

An Integrative Model Explaining  
Absences, Internal Mobility and  
Quitting the System Among Teachers in  
Israel

David Maagan

School of Education

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## **Abstract**

In the Israeli educational system, a considerable amount of teaching personnel leaves every year the schools, for both reasons moving to other schools and leaving the system completely. In addition, a significant proportion of teachers' work- days is not fully utilized due to absence from work. Beyond the involvement of high budgetary costs, these phenomena have negative implications on various aspects of the quality of teaching and the system outputs.

The proposed study has twofold aim: (a) Based on theoretical approaches and different research perspectives, to construct an inclusive integrated model, aimed at explaining withdrawal behaviors among teachers: absences from work, internal mobility, and leaving the system (b) Subsequently, to check the validity of the model, using a five years longitudinal study .

The rationale for this study is that these symptoms are related to a number of factors at different levels, which may affect differently each of the above mentioned variables: absence from work, internal mobility and quitting the system. The model attempts to explain these phenomena based on personal factors, organizational and structural factors, the differences in explanatory factors for any such phenomena and the relationships between them, in order to provide a comprehensive explanation of these phenomena.

The study population consisted of all teachers in primary, junior high and high schools in the education system in Israel, combined with other data sources, about the characteristics of schools, students and their achievements, geographic characteristics and socio-economic characteristics of school's localities. The data used in the study, is based on the databases of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics. The analysis was made by using Multinomial Logistic Regression and Multi-Level Analysis (MLA).

The research findings provide a broad support to the integrative research model, the relationships between absenteeism and mobility and between internal mobility and quitting the system. In detail, it was found that most of the factors at the level of the individual, the organization and the system, has significant association with absences of teachers, internal mobility and quitting the system. The factors at the individual level, have high explanation power regarding absences of teachers and quitting the system, while the organizational level

factors, have high explanation power regarding internal mobility. In addition, the research findings provide a broad support for the assumption regarding differences in the explanatory factors between internal mobility and quitting the system. It was found that Teachers who transfer to other schools, base their decision on different factors than those who quit the system. In addition, it was found that teacher absenteeism has a positive relationship with the chance of leaving the system and transition to other schools, while early internal mobility, is negatively associated with the chance of quitting the system, and on the other hand a positive correlation with the chance of switching schools again.

It was also found that these phenomena of teacher absences, internal mobility and quitting the system, has a significant correlation with student achievement. In schools that are characterized by students from low socio-economic status and low achievement, the extent of absenteeism and mobility of teachers are higher. For new teachers, it was found that the strongest predictors regarding internal mobility and leaving the system, are the number of work hours and Teaching internship.

In detail, it was found that the factors at the different levels have different explanatory abilities between internal mobility versus leaving the system. In addition, differences were found in most explanatory factors, between internal mobility versus leaving the system. The factors at the individual level have a high explanatory power for leaving the system compared to transition to other schools, while those in the school environment have a high level of explanation power for the transition to other schools compared to leaving the system. The findings of the study provide a broad link between the phenomena studied. It was found that the absence of teachers is related to mobility in general, whether moving to other schools or leaving the system, and that teachers who are more absent are more likely to leave their schools. In addition, it was found that internal mobility is related to the continued tendency in both cases of internal mobility and of leaving the system less.

Absence was found to be important, for the inclusion of early absence was the strongest predictor of current absence. In addition, it was found that teachers in managerial positions tend to be significantly less absent, despite longer hours of work than regular teachers. With regard to the extent of training courses and the level of education of teachers, it was found that teachers who perform more of training courses in the profession and teachers who are fully trained in teaching (academic degree and teaching certificate) tend to be less

absent. It was also found that teachers with lesser hours of work had a greater chance of leaving the system and that those with more training courses had a lower chance of leaving the system.

For new teachers, it is important to address the differences in the explanatory factors between internal mobility and leaving the system. In addition, it was found that new teachers in the system tend to move to other schools at the beginning of their careers. It was found that the higher the number of working hours by new teachers, the less likely they would leave the system or move to other schools. In regard to teachers who pass a year of specialization, it was found that they are less likely to leave the system while they are more likely to move to other schools.

The research findings have theoretical, practical and methodological implications. *Theoretically*, the study provides a comprehensive, integrative and multi-dimensional explanation regarding teacher absenteeism, internal mobility and quitting the system, the differences between mobility components and the relationships between these phenomena. From a *practical* viewpoint, the study provides possible directions for decision-makers that attempt to reduce undesirable effects of these phenomena on the system and financial costs resulting from them. From a *methodological* viewpoint, the research findings emphasize the importance of reliance on actual mobility over "intentional mobility", and the necessity of using a longitudinal study over several years in order to determine feasibilities of quitting the system in contrast to temporary career interruptions.