

TEACHER MOTIVATION IN LESS ENDOWED SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN TAIN DISTRICT OF BONO REGION

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Abstract

The study sought to explore the factors that contribute to the graduate teacher's motivation and retention in the less endowed public senior high schools in the Tain District in the Bono Region. It employed the qualitative research approach using the case study design to examine and interpret the perceptions and experiences of 21 graduate teachers in three less endowed senior high schools at the countryside. The findings revealed that inadequate remuneration, lack of opportunity for promotion and low prestige in teaching were the three most crucial factors which accounted for the drift of graduate teachers from the teaching service into other jobs. It recommended among others that, graduate teachers should be paid realistic and competitive wages in order to ensure higher teacher retention and improve upon their performance. There is the need to establish scholarship and incentive packages for all graduate teachers who accept posting to schools in the rural areas.

Keywords: teacher motivation, graduate teachers, teacher retention, senior high schools

Introduction

Basically, the teacher is expected to impart essential skills and knowledge to the students. He or she is responsible for promoting child growth and development. The graduate teacher has enormous role to play in this respect since in the second cycle institutions are where

career programmes and development commence. This explains the fact that the graduate teacher occupies a crucial position in the educational system in Ghana. Inayatullah and Jehangir (2012) aptly stated that teachers are the key to the success of any educational system and the individual teacher's integrity and motivation determine his or her output. To improve the conditions of service for teachers, the GES in collaboration with the MOE came out with some incentive packages, quick promotion, among others for teachers who are posted to rural areas. In addition, national best teacher award was instituted to reward deserving teachers, yet this does not cover the greater majority of the teaching population, it gives an impetus for the betterment of teachers.

Moreover, Ghana National Association of teachers (GNAT) has over the years fought tirelessly for improved condition of service for teachers. Despite these increasing efforts by GNAT to improve these conditions of service, teachers are still not satisfied with the conditions of service, for these are considered inadequate. Teachers all over the world have had conditions of service less favourable than that of other professions (Antwi, 1992). This is why job satisfaction and motivation among teachers are quite low and may account for teacher attrition. It has been difficult to get trained teachers go to rural areas (Inayatullah & Jehangir, 2012). Such factors and issues that constitute effective motivation for teachers would be vital in order to minimise the rate of teacher attrition.

Conceptual Framework

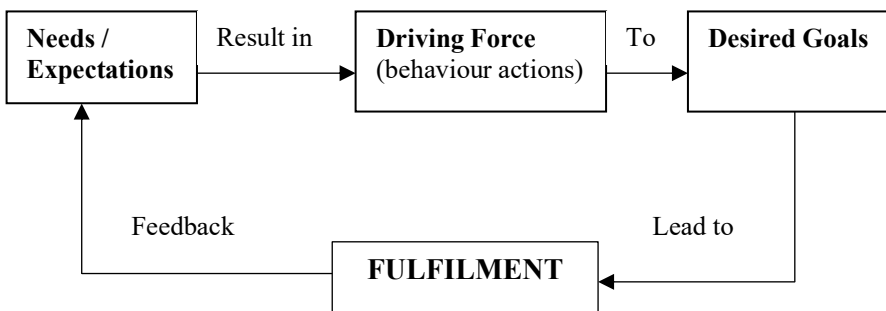


Figure 1: Illustration of the Concept of Motivation

Source: Mullins, (1999 (p. 407)

Porter and Steers (1991) argue that this model assumes that individuals hold a number of needs, desires, and expectations in varying

degrees. Based on these needs and expectations, people act and behave in a certain way that they believe will lead to the desired goals. The motivational process is not as simple and straightforward as it seems (Bassy, 2002). However, the influence of motives from observed behaviour is associated with difficulties traced back to at least five reasons (Bassy, 2002). The reasons are:

1. several motives may be expressed through any single action;
2. motives may occur in disguised forms;
3. similar or identical actions may represent several motives;
4. different behaviour may embody similar behaviour; and
5. the modes of expression of certain motives may be mitigated by personal and cultural variations (p.73).

Teacher Motivation

The word motivation refers to the psychological processes that influence individual behaviour with respect to the attainment of workplace goals and tasks. However, measuring the determinants and consequences of work motivation is complex because these psychological processes are not directly observable and there are numerous organisational and environmental obstacles that can affect goal attainment. A teacher may be highly committed to the attainment of the school's learning goals, but may lack the competency to teach effectively, which ultimately becomes de-moralising and de-motivating (Bennell, Hyde & Swainson, 2002). However, pecuniary motives are likely to be dominant among teachers where pay and other material benefits are too low for individual and household survival needs to be met (Bennell, 2004).

There is a wide range of views about teacher motivation in Africa, most of which are country specific. However, there appear to be mounting concerns that unacceptably high proportions of teachers working in public school systems are poorly motivated due to a combination of low morale and job satisfaction, poor incentives, and inadequate controls and other behavioural sanctions. (Bennell, 2004). Low teacher motivation is reflected in deteriorating standards of professional conduct and poor professional performance. The 2004 World Development Report neatly summarises these concerns about teachers. 'Cases of malfeasance among teachers are distressingly present in many settings: drunk teachers, physically abusive, or simply

do nothing. This is not low-quality teaching - this is not teaching at all' (World Bank, 2004).

A survey in Ghana also concluded that teacher morale is 'reasonably high' (Acheampong, 2003). Only 13 per cent of teacher respondents indicated that they 'did not enjoy teaching' although nearly one-third stated that they did not intend to remain in the teaching profession. Conversely, over 80 percent of teachers interviewed in Sierra Leone said they did not want to be teachers. In another survey in Sierra Leone, head teachers indicated that, if they could, they would replace 20 percent of teachers because they are poorly motivated (Bennell et al., 2002).

Theory of Pay

Pay has been considered an important reward to motivate the behaviour of employee (Nyam & West 2014). Yet it was not until theorists began exploring fairness in social exchanges that the specific cognitive mechanisms through which pay motivates workers began to become clear. Soon after, organisational researchers hypothesised that feeling of fairness led to organisation-related attitudes such as job satisfaction and specifically, pay satisfaction, and that these attitudes impact employee behaviour within organisations (Inayatullah & Jehangir, 2012).

A theoretical review of pay satisfaction considered pay as one of the most important organisational rewards. Nyam and West (2014), reviewing of motivation, recognised the motivating effects of pay on employees when they emphasised that workers put forth extra effort on the job to maximise their economic gains. Money remains the fundamental basis on which organisations reward employees (Wren, 1994). Despite the long-standing importance of pay, the manner in which pay impacts the behaviour of employees remains to be explained. Reinforcement theory, proposed by Skinner (1953), suggests that pay acts as a general reinforcement because of its repeated pairing with primary reinforcers.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers rarely enjoy the same work environment as other professions such as doctors and lawyers. It is not surprising to notice a decline in the standard of living of teachers in many countries like Ghana. Work and living environments for teachers are poor and tends

to lower self-esteem (Antwi, 1992). Again, series of time-tested data is urgently needed that can track changes in working and living conditions (Bennell, 2004). What is striking though is just how little systematic research has been undertaken on motivation and incentives for teachers in Ghana. According to Bennell (2004), there has not been a single article in any of the four leading international comparative education journals for so many years that focused on teacher motivation and pay in any Low Income Countries (LIC) in Africa. Neither has it been possible to locate any study that systematically tracks teacher motivation and deployment nor absenteeism over time in any LIC (Bennell, 2004).

In Ghana many graduate teachers leave the service for some reasons. Statistics indicate that over twenty percent (20%) of graduate teachers leave the service annually to join other sectors or to travel outside for greener pastures (Ministry of Education Science and Sports [MOESS], 2008). As a result of this mass exodus of graduate teachers, pupil teachers are recruited. Again, the Ministry (MOESS, 2008) disclosed that an amount of \$100,000,000 was budgeted to cater for the cost of teacher attrition problems in Ghana. This, therefore, affects quality standard of education in the country. Even though the statistics may not be current, it nevertheless, points to the fact that there is serious graduate teacher attrition. Hence this study sought to explore the factors that motivate graduate teachers in senior high schools in the Tain District.

Research Questions

The study attempted to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How do graduate teachers in the Tain District perceive the teaching profession?
2. What are the driving forces of graduate teacher motivation and retention in the teaching service?
3. To what extent are graduate teachers in the district satisfied with their jobs?

Significance of the Study

The study would be of great significance to the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service. This study that concerns graduate teachers would be of benefit to the individual teachers, the

Ghana National Association of Graduate Teachers (GNAGRAT), the GNAT, the administrative personnel, legislative bodies, and society in general. The findings of the study should be valuable to employers to help improve on conditions that motivate graduate teachers. This is because the teachers play critical role in promoting secondary education in rural areas of Ghana.

Research Design

The study relied on the qualitative research approach using the case study design to examine, explore and interpret the perceptions and experiences of graduate teachers in senior high schools in the Tain District. The study also sought to identify the factors that motivate the graduate teachers to teach in deprived SHS. A case study according to Yin (2014) is the “development of detailed, intensive knowledge about a single ‘case’ or a small number of related issues” (p. 124).

Qualitative research, as used, sought to find answers to questions relating to how events and interventions affect people (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative approach provided a unique opportunity to explore perspectives and opinions from participants on a phenomenon under study. Thus, the study explored factors that motivate the graduate teacher and the extent to which the motivation of teachers contributed to providing quality secondary education in the Tain District. The qualitative approach facilitated information sharing and to understand non-quantitative impacts which are not easily captured by quantitative approach. The aim in this research was to give a voice to the graduate teachers who were the core of this research project.

Population

The population for the study comprises all graduate teachers in senior high schools in the Tain District. The total accessible population was 45 graduate teachers from the three senior high schools: Seikwa Senior High, Badu Senior High and Nsawkaw State Senior High Schools.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

In all 21 graduate teachers including the headmasters were interviewed. The three headmasters and 18 graduate teachers from the three Senior High Schools were purposively selected for the interview.

This is because there was the need for the study to involve all graduate teachers in the three public senior high schools in the district. The teachers and heads were contacted for interviewing through the use of staff data obtained for locating information-rich key informants, the graduate teachers.

Data Sources and Collection Procedure

Data for the study were gathered from three major sources – interview data, observation data and documents. Glesne (2005) affirms that the use of multiple data collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of data. The main data collecting instrument for the research was the interview guide. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) summarised the fundamental methods relied on by qualitative researchers for gathering information as participation in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interviewing, and document review.

The necessary permissions were acquired, then the willing key informants (graduate teachers) were interviewed. Each interview session was preceded with a brief explanation of the purpose of the interview. The participants gave their consent by signing the approved consent form with the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Separate locations were used for the interviews. The interview sessions on the average lasted for 35 minutes and were conducted in a period of three months.

Analysis of Data

From the interviews, considerable text data were organised, transcribed, edited and coded to ensure accurate information. In interpreting data, inductive analysis was used. Inductive analysis is a process aimed at uncovering embedded information and making it explicit (Creswell, 2013). As Bogdan and Biklen (2003) also note, qualitative analysis helps themes and categories to emerge during three phases – i) Discovery, ii) Coding, iii) Interpretation. According to Yin (2014, p.127), “a hundred separate pieces of interesting information will mean nothing to a reader unless they have been placed into categories ... groupings, patterns and items of particular significance.” So, I categorised the emerging themes under the research questions as presented below.

Results and Discussion

The teachers and the headmasters highlighted myriad of challenges and barriers they experienced in pursuing their career, especially in the rural areas.

Research Question 1

How do graduate teachers perceive the teaching profession in the Tain District?

Graduate Teachers' Perception of the Teaching Profession

When the study participants were asked, how graduate teachers perceived the teaching profession, the great majority (78 percent) of the respondents indicated that they perceived the teaching profession as less attractive, less lucrative than other jobs. It was therefore perceived as a stepping stone to a better job. In the words of one Mathematics tutor:

“To me, the teaching profession is full of frustrations, so I see it as a stepping stone to a more lucrative job because I don't want to retire a poor man”. (A Form Master and Mathematics tutor of Seikwa SHS).

The minority, representing 22 percent of the respondent graduate teachers indicated that they perceive teaching as a noble profession for, it is safe and secure job. The reasons given by the minority included the fact that teaching is a more stable, peaceful and less stressful profession than some other professions. Another vital reason shared by the respondents is reflected in the words of one male Agricultural Science tutor of Nsawkaw Senior High captured here as follows:

I am comfortable with teaching. I feel it is my calling. At the end of the month my salary is assured and unlike other professions, I have more quality time to spend with my family. That is why I have never regretted being a teacher. (A male Agricultural Science teacher of Nsawkaw SHS).

When probed further whether they have ever had the idea of leaving the teaching service for other jobs, majority of the respondents confirmed that they had attempted at least once to leave the teaching field. However, the minority comprising almost all the female graduate

teachers and few male teachers indicated that they had no intention to leave the teaching profession.

On the question of whether they would encourage their children to teach, the majority of the teachers responded in the negative. Dominant reasons that were given have been captured in the following voices:

I will never encourage my child or any other child to be a teacher because I don't want my child to suffer the pangs of poverty as I have experienced. I want my children to take up some of the well paid jobs. (A female Home Science tutor of Badu SHS).

In a similar statement, a male tutor strongly expressed that:

On no account will I advise any of my children to take up teaching. They should aspire to be greater than I am so that they can secure a better future for themselves. For the future of the teacher seems bleak. (An Agricultural Science tutor of Nsawkaw).

The results gathered here indicated that the majority of graduate teachers are not satisfied with their career as professional teachers, for if they do, they encourage their children to take up teaching. This implied that graduate teachers are not quite comfortable with their career. Rather, they encourage their children to take up lucrative professions such as medicine, law, banking, and engineering. A variety of unrelated reasons were given for why the graduate teachers are teaching in a quite deprived district such as the Tain District. When the participants were asked why they teach in the District, the responses could be summarised in the words of an Assistant Headmaster. He stated that:

Cost of living in the district is quite low. Food is cheap and there is vast land available to farm and earn extra income and so I will not have to spend my meagre salary on food. (An Assistant Headmaster and an Agricultural Science tutor of Seikwa).

About a half (50%) of the participants indicated that they hailed from the Tain District. Their reasons were based on the need for their services in the District since there were inadequate graduate teachers in

the SHS. This implied that many indigenes opted to teach in their home districts where many others would cry off an opportunity to teach there.

Research Question 2

What factors influence graduate teacher motivation and retention in the teaching service?

Factors Influencing Graduate Teacher Motivation and Retention

A number of factors were mentioned accounting for teacher motivation and retention. Many of the teachers interviewed mentioned a number of factors. The following factors appeared to be the most dominant factors influencing many graduate teachers' decisions to stay on the job. First, was the fact that some opted for teaching because they have the interest in teaching. Secondly, others find teaching as a decent profession. Thirdly, to some it is because teachers enjoy job security. Lastly, others were influenced by the fact that teachers have much time to themselves, hence they stay on the job. These shared views reflected in the words of an experienced Assistant Headmaster. He had this to say:

I feel much secured with teaching and I love what I do as a teacher, imparting knowledge and moulding young minds and I feel good about it. Teaching offers me time to do other things and spend quality time with my family. (An Assistant Headmaster of Badu SHS).

On the other hand, the minority of respondents mentioned teaching as a decent and less stressful job and these were the reasons that have kept some of them on the job in spite of the unattractive nature of teaching to graduates. Putting it succinctly, a middle-aged Social Studies tutor had this to say:

“You may agree with me that teaching is a noble and a stress-free profession”. (A Social Studies tutor of Nsawkaw SHS).

When respondents were asked in a follow up question about what makes them teach, various answers were given. But the most outstanding or dominant reason expressed by the majority of the research participants was the fact that they teach to earn a living. This

was captured in the words of a Social Studies tutor also a House Master. He expressed that:

“I took to teaching not by accident but by intent. This is because I wanted to become a teacher in order to earn some money for a decent living”. (A Social Studies tutor and a Housemaster of Badu SHS).

The minority gave their reasons for taking up teaching as based on the fact that jobs are scarce and it was never easy to secure a lucrative or a dream job. This, however, led to the further probing on the issue. Individually, participants were then asked: *Do you teach because you wanted to teach?* Respondents were sharply divided on this issue and expressed mixed feelings. A little more than half of the teachers responded in the affirmative, that is, they do teach because they wanted to. This means that a simple majority of the teachers voluntarily opted for teaching. The other category of respondents who responded in the negative, agreed more with what a graduate non-professional teacher had indicated to the effect that other circumstances brought them into teaching. She said:

I never dreamt of becoming a teacher, so I did not consider taking any course in Education and here am I in the classroom due to some circumstances. But I like the experience and accept this as one of the challenges of life. (A female Business Management tutor of Seikwa SHS).

It could be deduced from the responses that many graduates take to teaching not because of interest but that their decision to teach is influenced by the agility of the teaching job. It was noted that a good number of the graduate teachers who indicated that they voluntarily opted for teaching as a career, expressed individually that she/he was ‘proud to be a graduate teacher’.

On the issue of what graduate teachers liked about the teaching profession, they were unanimous in enumerating a number of favourable situations about teaching. All the research participants agreed that teaching afforded them ample time to engage in other income generating activities. Another dominant issue next to time was the fact that teaching is perceived to be a noble profession which was described as less stressful unlike other jobs such as banking.

Research Question 3

To what extent are graduate teachers satisfied to stay on job?

Extent to Which Graduate Teachers are Satisfied to Stay on Job

The performance of an employee may to a large extent be depended on the job satisfaction that the individual worker derives from the job. Only a few of the graduate teachers indicated that they were satisfied with the status / recognition given them by society. Thus, the greater majority were dissatisfied with their status recognition as graduate teachers. Similarly, none of the participants mentioned that they were satisfied with their current salary. In fact, all teachers were dissatisfied with their salary levels and conditions of service, as well as the unavailability the relevant teaching /learning materials and lack of facilities in the SHS, located in the countryside.

Interestingly, the findings contrasted a study conducted by Bame (1991) in Ghana which supported the assertion that most of the teachers were dissatisfied with their salary, conditions of service and social status/prestige. The socio-economic condition of the 1990s which impacted favourably on the teachers at that time may have changed. It is believed that the impact of the current socio-economic situations has influenced the graduate teachers to respond differently. On the other hand, the majority of the teachers were quite happy with the modest achievements and the various relationships that existed in the school. Respondents were asked whether from time to time they applied for jobs and which type of career would they prefer to teaching. Less than five percent of the graduate teachers indicated that they had never applied for any other job but the greater majority of the graduates had ever applied for jobs that they perceived lucrative. The majority of the participants mentioned some professions which they preferred to teaching these included: medicine, law, business, auditing, accounting, social work with NGO, engineering, and immigration. The most dominant preferred choice was social work with NGOs, followed by medicine and engineering in that order. These substantiate the claim that the graduate teachers are not satisfied with the profession as teachers. Their choices were based on financial rewards. They wanted Jobs or profession that offered attractive salary and prestige.

Summary of Findings

The study revealed that the majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the conditions of service, low salary levels, the process of promotion, low recognition and respect given to the profession and inadequate facilities and teaching learning materials in schools for effective teaching. This resonates the findings of Kadioğlu and Yilmaz (2018). However, majority of teachers perceived the teaching service as stable, less stressful but fraught with poor pension scheme, meagre salary, and unfavourable working conditions. The study confirmed the theoretical review of pay satisfaction which considered pay as one of the most important motivational factors (Armstrong, & Murlis, 1996). Graduate teachers are often attracted to jobs that offered them higher wages. Thus, with salary rise and improved conditions of service are likely to induce more graduate teachers to stay in the job. This can be supported by the majority of respondents who indicated higher salary, good incentive packages and improved conditions of service as the dominant factors for motivating the graduate teacher.

It was evident that dissatisfied graduate teachers are likely to leave the teaching field at the least opportunity. All the participants agreed that teaching afforded the practitioner ample time to do many other things which may include other income generating activities and also to spend quality time with family. The study revealed that, the three most important factors which drive both male and female teachers out of the teaching profession were inadequate or poor salary, lack of opportunity for promotion and low prestige attached to teaching. This is strongly supported by Kadioğlu and Yilmaz (2018).

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, there was general job dissatisfaction in relation to recognition and respect for the profession, unavailability of facilities and logistics in schools, salary levels and conditions of service. These influenced graduate teachers to leave the teaching profession for other attractive jobs. Again, inadequate residential facilities, private accommodation, absence of car loans for teachers, delay in promotions, unattractive pension schemes and lack of vital social amenities in rural communities were some of the problems that militated against the retention of graduate teachers in less endowed rural schools. Poor working conditions coupled with heavy workloads due to limited teaching staff, inadequate facilities and lack of

appropriate teaching learning materials tended to frustrate teachers and push them to quit job at the village. However, graduate teachers appreciate job security, less stressful nature of teaching and satisfaction they enjoy for educating young ones to build a brighter future. It was clear that many indigenes readily took up teaching appointment in their home districts where many others would decline to teach. This offered them opportunity to farm and earn extra income. More so, poor salary, lack of opportunity for promotion and low prestige in teaching were the three crucial factors which accounted for the drift of graduate teachers from the teaching service into other jobs. Thus, teachers considered good pay as one of the most important organisational rewards. This agrees with Wren who said money remains the fundamental basis on which organisations reward employees (Wren, 1994). So many teachers would not hesitate to quit teaching if any job offered them better salary than what they received.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Ghana Education Service (GES) should put in place plans to improve upon the salaries and conditions of service of graduate teachers. Graduate teachers should be paid realistic and competitive wages in order to ensure higher teacher retention and improve upon the general teacher performance.
2. There is the need to establish scholarship and incentive packages for graduate teachers who accept posting to the rural areas. The incentive packages should be available and attractive with terms and conditions reviewed periodically.
3. Graduate teachers should be involved in taking decisions relating to their welfare, promotions, healthcare, curriculum and school management issues.
4. The government and the GES should consider providing accommodation, logistics and other necessary infrastructure to ensure that schools and teachers function effectively for higher performance.
5. There should be opportunities for higher academic progression among graduate teachers especially non-professional graduates. They should be assisted financially to pursue courses in Post

- Graduate Diploma in Education to enhance their professional competence.
6. District Assemblies should support student indigenes to pursue degree in education so that after the studies they come to teach in the district. This would not only help minimize the inadequate professional teacher syndrome that confront many districts in Ghana but also produce committed teachers.

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