



Teacher Moonlighting and Absenteeism in South African Community Learning Centers: Implications for Teaching and Teacher Retention

Ronnie Risimati Maceke, Nkarhi Excellent Mathebula, Mohammed Xolile Ntshangase*, Sibonangaye Dick Nkalanga

University of Limpopo, Polokwane, Limpopo, South Africa

Correspondence email: nkarhi.mathebula@ul.ac.za, ronnie.maceke@ul.ac.za, mohammed.nsthangase@ul.ac.za, sibonangaye.nkalanga@ul.ac.za

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Corresponding Author:

Mohammed Xolile Ntshangase,
email:

Mohammed.ntshangase@ul.ac.za

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Abstract

Community Learning Centres (CLCs), which are the main features of the Adult Education and Training system, offer necessary second-chance learning opportunities for out-of-school youth, and adults who have never been to school or have dropped out early. Educator absenteeism, however, has, for a long time, been the major factor that has led to a decrease in public trust in such centres and, consequently, their effectiveness. The aim of the research was to explore the effect of teachers' moonlighting on absenteeism, teaching quality, and retention in South African CLCs. For this purpose, the study employed thematic analysis in line with Braun and Clarke's six (2021) step method to process secondary data obtained from previous research and institutional reports. This meticulous method of coding, gathering, and polishing themes made it possible to recognize the essential patterns of teacher behaviour and school issues. The research concluded that teachers take additional jobs just to meet the demands of their socio-economic lives. Educators' low salaries, their financial commitments, and the ever-rising demands of the household are a few of the factors that push teachers to find other jobs. Research findings show that moonlighting has a direct negative impact on teaching quality, as teachers have less time to prepare their lessons, deliver them, and interact meaningfully with students.

INTRODUCTION

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) are the core of the South African Adult Community Education and Training (ACET) system, through which second-chance education is given to young people and adults who have not gone through the formal schooling system. The purpose of this research was to explore the impact of teacher moonlighting on teacher absenteeism, teaching quality, and retention in South African CLCs, in other words, it aimed to increase understanding of teacher behaviour and institutional challenges that hinder the effectiveness of these centres. Current projections show that about 17 million South Africans between 15 and 60 years of age are neither in education, employment, nor training (NEET) (Khuluvhe & Negogogo, 2021). Under these circumstances, CLCs become indispensable as the only venues

which, through the provision of inclusive adult education, can address the problem of unemployment and assure social integration (DHET, 2015). These centres which mostly operate after school hours and in the evenings are thus a convenient way of reaching the vulnerable learner populations. Unfortunately, teacher absenteeism has been a significant issue, as the cessation of learning due to frequent absences of staff has been a direct way in which the adult education quality has deteriorated. Learners who are habitually absent perform very poorly, if at all, in areas such as literacy, numeracy, and employability-related competencies (Ansari, Hofkens, & Pianta, 2020).

Practicing teachers holding side jobs is one of the foremost reasons why absenteeism has shot up. The teachers who decide to take on a second job in the hope of complementing their primary income are certainly responsible for the biggest part of the rise in absenteeism (Brown, Sullivan, & Maninger, 2019). The educators' low salaries and lack of security in their contractual relationships expose them to financial hardships, thus, many of them are forced to take on extra jobs in order to generate additional income (Klungseth & Anderson, 2024). Despite the fact that moonlighting eases the economic burden, opponents maintain that it causes exhaustion, lack of concentration, and fewer hours allotted towards teaching (Texas State Teachers Association, 2022). This is not a problem distinctly experienced by South Africa, a pool of evidence from the United States, in fact, reveals the existence of similar patterns, and thereby, it indicates that moonlighting negatively affects aspects like learner engagement, lesson preparation, and student achievement (Fitchett, Heafner, & Harden, 2016). The effects of moonlighting on educators are exacerbated by the fact they soon extend to school performance. Failure to appear for work due to moonlighting is a kind of absenteeism that is unnoticeable for a long time because of weak monitoring systems, poorly understood or informal processes of leave-management. Insufficient oversight in Community Learning Centres usually enable it. The falling morale of the staff and the declining sense of responsibility of the adult educators which are most likely a result of the lack of adequate institutional support and low levels of accountability in the sector, have been reflected in the adult education sector.

This research presents teacher moonlighting as a major issue that breeds problems such as absenteeism, low teaching quality, and lack of retention of educators in Community Learning Centres in South Africa. Moonlighting, in addition, reveals even more profound structural issues that have been influenced by socio-economic pressures and the absence of policies that weaken the quality of teaching. It is important to know the effects of moonlighting on the effectiveness of teaching, attendance, and retention if we want to raise the standard of adult education in general. Still, surprisingly, moonlighting can sometimes help keep teachers as a result of wallet easing especially in under-resourced educational contexts. Moreover, the research has detected the institutional problems that cause increased absenteeism, among them, weak organisational structures, poorly defined processes for managing leave, and unprepared leadership dealing with staff-related issues. These systemic challenges contribute inconsistency of getting the lessons taught and overall performance of the centre. The study dealing with the socio-economic and institutional forces leading to educators experiencing multiple jobs argues that the harmful side effects of moonlighting can be erased if seen reforms such as higher pay, greater accountability, and strengthened professional development were implemented in targeted ways.

In the end, the paper basically states that the teachers' side jobs could be part of a plan to keep them in teaching, nevertheless, the economic, social, and

institutional issues taken together are still the major causes of pupils' attendance and education outcomes in the CLCs. Since this investigation is a desktop review of secondary sources only, it does not concentrate on a certain number of communities but rather gathers evidence from various studies all over South Africa. This is a recognition that not every teacher is involved in moonlighting and teachers' experiences can be quite different from one community to another.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How does teacher moonlighting influence absenteeism, teaching quality, and retention in South African Community Learning Centres (CLCs)?

Sub-questions:

1. What socio-economic and institutional factors drive teachers in CLCs to engage in moonlighting?
2. How does moonlighting affect classroom attendance, lesson delivery, and learner outcomes in CLCs?
3. What policy and management interventions can mitigate the negative effects of moonlighting while supporting teacher retention?

Worldwide, extensive research has been done on teacher absenteeism in traditional schools; however, research on educators who have second jobs and how this influences teaching quality and teacher retention in adult education is scarce. Most of the existing studies are based on primary and secondary schools, and the socio-economic challenges and institutional constraints that affect the adult learning environment are, for the most part, unnoticed. Also, the consequences of absenteeism on educational outcomes and teacher retention are hardly ever considered in alternative and community-based education programs. This study fills these s by investigating the effect of moonlighting on teacher performance and retention in South African CLCs, thus making a significant local and global adult education policy and management strategy contribution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher moonlighting, in general, is connected to the issue of low salaries and an increase in the cost of living. Consequently, social problems such as stress and burnout are a result of that. Greggs (2022) shows that one out of four teachers is the most probable to have a second job. Fitchett et al. (2016) noted that the most frequently moonlighting group was single, low-paid male teachers, most of whom look for additional income in fields beyond education.

Moonlighting has a negative impact on the time that teachers have for lesson planning, as well as their energy levels and engagement in the classroom (Brown, Sullivan, & Maninger, 2019). Most teachers evidently take up a secondary job out of their primary salary, which is insufficient. Hence, better salaries might have the effect of raising them no longer to moonlight (South Dakota Teacher Compensation Review Board, 2025). Likewise, the probability of teachers having extra jobs also increases due to financial stress and teachers being underestimated by stakeholders (Harris et al., 2019).

Teachers in India additionally decide to work in a secondary position in order to meet their ever-increasing living costs (Pandit & Kamjula, 2025). The same situation

occurs in rich countries, where moonlighting is usually in the form of tutoring or online work. In general, teachers worldwide try to survive economically while at the same time fulfilling their professional duties, and this challenge is common in different educational systems. In Texas, for instance, beyond-the-hours work might bring some financial gains but leads to burnout, absenteeism, and attrition increase (Texas State Teachers Association, 2022)

In Sub-Saharan Africa, teachers moonlight differently by context; in rural Uganda, farming or tutoring supplements income and can enhance teaching skills if well-regulated (Klungseth & Anderson, 2024). Nonetheless, the good impact is mostly dependent on the personality and regulation of the additional work. Those who moonlight in an unregulated manner are usually absentees, lack energy, and their quality of instruction decreases. In Tanzania, secondary jobs give teachers some challenge in time-management, more stress, and less teaching effectiveness and struggle to balance different professional roles (Timothy & Nkwama, 2017).

Studies from across the region has also confirmed these issues. In Ghana, teachers do small-scale trading and private tutoring to raise their income which comes from the government. Though these help the teachers financially, they also cause irregular attendance and inadequate lesson preparation (Tawiah, Opoku-Asare, & Gyekye-Ampofo, 2023). In Nigeria, the secondary employment of teachers leads to their exhaustion and fewer instructional hours. Besides, learner outcomes are negatively affected, especially in under-resourced urban and peri-urban schools (Madigan & Kim, 2021). This imply that teachers who moonlight gain financial relief only in situations where teaching effectiveness is not compromised.

The knowledge of the models, drivers, and effects of moonlighting in Sub-Saharan Africa would be very helpful in providing educational policies, institutional management, and professional support strategies. By looking at both the sides of the issue, i.e., positive and negative, policymakers can figure out the interventions that lessen the bad effects and, at the same time, support teacher retention and raise adult education quality level (UNESCO, 2017).

Absenteeism linked to moonlighting is a major problem in South African Community Learning Centres, where non-standard hours and weak administrative oversight worsen the issue. Teacher absenteeism is the main cause of the public education sector's declining performance, but it is particularly severe in CLCs due to a lack of adequate monitoring and accountability mechanisms (Maceke, 2022). Financial difficulties compel many educators to find additional sources of income, causing conflicts in their schedules, chronic fatigue, and a decline in instructional quality. Therefore, moonlighting turns into both an economic survival mode and a factor that makes the teaching process less effective (Brown, Sullivan, & Maninger, 2019).

Similar to the situation in other countries, South African teachers participate in different forms of secondary employment to support themselves financially (Olivier & Hofmeyr, 2022). Although necessitated by financial reasons, these actions cause absenteeism from important instructional periods. At the same time, the time for lesson preparation is further reduced, and learner engagement decreases. Financial hardships and weak institutions enable moonlighting, marginalising learners and undermining trust in adult education (Cooper, 2003; Walters, 2018).

The discrepancy in resources between urban and rural CLCs is another factor that affects the consequences of moonlighting. Meanwhile, urban teachers frequently encounter higher living costs and may opt for more demanding secondary jobs. On the

other hand, rural teachers are more likely to supplement their income through activities such as farming for their own needs or starting small businesses in their local areas (Arinaitwe & Corbett, 2023). Such differences point to the necessity of having policies which are sensitive to the context and consider both the economic reality of the teachers and the shortcomings of the institutions within CLCs.

Previous research mainly looked at moonlighting at a broad level across countries or regions. Instead, this paper is a case study of CLCs in South Africa a setting where teacher absenteeism and weak school governance are major problems. A creative comparison of local and international findings is achieved through Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis of secondary data, which results in identifying the complex interactions between moonlighting and the economic and legislative challenges of CLCs. This is a more context-aware explanation of teacher practices, which not only indicates the global similarity but also educates about the economic pressures of teachers in South Africa. The strength of this paper is that it connects general narratives of moonlighting to the specific mood of CLC adult education, thus providing data that may be used for devising precise teacher retention, better supervision, and quality of instruction enhancement policies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is influenced by Braverman (1974) Labour Process Theory (LPT) which looks at the manner in which labour is organised, controlled and exploited in different work systems. Labour Process Theory (LPT) is a suitable instrument for examining teacher moonlighting as it considers absenteeism as a consequence of structural and managerial conditions, thereby it discriminates the individual as a cause for the absence. The low wages combined with a poorly run institutions are factors in CLCs which make teachers look for other ways to make a living thereby moonlighting being both a survival strategy and a reaction to the deep-rooted systemic problems. Hence, LPT aids in understanding teacher absenteeism as a result of broader labour-related pressures, which represents the interplay of various economic, organisational, and professional factors influencing worker behaviour (Apple, 1986; Connell, 2009).

Nevertheless, LPT by itself is not enough to explain the three interlinked problems that are the subject of our research: absenteeism, teaching quality, and retention. To deepen the analysis, this paper also references Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964), which considers education and training as investments in one's skills and productivity. Human Capital Theory essentially elucidates how moonlighting deteriorates teaching quality as it leads to less time and energy being spent on lesson preparation and accommodating learners, as well as how it influences retention by lowering teaching's perceived value as a career option over the long term. By integrating the structural perspective of LPT with the focus of Human Capital Theory on individual skill development and institutional investment, the paper offers a more thorough framework for comprehending the causes and implications of teacher moonlighting in South African Community Learning Centres.

METHODOLOGY

The study involved qualitative desktop research and an interpretivist paradigm. Desktop research allows for an in-depth study of teacher behaviour, school environments, and educational policy issues, through the use of secondary data (Panchenko & Samovilova, 2020). This method is particularly applicable to CLCs,

where direct access to the sites is generally difficult. By means of already available resources and documents, the study explores the objectives, challenges, and institutional practices of CLCs without the necessity of additional primary fieldwork.

Data Collection

The research extensively depended on secondary data to gather sufficient information about the issues of teacher moonlighting and absenteeism in South African CLCs. Materials for this study were inclusive of peer-reviewed journal articles, theses and dissertations, books, and policy documents of the government or international organizations. All the materials underwent a systematic review to uncover the main topics, patterns, and factors affecting teacher behaviour, and issues of absenteeism and retention. To maintain academic integrity and to support the analysis, proper citations were made for each source. The study through desktop research was able to explore, in a systematic, ethical, and cost-effective manner, various aspects such as socio-economic pressures, effects on teaching and learning, retention dynamics, and institutional or policy gaps. This approach has provided the necessary insights to inform both policy and practice.

Data Analysis

The study utilised thematic analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2021) framework to handle the secondary data about teacher moonlighting and absenteeism in CLCs. The primary objective of this method was to identify, investigate, and comprehend the interpretation of the significant and most considerable data patterns, which eventually led to the deepening of the understanding of teacher behaviour and the institutional challenges. The analysis was interpreted in such a way that themes identified in the data could be directly accessed. The first stage was the researchers' thorough work of going through the texts several times in order to gain a wide understanding. After that, the first codes were created in order to indicate those major aspects dealing with absenteeism, moonlighting, and instructional quality. The researchers then employed these tags to delineate possible subjects which they reviewed and altered to indicate correct connections within the information. Finally, the themes were clearly indicated, corresponding with the study goals and supported by the reflexive methods which help lessen the researcher's bias. The interpretations were also cross-checked against other sources for the sake of validity and supporting the conclusions from the data. The final themes included socio-economic pressures, impacts on teaching and learning, institutional and policy gaps, and retention dynamics. These topics not only assisted in ordering the research data but also in guiding the analysis which, therefore, gave an in, depth understanding of teacher behaviour, absenteeism, and institutional challenges in South African CLCs.

Table 1:1
Themes Derived from Analysis

	Theme	Description	Codes
1.	Theme 1: Socio-economic pressures	Teachers engage in secondary employment due to low salaries, family obligations, and financial insecurity	Low income; family responsibility; financial stress; moonlighting
2.	Theme 2: Impacts on teaching and learning	Moonlighting reduces lesson preparation, attendance, and learner engagement	Missed classes; reduced concentration; fatigue; poor learner outcomes
3.	Theme 3: Institutional and policy gaps	Weak supervision, unclear leave policies, and informal absence management	Weak oversight; policy gaps; low accountability
4.	Retention 4: dynamics	Moonlighting has mixed effects on teacher retention: some resign due to fatigue; others stay because secondary income makes teaching viable	Resignation; sustainability; turnover; staff retention

FINDINGS

Socio-economic Pressures and Survival Strategies

The study uncovers that low wages, part-time employment contracts, and long working hours are some of the reasons that push teachers in urban areas to moonlight (Pandit & Kamjula, 2025). The survey data reveal that the money earned from the second job is mainly spent on basic living expenses, on children and relatives, and on the extended family, thus supplementing the already insufficient salaries. Financial and familial pressures drive educators to seek extra income, highlighting deep-rooted structural issues in South African education (BusinessTech, 2024).

Impacts on Teaching and Attendance

Despite the fact that moonlighting is a source of financial relief for some, the study reveals that the practice has a negative impact on teaching quality in CLCs. Besides working a second job, a number of teachers come late to school, miss their classes or have less energy for working with students. As a result, teaching becomes more superficial, students' motivation decreases and exhaustion gets more likely, especially as teachers are working overtime to find better paid jobs. Evidence shows that the additional job lessens teachers' concentration on their everyday tasks in the classroom and the time they spend with students thus, the learning outcomes are getting worse (Klungseth & Anderson, 2024).

On average, South African teachers are given 19 days' worth of leave per year that is more than twice the average of nine days in the neighbouring SADC countries (Msosa, 2020). Teacher absenteeism is higher in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, while Gauteng and the Western Cape, being better resourced, have lower absenteeism (School Monitoring Survey, 2017). The trend here is that moonlighting as a cause of absences not only deepens the existing crisis of teaching and learning but also, the latter being less than equal communities, faces the greatest severity of the crisis.

Institutional and Policy Gaps

The study also reveals that the main problem in the CLCs sector is the weak institutional monitoring which has been the cause of a significant number of absences of teachers. Evidence show that managers fail to monitor teacher attendance, leading to unchecked absenteeism and weak administrative oversight (Maceke, Chauke, & Nkoana, 2025). To add to that, the majority of the CLCs educators are not sufficiently trained in adult education and, therefore, the institutions are not well enough prepared to put into practice the attendance regulations or handle absenteeism (Land, 2021). The gaps have systemic weaknesses in policy implementation and institutional oversight that are at the root of the disappearance of teacher accountability and the deterioration of the quality of teaching and learning.

Retention Dynamics

On the subject of moonlighting and its impact on teacher retention, the evidence is mixed. Some of the staff members abandon the CLCs as a result of weariness, exhaustion, and the challenge of juggling several jobs whereas some others stay because the income from the side job makes their CLC position financially viable (Harris et al., 2019; Pandit & Kamjula, 2025). Staff who reduce hours or delay quitting to moonlight reflect informal coping strategies that undermine institutional stability. The two influences at the same time make it difficult both for staff retention as well as policy planning.

According to the 2017 School Monitoring Survey (DBE, 2017), about 10% of South African teachers are absent daily, reflecting the pressures of balancing teaching and economic demands. The staff retention problem is essentially dependent on not only the money that can be gained but, equally, on the institutional support, supervision done competently, and professional development chances, factors that can either bring about the turnover or lessen it.

DISCUSSIONS

This study reveals evidence consistent with the literature regarding teacher absenteeism. This research identifies the difficult working conditions as the major cause of adult educators' absenteeism while also pointing out the structural factors responsible for aggravating the problem at the local level.

Socio-economic Pressures and Survival Strategies

The investigation into the issue of secondary jobs for CLC teachers unveiled that such a practice is symbolic of not only the unequal structures but also unstable labour conditions. According to Labour Process Theory (Braverman, 1974), when institutions neglect the needs of their workers, the workers themselves come up with survival strategies to safeguard their livelihoods. Comparable to this, Apple (1986) states that

under-funded education systems drive teachers to look for autonomy and relief in external work.

In South Africa, the combination of low wages, short, term contracts, and high living costs has resulted in economic hardships, whereas family responsibilities, among which the care of children, dependants, and extended relatives, escalate the pressure to get extra income. The interlocking financial and social burdens manifest in the structural inequalities that impact teachers' decision to take up moonlighting thus perpetuating the socio-economic factors that influence behaviour in CLCs (Fajardo, 2024). Walters (2018) emphasizes that one of the major dilemmas of adult educators is systemic inequalities that force them to adopt survival strategies, for example, to have a second job. Msosa (2020) also illustrates that these tensions, if not resolved, will keep on building like a snowball until eventually absenteeism becomes a structural issue instead of an individual one.

Teachers in disadvantaged suburbs frequently share that due to money problems and the need to help at home, their teaching effectiveness is negatively affected while stress levels are going up (Nomtshongwana & Buka, 2023; Padmanabhanunni & Pretorius, 2024). According to the research, living on a low income and having unstable contracts can lead to teacher leaks, hence, a second job having been used as a coping mechanism (Public Servants Association, 2025). Most of the time, teachers go for double jobs in order to protect themselves from the side effects of the system, but this method of surviving drains the time that could have been used for lesson planning and learner interaction (Versfeld, Ebershn, & Ferreira, 2025). These research results support the idea that moonlighting is not just an individual free will but a manifestation of the socio, economic forces affecting teacher behaviour in CLCs.

Impacts on Teaching and Learner Outcomes

The data reveal that one of the foremost causes behind the decline of teaching quality and learner disengagement in South Africa is educator absenteeism and moonlighting. On an average school day, 10, 12% of educators are absent; however, the rate of absenteeism is higher in under, resourced provinces (Msosa, 2020).

Bipath, Venketsamy, and Naidoo (2019) show that absenteeism interrupts the teaching of lessons and slowly destroys the trust that learners have in their teachers. Over the years, the gradual loss of instructional time due to absenteeism leads to disengagement and poorer performance by learners. The policy briefs of Kagiso Trust (2025) indicate that disadvantaged learners suffer the most in this situation and further reveal that these consequences intensify existing inequalities in the society over time.

Furthermore, educators may even entirely abandon their roles as teachers and have to resort to other modes of instruction. On the other hand, moonlighting makes the situation worse because educators divide their time and energy among different jobs, which usually leads to teachers' hurried lessons, deteriorated teaching quality, and thus, less teacher, learner contact. These results point to the harmful effects that socioeconomic pressures have on teaching and learning and reveal the urgent need for institutional interventions to support educators and to counteract the instructional loss.

Teacher absenteeism and secondary jobs affect negatively the time given for teaching and the students participation, especially in the schools located in the deprived areas (Olivier & Hofmeyr, 2022; Spaul, 2013). Research also reveals that the wherewithal and concentration being split due to moonlighting are the factors that contribute to the decline of learner outcomes as well as the rise of dropout rates in adult

education programmes (Walters, 2018; Cooper, 2003). There is also the international level evidence that supports these findings where teacher moonlighting is associated with less lesson preparation and poorer performance in the classroom in both developed and developing contexts (Brown, Sullivan, & Maninger, 2019; Tawiah, Opoku, Asare, & Gyekye, Ampofo, 2023).

Retention Dynamics

Teacher absenteeism has been a significant issue in South Africa for a long time. Daily absenteeism rate is roughly 10% (Department of Basic Education, 2017). Poorer regions are the most affected. The phenomenon there is caused not only by the existence of socio-economic pressure and weak institutions but also by other factors. Low salaries and giving in to family needs tempt teachers to take on a secondary job. The result is a two-fold effect on retention. Some quit the profession because of exhaustion and burnout, while some remain because of the financial viability of their teaching posts through moonlighting. The study by Koomson, Afful, and Villano (2017) found that teachers who are under financial pressure are more likely to quit their jobs while those who have another job are more likely to leave the classroom. Some educators choose to delay resignation or lower their working hours so as to be able to handle both roles, thereby creating informal coping mechanisms that jeopardize organizational stability. Theron (2018) demonstrates that while some teachers can manage through resilience strategies for a short term, in the long run, wellbeing gets depleted due to dual commitments and eventually, they leave the profession. Similarly, Walters (2018) observes that retention is slowly destroyed as teachers initially get support from the moonlighting financially, but later on, it leads to burnout and instability.

These double commitments lead to less instructional preparation, lower teaching quality, and reduced learner participation, which, in turn, result in the deepening of educational inequalities. Therefore, employee retention strategies and policy responses must encompass not only clear leave provisions but also enhanced institutional support and easy access to professional development opportunities.

Financial problems and limited institutional support are major factors that lead to high attrition rates of teachers. Many teachers indicate that burnout and taking up secondary jobs are the main reasons why they quit teaching (Olivier & Hofmeyr, 2022; Spaul, 2013). In fact, some teachers would only be able to continue teaching if they were allowed to supplement their income by moonlighting, thereby creating a situation where secondary jobs are both a factor in teacher retention and a factor in teachers leaving the profession (Walters, 2018). Research studies also reveal that the use of coping strategies such as cutting down on working hours or making informal arrangements not only destabilize schools but also widen the gap in learner performance (Cooper, 2003; Versfeld, Ebershn, & Ferreira, 2025)

Institutional and Policy Gaps

One of the main reasons cited for lax attendance monitoring within CLCs reflects the overall weakness of the adult community education and training (ACET) sector in South Africa. Several national patterns exhibit considerable differences in absenteeism rates with the provinces of the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, and KwaZulu, Natal being at the top of such rates (DBE, 2017). Many ACET facilities are run by educators who have had little or no training in adult education and are managed by administrative structures

that are struggling to provide even the most basic requirements such as attendance monitoring, thus resulting in poor accountability (Land, 2021).

Aitchison (2017) argues that a disjointed governance system and lack of accountability have provided a loophole for teacher absenteeism to continue especially in the rural areas of the provinces. Similarly, Kagiso Trust (2025) points out that unless there is an improvement in managerial capacity and better enforcement, the holes in the institution will keep getting bigger and thus, both teacher presence and student morale are being compromised.

Inadequacies at the institutional level create a loophole for absenteeism to thrive which besides reducing instructional time, also agitates and discourages the learners and thus causes them to lose trust in the educational institutions. Closing these gaps necessitates the efficient use of managerial skills, the introduction of better attendance policies, and the presence of regular supervision to warrant compliance and guarantee learning quality.

Weak institutional oversight and limited managerial capacity have been identified as two of the main challenges in the South African adult education sector that continuously occur, especially poor accountability mechanisms have been described as stealing learner confidence and programme effectiveness (Walters, 2018; Cooper, 2003). The studies also point at the role of inadequate training of adult educators in deriving downgrading of monitoring and poor instructional quality, primarily in rurally located provinces that lack resources (Olivier & Hofmeyr, 2022). Policy reviews have also acknowledged fragmented governance structures within the ACET as the factors that hinder the implementation of effective attendance systems and thus weaken institutional stability (Aitchison, 2017).

Systemic Implications of Moonlighting

The study reveals that to engage in moonlighting is a way of economic survival for the educators in South African CLCs, but at the same time, it is a sign of a problem with the system within the ACET sector. Educators' moves to get extra work are caused by pay cuts, increased cost of living, and lack of support from the institution. However, this act leads to absenteeism, exhaustion, decreased quality of lessons, and poor student performance, which ultimately worsens the existing educational inequalities. To overcome these issues, there is a need for systemic changes, such as lifting teacher salaries above the poverty line, improving monitoring and accountability measures, increasing the budget for teacher training, and implementing policies that consider the differences between provinces.

Cooper (2003) claims that moonlighting is a sign of deeper inequalities in the adult education system. Kagiso Trust (2025) illustrates that the consequences are complex: initially, moonlighting is a survival tactic; later, it lowers the standard of teaching and disrupts the stability of institutions; finally, it deepens inequality between provinces. This development shows that moonlighting is not just a single act but a crisis of the whole system that deteriorates little by little if no major changes are made.

One of the main points in the discussion about adult education in South Africa is that moonlighting is merely a symptom of a host of other systemic problems that include among others, constant underfunding, the puzzle, like governance arrangements, and the lack of proper institutional checks (Walters, 2018; Cooper, 2003). In addition to what has already been mentioned, studies reveal that insufficient spending on teacher training combined with the weakness of the existing accountability

mechanisms give rise to teacher absenteeism, hence fewer learning opportunities and outcomes are realized (Olivier & Hofmeyr, 2022; Aitchison, 2017). When the salary of a teacher is way below what is needed for survival, the moonlighting practice to a certain extent, gets entrenched as a survival strategy and, hence, the vicious circle of inequality in education systems continues unabated (Brown, Sullivan, & Maninger, 2019).

According to Labour Process Theory (Braverman, 1974) and Apple (1986), substantial change should focus on structural inequalities instead of merely individual behaviour, thus requiring comprehensive, context, sensitive solutions in ACET centres.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) should use the four core themes of this research as a basis for their intervention programs to deal with teacher moonlighting and absenteeism effectively. Firstly, the issues of socio-economic anxieties and survival tactics must be tackled. Apart from paying teachers a competitive salary, which will help to ease their financial burden, policies that consider the family responsibilities of teachers (for example, facilitating caregiving or allowing teachers to work flexible hours) will bring down further secondary employment. Secondly, the effects of the issue on teaching and learning can be lessened through the improvement of monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Ways like attendance registers, biometric recognition, and peer monitoring can be utilized to make sure that teachers are always present. In addition to this, educational seminars and staff training can be used as tools to improve teachers' skills, raise their energy levels and increase their interaction with students. Thirdly, bridging the gap between institutions and policies with the help of stronger managerial capacity, clearer cut regulations on leave and attendance, as well as ensuring good enforcement will go a long way in solving the problem. Besides that, policymaking should account for differences among provinces by, for instance, understanding that some districts lack enough resources and the teachers there are not adequately trained. Lastly, the retention dynamics need to be balanced. Even if moonlighting may at times help retain teachers, measures should be in place to financially support educators while at the same time ensuring they have enough time and energy for their first teaching job. Fair distribution of resources, focused provincial assistance, and comprehensive policy frameworks are the major structural reforms that are necessary. Collectively, these interventions shrink the scale of systemic inequalities and pave the way for long, term improvements in adult education quality. Community Learning Centres (CLCs) should use the four core themes of this research as a basis for their intervention programs to deal with teacher moonlighting and absenteeism effectively.

CONCLUSION

Through this research, it became evident that working on the side by teachers in CLCs is a multi, faceted issue influenced by economic, social, and institutional factors. However, in a vicious cycle, secondary employment becomes the cause of absenteeism in the first place and worsen the quality of lessons, while at the same time it introduces fewer learners to attend. The only way to tackle them effectively is through big, system interventions such as higher salaries, better contract security, increased monitoring, availability of professional development, and most importantly, the provision of clear policies tailored to the local contexts. Durable solutions are contingent upon the

convergence of structural reforms and the local realities. Teachers, centre managers, and policymakers need to work hand in hand to bring up initiatives that will both facilitate teachers in balancing economic survival and ensure quality education provision. Future research should use longitudinal and mixed, method approaches to evaluate interventions, thus producing evidence, based strategies that increase teacher presence and adult education outcomes in South Africa.

An important limitation of this research is that it focused on teachers' experiences and institutional dynamics, without directly considering learner outcomes. Hence, subsequent research should investigate whether and how part-time employment influences students' class attendance, teachers' lesson delivery, and learners' achievement in community learning centres. Filling this void will reveal a more comprehensive picture of the systemic implications of moonlighting and will reinforce policy measures aimed at simultaneously enhancing teacher retention and learner performance.

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