methods. Guided by existing theories and literature factors, deductive coding is carried out, while inductive coding is used to discover new themes in the data. NVivo 12 software is used to manage and organize the data, code and classify the interview transcripts, extract themes related to teacher turnover, and explore the reasons for high turnover and the relationships between various factors.

4.4.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

Statistical software such as SPSS is used to analyze the questionnaire data. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation of each indicator are calculated, and correlation analysis is conducted on data of different dimensions, such as the correlation between salary and job satisfaction, and between career development opportunities and turnover intention. Through quantitative analysis, the relationships between factors found in qualitative research are verified, which enhances the reliability of the research conclusions and helps to classify the reasons for teacher turnover.

4.5. Data Integration and Interpretation

The results of qualitative and quantitative data analysis are integrated by comparing and verifying the themes in qualitative research with the statistical relationships in quantitative research. For example, if qualitative research finds that the teaching evaluation system is an important reason for teachers' resignation, the correlation analysis results between the teaching evaluation system and job satisfaction, as well as turnover intention in quantitative research, can further support this conclusion, so as to comprehensively understand the phenomenon of teacher turnover in private schools.

4.6. Research Procedures and Ethical Considerations

4.6.1. Ethical Considerations

The research strictly abides by ethical principles. Before the interview, the research purpose, process, and data usage are clearly explained to the participants, and their informed consent is obtained to protect their privacy and personal information.

4.6.2. Specific Procedures

First, review relevant policy documents, design interview outlines and questionnaires, coordinate with the school's human resources department to determine the interview time and location, and collect data on the number of departing teachers to calculate the turnover rate. Second, conduct formal interviews as planned, control the interview time, record and transcribe the content in a timely manner. Finally, use thematic analysis and statistical methods to analyze the collected qualitative and quantitative data respectively, and integrate the analysis results.

References

[1] Liu, Q. Investigation and analysis of teacher turnover in private schools[J]. Journal of Henan Mechanical and Electrical College, 2004(1): 10–11.

[2] Zhang, S. Research on problems and countermeasures of full-time teacher turnover in private universities[D]. Wuhan: Hubei University, 2024.

[3] Wang, N. An empirical study on the relationship between teacher's motivation satisfaction and turnover tendency in private colleges and universities[D]. Beijing: Capital University of Economics and Trade, 2017.

[4] Li, Q. Problems and Countermeasures of the Incentive Mechanism for Teachers in Private Higher Education Institutions from the Perspective of Two-Factor Theory[C]. Proceedings of the Third 'Innovative Education and Precise Management High-Level Forum' on Educational Theory and Management, 2023: 222–224.

[5] Du, X. Research on the phenomenon of teacher turnover in private primary and secondary schools[D]. Qingdao: Qingdao University, 2019.

[6] Chen, S. Analysis and Countermeasures of Teacher Turnover in Private Universities[D]. Fuzhou: Fujian Normal University, 2017.

[7] Wang, Y. Survey on the Mobility of Teachers in Private Middle Schools[D]. Kunming: Yunnan University, 2012.

[8] Zhou, L. Why do they leave[D]. Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University, 2019.

[9] Luo, Y., Li, J. Analysis of the Dilemmas and Countermeasures in the Construction of Teachers' Teams in Private Universities in the High-Quality Development of Education[J]. Journal of Jilin Provincial Institute of Education, 2025, 41(01): 61–66.

[10] Gong, H., Wu, X. The Realistic Dilemmas and Solutions for the Professional Development of Teachers in Vocational

Undergraduate Universities[J]. Vocational Education Forum, 2024, 40(07): 58–65.

[11] Zhanjiang Municipal Bureau of Education. 2024 Zhanjiang Vocational Education Development Report[R]. Zhanjiang: Zhanjiang Municipal Bureau of Education, 2024.

[12] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Guidelines for the Construction of Teachers in Vocational Schools[Z]. Beijing: Ministry of Education, 2023.