

Head of School Managerial Strategies on Addressing Challenges Facing the Former Unemployed Graduate Secondary School Teachers in Kahama District, Tanzania

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Abstract

Building on Human Capital Theory, this study examined managerial strategies for addressing the challenges faced by former unemployed graduate-teachers in their teaching processes. This study employed a qualitative research approach and a case study design. The sample involved 86 respondents. The data were collected through interviews and documentary review. The findings revealed professional difficulties in teaching methodologies, student assessment, classroom management, and psychological effects among former unemployed graduate-teachers in classrooms. Moreover, it was noted that overcrowded classrooms, graduate mind-set, lack of a conducive learning environment, and excessive focus on entrepreneurship activities were identified as challenges facing former unemployed graduate-teachers in their teaching processes. The findings indicated that seminars, enhanced cooperation in teaching, promotion of a conducive working environment, and provision of pedagogical leadership were identified as strategies that can address the challenges facing former unemployed graduate-teachers in their teaching endeavours. The study concludes that long-term unemployment affects teaching competency. It recommends that the government invest in induction programs for former unemployed teachers to boost their teaching skills.

Keywords: *Employability, Teaching Competency, and Secondary Schools*

Introduction

Graduate unemployment is a global phenomenon. The situation is particularly difficult in Africa, where many inhabitants see university education as a lifeline to economic freedom, prosperity, and a better living condition (ILO, 2016). However, teachers who graduated from various educational institutions have been unemployed in Tanzania. This is due to the number of graduates produced exceeding the available teaching job opportunities (Mbalamwezi, 2015). Nevertheless, the issue of university graduates being unemployed has

been affecting the whole World. Experience from developed countries, such as China, shows that it has been a populous country and has faced challenges in graduate employability since the 1990s (Yang, 2016). The introduction of the household registration system in China led to more graduates than there were available job opportunities. For example, from 1999 to 2013, the number of new entrants to universities increased from 1.08 million to 7 million. Likewise, from 2001 to 2014, the number of new university graduates in China increased from 1.07 million to 7 million. A Nationwide survey reported that in 2012, about 530,000 graduates were unemployed in China (Yang, 2016).

According to Ding and Yu (2017), China produces over seven million graduates per year, but only two million were employed by 2013. This affects graduates' lives, and many continue to depend on parents or relatives for survival. In Kenya, the gap between employer demand and the supply of university graduates is widening, and various stakeholders have questioned the quality and quantity of graduates entering the labour market (Kalei, 2016). It is evident that there is a discrepancy between graduates' skills and the job market's requirements. This means that many graduates lack basic employability skills when they enter the job market. Issues related to mismatches between graduate skills and employer needs have led to graduates' unemployment and social problems (Kalei, 2016).

Over the years, Namibia has shifted from a centralised to a decentralised recruitment system, allowing regional offices to address local school needs more effectively (Aloovi, 2025). The literature indicates that Namibia faces a rising teacher unemployment rate, with statistics from the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) showing an increase from 31% in 2019 to 34% in 2020. This issue is further compounded by an oversupply of teacher graduates, which is disproportionate to the labour market demand. Mwangonde (2014) reveals that only 20% of university graduates in Tanzania find employment each year. Some statistics show that more than 900,000 graduates enter the job market, but only 50,000-60,000 are employed, suggesting that about 800,000 remain jobless (Gregory, 2017).

However, their access to formal employment is limited, as only approximately 40,000 (5.7%) find jobs in the formal sector. Thus, most graduates remain jobless and unfit for the job market. Therefore, unemployment in Tanzania remains a daunting challenge in this developing economy. Consequently, employment for higher education graduates has become a severe concern for students, parents, universities, the government, and the public (Mbalamwezi, 2015). Moreover, the NBS (2018b) shows that the public sector employment rate dropped from 36.7% in 2015 to 35% in 2016 across sectors, including the teaching profession in the education sector. This suggests a limited ability of the Tanzanian government to create employment, while private-sector

employment growth remains minimal (Kalufya & Mwakajinga, 2016). Tanzania's official statistics indicate that the unemployment rate has decreased slightly, from 10.3% in 2014 to 9.7% in 2018 (NBS, 2018b). In other data, Nganga (2014) suggests that 61% of Tanzanian graduates are unfit for the job market. Generally, it is estimated that only 5.7% of graduates each year find jobs in the formal sector that everyone aspires to (Ngalomba, 2018).

Different ways to rescue the employability challenges have been suggested to reduce graduates' unemployment. For example, Mbalamwezi (2015) suggests that graduates' mindsets should be transformed from employment to self-employment through teaching and training to change their mindsets and attitudes. Moreover, Tanzania's higher education system needs to prepare graduates for sustainable livelihoods in all positive forms. Business educators should rethink their training approaches and strategies and adopt a competence-based model of education delivery, and trainers should monitor labour-market changes and demands so they can rethink their mission, messages, and methods in line with these requirements.

ILO (2016) shows that only 10% percent from 800,000 graduates who enter the labour market are employed. Also, ILO (2020) revealed that only 3.6% of youth in Tanzania have formal employment opportunities. The unemployment issue seems to be in the education sector as well, where graduate-teachers are currently facing unemployment challenges. In Tanzania, up to the 1990s, teaching employment was automatic, as graduates were automatically hired for public school positions. However, the unemployment problem affected the education sector, especially in the 2000s, and worsened in the 2020s. For instance, the government, through the President's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PORALG), announced the teaching employment opportunities in 2021 and 2022. Despite efforts to employ teachers, only a few received jobs offer, and among those who did, some have been out of work for several years and so faced pedagogical challenges.

Prolonged unemployment among graduate teachers results in notable professional challenges that undermine their effectiveness upon entry into the teaching profession. Extended absence from classroom practice contributes to the erosion of subject content knowledge and pedagogical skills, as pre-service training is not continuously reinforced (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Delayed entry also limits access to induction, mentoring, and workplace learning, which are essential for developing instructional competence and professional confidence (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa further shows that prolonged unemployment weakens teachers' exposure to learner-centred pedagogies and professional identity, increasing the need for managerial support from school heads (Avalos, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2010). Hence, this study aimed to:

- i) Assess the challenges faced former unemployed graduate-teachers in their teaching processes and
- ii) Examine school head strategies on solving the challenges facing former unemployed graduate-teachers in their teaching endeavours.

Literature Review

The Concept of Employability

Zavala (2020) argues that employability is defined as a graduate's competence in designing their professional career, accessing the job market and managing their job development with success and satisfaction in the labour market. Ngasu (2012) found that graduates themselves, the poor education and entrepreneurship curriculum in our country are the main causes of graduate unemployment. Employment is defined as the potential to secure a job at a workplace, while, employability is the potential to secure, maintain, and grow in a particular job at the workplace. Based on this definition, it is safe to conclude that employability requires a set of skills that can help individuals get employed, remain employed, and even become self-employed and create jobs. The term employability is also reciprocally used with the term work-readiness (Yorke, 2010).

Employability skills are crucial for overcoming employment barriers, and a lack of job opportunities can undermine the motivation and effectiveness of graduates, including teachers. Enhancing employability skills is therefore, essential not only for securing employment but also for ensuring that graduates, such as teachers, can perform their roles effectively and contribute positively to their sectors. This connection underscores the importance of aligning education and skill development with labour market needs to mitigate unemployment and its negative impacts on professional performance. The study of the implications of graduate-teacher unemployment for teaching competency highlights how unemployment among graduates can negatively affect their motivation and preparedness to perform their roles effectively.

Types of Employability Skills

According to Bano and Vasantha (2020), employers and recruiters highly demand skills during interviews and placements. These skill categories include professional, methodological, social, personal, analytical, and digital literacy skills. Employability skills emphasise graduates' ability to adapt and apply their academic and personal skills to achieve tangible outcomes that support graduate employability. Chung and Yet (2009) found that most employers want to employ those graduates who are from the public universities because they seem to have the needed job skills. Furthermore, it was suggested that younger employers are more favourable to graduates' employability skills.

These conditions however, cause delays in getting employment by graduate-teachers with required employability skills.

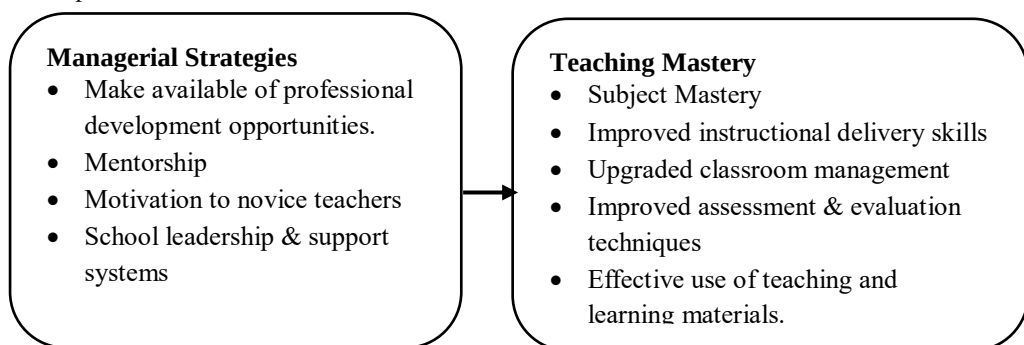
Human Capital Theory

The focus of this study challenges Human Capital Theory, as proposed by Becker and Schultz, which posits that education and training are vital investments that enhance market productivity. (Becker, 2009). The theory suggests that quality education significantly influences economic growth and human capital development. However, many graduate-teachers face unemployment, which not only hinders their productivity but also negatively affects their teaching competency due to a lack of practical teaching experience and skills. Furthermore, as unemployed teachers may refrain from seeking professional development, this leads to a less qualified teaching workforce. Thus, the study highlights the critical need to address the consequences of unemployment among teachers and enhance their human capital to improve the overall quality of teaching and education in Kahama District Council, Tanzania.

Human capital is highly relevant individuals possess and can contribute to their productivity and success in the workplace. In the context of teaching, human capital is essential for teachers to effectively impart knowledge, engage students, and foster a positive learning environment. In school context, teachers are unable to fully utilize their human capital due to employability, it can hinder their ability to perform their job effectively and ultimately impact the quality of education that students receive. Therefore, understanding the role of human capital in teaching competency is crucial for addressing the challenges posed by delays in acquiring employment in public secondary schools in Kahama District Council, Tanzania.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1:
Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher's Insight and Human Capital Theory (2024).

The conceptual framework illustrates the roles of managerial strategies employed by school heads in managing teaching challenges experienced by the former unemployed graduate teachers in their teaching endeavours in schools. The framework assumes that the effectiveness of managerial practices directly influences the extent to which novice teachers are able to overcome instructional and professional challenges in the school environment. The school heads' managerial strategies include the provision of professional development opportunities, induction and orientation programmes for newly recruited teachers, mentorship arrangements, motivational practices, and supportive school leadership programs. These strategies represent deliberate actions taken by school heads to build subject mastery, improve instructional delivery skills, upgrade classroom management, enhance effective assessment and evaluation techniques, and improve effective use of teaching and learning materials. Henceforth, the challenges experienced due to inadequate prior exposure to practical teaching environments are well handled and consequently, novice teachers (former unemployed graduate-teachers) acquire the necessary competencies, adapt smoothly to the school context, and perform effectively in their instructional roles. Conversely, weak or absent of managerial support may leave novice teachers struggling to cope with classroom demands.

Methodology

The study employed a case study research design under qualitative research approach. With this research design, researchers collected, analysed and comparing qualitative data in a single phase of data collection to determine whether the results corroborate or contradict one another. Since this study was qualitative in nature, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to select different categories of sample as follows.

Graduate teachers (i.e. who experienced more than 2 years' delay in acquiring formal employment but were in employment more than 4 years) were selected using snowball sampling technique. This method made it easier for one participant to introduce another participant. Since, it was challenging to identify graduates who were impacted by the issue of a lack of formal jobs, the researcher chose graduate-teachers using a snowball sampling approach. *New teachers* (these were recently employed teachers with less than 1 year and previous stayed without formal employment for some years) were sampled using a purposive non-probability sampling technique. This included teachers of different subjects. Purposive sampling ensured that the teachers selected had relevant experiences and insights regarding the problem.

Senior teachers (i.e. with 5 and above years in teaching) were also sampled using purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique allowed selecting senior teachers with experiences in the field, because they were able

to provide in-depth knowledge regarding the study. *Heads of schools* (i.e. those with 3 and above years in headship) were sampled using purposive sampling technique. Heads are responsible for managing school operations, employing managerial strategies, and expected to professionally support the novice teachers so by purposive sampling technique, helped in selecting heads of schools who have direct experience with the changes brought about by curriculum implementation. *District Secondary Education Officer* (DSEO) was sampled using purposive sampling technique and based on her position as key supporter of managerial strategies that would capacitate the novice teachers in schools. Purposive sampling ensured that insight from someone who has a comprehensive understanding of the effect of unemployment on teachers as applied to secondary education delivery.

This study employed 86 participants. They included 40 graduate teachers who were employed in schools late, 25 senior teachers, 15 newly teachers and 5 heads of secondary schools, and 1 District Secondary Educational Officer. The five (5) secondary schools were selected purposely based on having a big number of teaching staff.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings of this study on the school heads managerial strategies on addressing challenges facing the former unemployed graduate secondary school teachers in Kahama District, Tanzania. Various opinions, views and experiences were provided by participants on strategies that can be used to solve the challenges facing unemployed graduate-teachers in their teaching processes. The findings are presented, analysed and discussed as follows.

Table 1:
Challenges Facing Unemployed Graduate-Teachers in their Teaching Processes

Category	Themes	Themes explanation
Challenges	Overcrowded class	• Classroom management challenges • Impact on teaching efficiency and effectiveness • Inability to provide individualized attention and support to students
	Lack conducive environment	• Inadequate infrastructure • Lack of housing for teachers • Expectations vs. Reality • Unfavorable working conditions.
	Graduate mind-set	• Mindset of Entitlement • Lack of Awareness
	Lack of education concentration rather than entrepreneurship activities	• Prioritization of Self-Employment Over Teaching: • Challenges of Balancing Responsibilities

Source: Field Data (2024).

Table 1 highlights key challenges facing formerly unemployed graduate teachers, including overcrowded classrooms, unconducive working environments, mindset-related issues, and divided attention due to entrepreneurial activities. Overcrowding particularly hinders classroom management, learner engagement, and effective use of interactive teaching methods, reducing instructional effectiveness and professional adjustment. During an interview a senior teacher commented:

It is challenging to manage a large class, especially for newly employed teachers who are not used to handling such a large number of students. The overcrowding can really affect the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Overcrowding also reduces teaching efficiency and limits the use of learner-centred approaches emphasized in current curriculum reforms. Large class sizes have been consistently linked to decreased instructional quality, reduced opportunities for interactive pedagogy, and increased teacher workload (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011). Furthermore, teachers are unable to provide individualized attention and academic support to learners with diverse needs, thereby negatively affecting overall learning outcomes (Finn, Pannozzo, & Achilles, 2003).

Lack of a conducive working environment significantly challenges formerly unemployed graduate teachers. Inadequate physical infrastructure, limited teaching resources, and poor housing undermine teachers' capacity for lesson preparation and delivery, contributing to job dissatisfaction and reduced performance (Day, 2008; Ingersoll, 2001). Long commuting distances cause fatigue and lateness, while unmet expectations regarding working conditions reduce morale and complicate professional adjustment (Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

Graduate mindset-related challenges affect teaching processes, as some formerly unemployed teachers expect favourable conditions and rapid advancement. Research on teacher attitudes suggests that unrealistic expectations about working environments and career progression can lead to frustration, dissatisfaction, and reduced motivation when faced with challenging school contexts (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Additionally, limited awareness of labour market realities hinders effective professional adjustment, as teachers struggle to adapt to contextual demands and institutional constraints (Day & Gu, 2010). Continued engagement in entrepreneurial activities limits some formerly unemployed graduate teachers' concentration on teaching. Financial pressures and delayed salaries compel teachers to balance self-employment with instructional duties (King & Palmer, 2010). Such dual engagement reduces time for lesson preparation, professional

development, and school involvement, weakening professional identity, commitment, and potential learning outcomes (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Overall, challenges facing formerly unemployed graduate teachers stem from both systemic and individual factors. Overcrowding, poor working conditions, mindset issues, and economic survival strategies complicate the transition into teaching, necessitating deliberate managerial interventions. Supportive induction programs, mentoring, constructive supervision, and improvements in working conditions have been shown to enhance teacher effectiveness, job satisfaction, and retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009). Such strategies strengthen professional commitment and contribute to higher instructional quality.

Table 2:

Strategies to Solve Challenges Facing the Former Unemployed Graduate-Teachers

Category	Themes	Themes Explanation
Strategies	Provision of relevant education seminars	- Professional Development, - Job Readiness, - Skill Enhancement: - Adaptation to Educational Changes
	Cooperation and assistance	- Providing mentorship programs - Professional development opportunities - resources
	Promotion of a welcoming and conducive environment	- Fostering a positive school culture - Promoting collaboration among staff members - Encouraging open communication
	Provision of good leadership.	- Regular feedback, - Recognition of their efforts, and - Opportunities for professional growth and development
	Engaging in teaching activities and assigning duties	- A Skills alignment, - Practical experience, - Confidence Building

Source: Field Data (2024).

Table 2 highlights strategies to support formerly unemployed graduate teachers, including professional development, mentorship, a supportive environment, strong leadership, and active teaching engagement. Implementing these approaches builds a solid foundation for new educators, enhancing job satisfaction, employability, and educational outcomes while helping teachers overcome early-career challenges.

Provision of Relevant Education Seminars

The findings highlight the need for education seminars for formerly unemployed graduate teachers to update their professional knowledge and teaching skills. Focused training in teaching techniques, classroom management, and subject-specific knowledge enhances teachers' competence,

confidence, and effectiveness, ultimately improving teaching processes and overall classroom performance (Avalos, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Such professional development interventions have been shown to support teacher adaptation, strengthen instructional practices, and facilitate smoother transitions into formal teaching roles after prolonged unemployment. During interview graduate teacher said that:

I think seminars would really benefit us as newly employed teachers. I feel like there is so much more I could learn to improve my teaching strategies and manage my classroom more effectively (Interview with graduate-teacher B, 2023).

In addition, head of school shared the following:

I fully support the idea of providing seminars for newly employed teachers. It's crucial for them to continue their professional development and enhance their teaching abilities. Investing in their training will ultimately benefit the students and the overall effectiveness of our school (Interview with Head of secondary school, from school D, 2023).

Providing seminars for newly employed teachers enhances professional development, teaching strategies, and classroom management. Ongoing training equips teachers with practical skills, improving instructional effectiveness and creating a more engaging learning environment. Such proactive support benefits both teachers' growth and student outcomes, contributing to overall school performance.

Cooperation and Assistance

The findings indicate that schools should support newly employed teachers, particularly formerly unemployed graduates, through mentorship, professional development, and access to resources. Such support facilitates adaptation to new roles, helps teachers navigate professional challenges, enhances job satisfaction, improves performance, and promotes effective integration into the school environment (Avalos, 2011; Hobson *et al.*, 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Evidence suggests that structured induction and ongoing support are critical for building teacher confidence, professional identity, and instructional competence, particularly for teachers entering the profession after prolonged periods of unemployment. A newly employed teacher shared:

My school has provided numerous professional development opportunities that have allowed me to grow and develop as a teacher. I feel supported and motivated to continue improving my practice, which has ultimately led to greater job satisfaction. Therefore, I suggest school to continue providing professional support to the newly employed teachers in every challenge (Interview with newly employed teacher from school E, 2023).

A head of school added:

Investing in the support and development of our newly employed teachers is crucial for their success and for the overall success of our school. By providing

resources, mentorship, and ongoing training, we are ensuring that our teachers feel equipped and empowered, supported to excel in their roles (Interview with Head of secondary school, C, 2023).

The findings emphasize the importance of supporting newly employed teachers, especially formerly unemployed graduates. Providing mentorship, professional development, resources, and growth opportunities fosters professional growth, enhances teacher retention, and creates a positive learning environment. Ongoing support benefits both teachers and the wider school community, promoting success and overall educational outcomes. During interview one head of school said that:

Providing ongoing support for our newly hired teachers is essential in order to ensure their success and retention at our school. We recognize the unique challenges that unemployed graduate teachers may face, and we are committed to implementing specific strategies and programs to support them in their professional development (Interview with Head of secondary school, A, 2023).

The implication of the statement is that supporting newly hired teachers, especially those who are recent graduates and may be facing challenges in entering the workforce, is crucial for their success and retention at the school. By implementing specific strategies and programs to support these teachers in their professional development, the school is investing in their growth and ensuring their continued success in the long run.

Promotion of a Welcoming and Conducive Environment

The findings revealed that creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all teachers, including unemployed graduate teachers, can help them feel valued and supported in their teaching roles. This included fostering a positive school culture, promoting collaboration among staff members, and encouraging open communication. During interview Head of School said that:

We are committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all teachers, including unemployed graduate teachers. We believe that by fostering a positive school culture and promoting collaboration among staff members, we can help our teachers feel valued and supported in their roles (Interview with Head of secondary school, B, 2023).

In similar view one among said that Senior Teacher:

By promoting open communication and creating opportunities for all teachers to contribute their ideas and experiences, we can build a strong sense of community within our school. This can ultimately benefit not only the teachers themselves, but also the students in our care (Focus Group Discussion with senior teachers from school E, 2023).

The findings suggest that schools should create inclusive and supportive environments to attract and retain teachers, including formerly unemployed

graduates. Prioritizing collaboration, open communication, and a positive school culture helps teachers feel valued, facilitates professional adjustment, and aligns with research showing that supportive school environments enhance teacher satisfaction, retention, and student learning outcomes (Day & Gu, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Evidence indicates that fostering a positive organizational culture and providing social and professional support are critical for teacher effectiveness and long-term commitment to the profession.

Provision of Good Leadership

The findings revealed that strong leadership that encourages and supports teachers is essential for the success of any school. It was further revealed that providing unemployed graduate teachers with good leadership can help them feel motivated and inspired to excel in their teaching roles. This included regular feedback, recognition of their efforts, and opportunities for professional growth and development. During interview Head of School revealed that:

Our school has seen significant improvement in teacher performance and student outcomes when we invest in strong leadership that supports and empowers our teachers. By providing regular feedback, recognition, and opportunities for growth, we have seen a positive impact on our staff morale and overall school success (Interview with Head of secondary school, B, 2023).

In addition, senior teacher added that:

I have personally experienced the benefits of strong leadership in my professional development. When I feel supported and encouraged by my school leaders, I am motivated to improve my teaching practice and provide the best education possible for my students (Focus Group Discussion with senior teacher from school C, 2023).

One implication of the findings is that school leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the success of teachers and students. By prioritizing the development and support of teachers, schools can create a positive and thriving learning environment for all stakeholders.

Engaging in Teaching Activities and Assigning Duties

The findings revealed that in order to help unemployed graduate teachers get back into the teaching profession, schools can engage them in various teaching activities and assign them duties that align with their skills and interests. This can help them gain practical experience, build their confidence, and transition smoothly into their teaching roles.

During interview Head of School said that:

We have found that by providing opportunities for unemployed graduate teachers to engage in various teaching activities and aligning those activities with their skills and interests, we are able to support them in transitioning back

into the teaching profession (Interview with Head of secondary school, E, 2023).

In addition, participants during Focus Group Discussion shared that:

Assigning duties that are meaningful and relevant to the graduate teacher's background and expertise can help them gain confidence and practical experience that will benefit them in their teaching roles (Focus Group Discussion with senior teacher from school A, 2023).

The findings highlight strategies to support formerly unemployed graduate teachers, including educational seminars, collaboration, a welcoming environment, strong leadership, mentorship, and active engagement in teaching duties. Such interventions enhance professional development, update skills, build confidence, and facilitate smoother transitions into teaching, ultimately increasing the pool of qualified educators and improving school performance (Avalos, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Providing mentorship, resources, and supportive leadership fosters collaboration, communication, and teacher motivation, while actively engaging graduate teachers in teaching activities strengthens practical experience and professional identity. Collectively, these strategies improve job satisfaction, retention, instructional quality, and overall educational outcomes, contributing to a resilient teaching workforce and enhanced learning experiences for students (Day & Gu, 2010; Hobson *et al.*, 2009).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has shown that implementing targeted strategies such as relevant training seminars, strengthened cooperation and support systems, conducive working environments, effective leadership, and motivational interventions can significantly reduce the challenges faced by unemployed graduate teachers. The findings underscore the value of a holistic approach that integrates capacity building with environmental and motivational support to facilitate the smooth reintegration of graduates into the teaching profession. These results enhance understanding of practical interventions needed to improve graduate teachers' employability, professional competence, and performance, highlighting the importance of continuous policy and program development. Although potential implementation barriers exist, the study provides valuable insights and lays a foundation for future research aimed at refining strategies to support graduate teachers experiencing delays in employment.

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