

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Factors Influencing Practicing Teachers in Pursuing Educational Leadership Programmes in Ghanaian Higher Education Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

While there is a plethora of research devoted to the study of formal university-based school leadership development programmes in Africa, no study to date has examined the motivational factors that influence practising teachers' decisions to enrol in such programmes. Utilising concurrent mixed methods design, this study sought to explore the key factors that influence teachers' decision to enrol in postgraduate degree programmes in educational leadership in Ghanaian higher education institutions. Findings from the study showed that practising teachers were principally influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motives in pursuing the educational leadership programmes. Nonetheless, the most emphasised theme as a motivation factor was for professional growth and development. The study concludes that to really create an enabling learning environment to stimulate practicing teachers' learning outcomes, higher education operators need to be conscious of the underlying motives influencing their decision to enrol in their programmes. This is to help provide an enriching learning experience for students and to promote their active engagements in the teaching and learning processes.

**Keywords:** Educational leadership, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, professional development

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## INTRODUCTION

Due to the global recognition that effective educational leadership stimulates improvement in teaching and learning (Bush, 2012; Pont et al., 2008) and its impact to student learning is second only to classroom teaching (Bush & Glover, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004), several countries have designed formal school leadership development programmes aimed at improving school leaders' competencies and performance in their leadership roles (Huber, 2013; Lumby et al., 2008). These school leadership development interventions are conducted by a number of institutions and agencies including profit and non-profit organisations, governmental agencies, independent consultants, universities, as well as professional associations (Peterson, 2002).

In a number of developed countries, school leadership development programmes have been formally institutionalized where potential applicants are offered training prior to and after their appointment to their leadership roles (Bush, 2009; Ibrahim, 2011). Though school leadership development opportunities for educational leaders in Africa is not as systematically organised and pronounced compared to their counterparts in the developed countries (Bush & Heystek, 2006), studies suggest that a number of countries have initiated programmes for preparing and developing school leaders (Bush et al., 2011; Onguko et al., 2008).

In South Africa for example, Bush et al. (2011) report that the Advanced Certificate in Education programme has been developed by the Department of Education for all newly appointed principals to enrol within three years in office. Similarly, school leadership development in Kenya has been recognised through the provision of courses offered by consultants, professional associations and universities (Asuga et al., 2015; Scott & Rarieya, 2011). In Ghana, a number of departments in both public and private higher education institutions run Master degree programmes in Educational Leadership, Management and Administration for practising and potential school leaders at the different levels of the education sector (Amakyi & Ampah-Mensah, 2013; Kusi & Mensah, 2014). Different modes of learning such as full-time, distance learning and sandwich are employed by these institutions to enable prospective applicants to combine studies with work.

While there is a plethora of research devoted to the study of these formally designed university-based school leadership development programmes in Africa (Asuga et al., 2015; Okoko et al., 2015; Onguko et al., 2008), no study to date has examined the factors influencing practising teachers to enrol in such programmes. In Ghana, past studies suggest that a study in educational leadership and management is not recognised as a prerequisite for appointment into headship position in both basic and senior high schools (Amakyi & Ampah-Mensah, 2013; Bush & Oduro, 2006; Donkoh, 2015). For example, to be eligible for headship position in the basic schools, the Ghana Education Service stipulates that the applicant should be a professional teacher with satisfactory work history and conduct and should be a principal superintendent for at least 2 years (Amakyi & Ampah-Mensah, 2013). It is even not a requirement for practicing headteachers to acquire certification in educational leadership and management in Ghana. Moreover, available literature documents the increasingly unattractiveness of school leadership as a career choice (Pont et al., 2008; Tucker & Fushell, 2013). Against this background, this study sought to interrogate the key factors that influence practising teachers' decision to enrol in postgraduate degree programmes in educational leadership and management in Ghanaian higher education institutions.

### Literature Review

The reasons why applicants choose a particular course to study in a higher education environment plays a critical role in ensuring the successful learning outcomes of students (Arar & Abramowitz, 2017). Motivational factors

transform the entire learning environment and affect how students engage in school tasks and their level of achievement (Bryne & Flood, 2005). Moreover, the decision-making processes of students in the teaching and learning processes is influenced by motivation factors (Cole et al., 2004). Kong et al. (2003) further argue that the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement of students with their studies is frequently determined by their motivation to study.

Motivational factors for study have been categorised broadly into intrinsic and extrinsic motivations by classical motivation theories (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Kember et al., 2010; Taheri, 2011). Intrinsic motivation to study is concerned with the person's interest and aspirations for self-improvement and fulfilment (Arar et al., 2017; Ho et al., 2016). Deci and Ryan (2012) argue that intrinsically motivated behaviours are based in the inherent satisfactions of the behaviours perse and have little to do with the contingencies or reinforcements that accompany those activities. Thus, students who are intrinsically motivated engage in higher education out of personal interest and curiosity, and enjoy learning new things, or strive toward accomplishments that they internally desire to achieve. In contrast, extrinsic motivation consists of behaviours pursued for instrumental reasons but for engaging in those activities for reasons inherent in them (Vallerand & Ratelle 2002). It refers to engaging in an activity as a means to an end that is separate from the activity itself (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

There are a number of motivational factors that shape individuals' decision in pursuing higher educational programmes. Major reasons that influence students to enrol in postgraduate studies include the desire for self-fulfilment, a need for financial advancement, to influence the respondent's own society, and a desire to change profession (Arar et al., 2017; Arar & Abramowitz, 2017). Other factors may include improved working conditions, ability to save for retirement, obtaining material goods, job security, making friends, and improving social skills (Teowkul et al., 2009). Teowkul et al. (2009) examined the motivational factors of graduate students and found that the students expected to gain better opportunities to change jobs, transition into a new career as a result of their degree, and gain improvement in compensation. Also, Arar and Abramowitz (2017) examined motivations of Arab teachers for undertaking postgraduate studies and found that the strongest motivation factors expressed by the students were the desires for self-fulfilment and further education. In a related study, Arar et al. (2017) examined whether Israeli Jewish and Arab students had different motives for postgraduate studies and found that they were highly motivated to study for intrinsic reasons, with particular reference to their desire for self-fulfilment. Nonetheless, the study found that Israeli Arab students had a strong desire to improve their social status and influence their society, while the Jewish students considered this as the least important factor.

Investigating practicing teachers' motives for pursuing graduate education in the fields of science and mathematics in Turkey, Incikabi et al. (2013) found that the key internal factors contributing to student decision to enrol in graduate programmes included contributing to social development, professional development, keeping up with the era, academic improvement, and interested with scientific research. On the other hand, effect of teachers on college emerged as the key external factor influencing students. In the US, Knutsen (2011) explored the factors that motivate U.S. workers to pursue higher education programmes. The study result showed that while 'to increase my job opportunities' was rated as the most important extrinsic factor, 'to advance my personal growth' was perceived as the most important intrinsic factor. Findings from the reviewed past studies suggests that students who pursue postgraduate degree programmes are influenced by a multiplicity of factors categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Nonetheless, none of the available studies in the area of research interrogated teachers specifically pursuing educational leadership and management and more importantly within the Ghanaian context.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study employed concurrent mixed methods design. This design generally utilizes separate quantitative and qualitative strategies as a means to offset the inherent weaknesses in one method with the strengths of the other method (Creswell et al., 2003). In this study, the researcher obtained different but complementary data on factors that influence teachers to pursue programmes in educational leadership and management. The qualitative data helped to expand and clarify the quantitative results obtained from the study (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The design was deemed fit for the study since it provided the opportunity to explore multiple viewpoints and perspectives of respondents in a single study. Moreover, considering that the study research questions were descriptive in nature, the concurrent mixed method design was appropriate because it provided corroboration and clarification of the results between the quantitative and qualitative data. Again, the concurrent data collection procedure of this design resulted in a shorter data collection time period.

### Setting and Participants

The study was carried out at the Department of Educational Studies and Leadership at the University of Ghana. The location was selected based on convenience and availability of the respondents in the programme. Moreover, the researcher teaches on the programme and felt that a study of that nature in the department will help generate results that could be used for instructional improvement in the programme. The department runs a master's degree programme in educational leadership and management. It is a one-year master's degree programme which seeks to offer students the required competencies and expertise to address key challenges faced by the educational sector in Ghana. Some of the main courses offered include educational policy and planning, contemporary issues in educational leadership, educational management and supervision, human resource management in education, higher education management and education financing and budgeting.

The study population consisted of all teachers in the MA Educational Leadership and Management programme of the Department of Educational Studies and Leadership, University of Ghana. For the quantitative part of the study, a sample size of 175 was selected using Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) criteria for selecting sample size through simple random sampling technique from a total population of 320 (Cohen et al., 2007). With respect to the qualitative part, 10 students were selected to participate in the interview sessions. The criteria employed to qualify as a student was that they had duly registered for courses in the academic year. Past students were not included since available data on them could not be secured. This was done by employing purposeful random sampling technique to ensure credibility (Patton, 2002). Thus the 10 students were selected randomly and hence each student stood an equal chance of being selected. They were randomly selected with the intention of reducing the biases of the researcher and also to give equal chance to all respondents. According to Patton (2002, p. 241), "a small, purposeful random sample aims to reduce suspicion about why certain cases were selected, but such a sample still does not permit statistical generalisations".

### Instruments

The research instruments utilized for the data collection was structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews designed specifically for the study by the researcher. The self-completion questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part I consisted of questions relating to respondents' personal details including gender, age, marital

status, highest academic qualification, and whether respondent currently work in the education sector. The second part, developed through the review of the literature, consisted of 17 motivational factors which respondents were invited to determine the degree of importance of each of them in influencing their decision to enrol in the programme. The rating scale consisted of a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important).

Also, the interview guide consisted of two sections constructed to elicit from interviewees what they perceived as the key factors that influenced their decision to enrol in the programme. To ensure that interviewees expressed themselves as free as possible, the interview guide started with a general question to all interviewees as 'What factors influenced your decision to enrol in this educational leadership and management programme'. Follow up questions were then posed to provide detailed descriptions and explanations depending on their response.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaire research instrument, a pilot study was conducted on 40 students pursuing MA in Education programme at the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Ghana. The students who took part in the pilot study were deemed to have similar characteristics to the study participants since they were also pursuing a postgraduate degree in education and were practising teachers. The internal consistency reliability of the instrument was .778. For the qualitative component of the study, the researcher employed member checking to safeguard the credibility of the results. The researcher provided the participants the interview transcript to enable them to ascertain whether it captured fully what had been shared. Also, the credibility of the qualitative data was ensured by audio-recording all interview sessions to capture the views of participants in its original form. Finally, the researcher provided thick description of the research process detailing the sampling procedure, the research instrument, the data collection procedure, and the systematic steps in the data analysis.

## **Procedure**

In compliance with research ethics, the researcher sought permission from the management of the Department of Educational Studies and Leadership prior to the commencement of the data collection process. The questionnaires were then distributed to the selected students after their consent had been sought. The researcher further contacted the students who were selected to participate in the interviews for their consent to be interviewed. With the ten interviews conducted, each interview session lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. These interviews were conducted face-to-face. As already pointed out, the 10 participants who were interviewed were selected randomly so as to reduce researcher bias and to give equal chance to all respondents (Patton, 2002). After obtaining permission from the participants, all the interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed in preparation for the analysis. Additionally, the researcher sought the consent of the respondents and assured them of the confidentiality and anonymity of their views. Finally, to safeguard their anonymity, pseudonyms were given to all interviewees. Thus, names appearing in the report of the results do not reflect the real names of the participants in the study.

## **Data Analysis**

The quantitative and qualitative data generated from the study were analysed concurrently using descriptive statistical analysis and qualitative data analysis methods. This meant that the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data was independent from each other, and thus one type of data did not inform the analysis of the other (Bryman, 2007). This approach helped to synthesize and integrate multiple data set and uncover any contradictions that may emerge from the two data set. The quantitative data were analysed through descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations. The use of descriptive statistics such as means, and standard

deviations were employed for describing the numerical data. This was deemed appropriate since the study aimed at exploring the factors perceived as important in influencing students' decision to enrol in educational leadership and management programme, and not testing hypothesis (Muijs, 2011; Neuman, 2007). IBM SPSS Statistics 25 was used to organise and analyse the data for the quantitative part.

The qualitative data was analysed through thematic analytical technique. First, the researcher prepared and organised the data for analysis by transcribing the raw data generated from the interviews. The researcher then read through the data to gain familiarity with the entire data set. This entailed repeated and active reading of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data was then categorized into themes emerging from the data, and finally reporting in light of perspectives in the literature. The broad categories emerging from the data were professional growth and development, future expectations and aspirations, improving income/earnings, and improving social status. The thematic analysis was considered appropriate for the study because it is a method to use when seeking to understand a set of experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set (Clarke & Braun, 2013) and to search for common or shared meanings (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

## RESULTS

### Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics showed that of the 175 respondents, 96 (55%) were females while 79 (45%) were males. This suggests that females were more represented in the programme than males. The result further showed that while 83% of respondents held bachelor's degree qualifications, 17% already possessed masters' degree which suggest that the MA educational leadership and management was an additional masters' degree programme that they were pursuing. Further, majority of the respondents 108 (62%) were below 40 years while minority 67 (38%) were above 40 years of age. Finally, 131 (75%) respondents reported being married while 44 (25%) reported being single.

### Factors Influencing Students' Decision Gathered Through the Survey Data

The views of respondents were sought to determine the degree of importance they attached to each of the 17 motivation factors that were likely to have influenced their decision to enrol in the programme. The descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviations) of each of the factors is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

*Degree of importance of motivation factors to study educational leadership and management*

| Ranking | Motivation factors  | M    | SD   |
|---------|---|------|------|
| 1       | For self-improvement and personal growth                                | 4.55 | 0.86 |
| 2       | To perform my job better  | 4.48 | 1.04 |
| 3       | To achieve my goal of establishing and managing my own school in future | 4.41 | 0.87 |
| 4       | To attain leadership position in my current job                         | 4.39 | 1.11 |
| 5       | To attain high social status  | 4.30 | 0.90 |
| 6       | To improve my income and long-term financial stability                  | 4.09 | 0.93 |
| 7       | To gain promotion in my current job                                     | 4.00 | 1.27 |
| 8       | To gain more self-confidence  | 3.89 | 1.12 |
| 9       | To make my job more secure  | 3.85 | 1.21 |
| 10      | To have better access to health care                                    | 3.81 | 1.15 |
| 11      | To become a professional teacher  | 3.28 | 1.56 |
| 12      | To help me get the respect I deserve at work                            | 3.23 | 1.33 |
| 13      | To afford me the opportunity to change my occupation                    | 3.13 | 1.35 |
| 14      | To meet and make new friends  | 2.99 | 1.32 |
| 15      | To fulfil my family's expectations                                      | 2.97 | 1.32 |
| 16      | To a member of the university of Ghana community                        | 2.84 | 1.32 |
| 17      | To gain acceptance of friends   | 2.65 | 1.19 |

Notes: M = Means, SD = Standard Deviations

The result showed that of the items rated by respondents, 'for self-improvement and personal growth' was ranked as the most important factor that influenced their decision to pursue the programme. In all, seven factors were ranked as 'important' factors that influenced their decision to enrol in the programme. Per ranking in ascending order, these factors were 'for self-improvement and personal growth' ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ), 'to perform my job better' ( $M = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ), 'to achieve my goal of establishing and managing my own school in future' ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ), 'to attain leadership position in my current job' ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), 'to attain high school status' ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ), 'to improve my income and long-term financial stability' ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ), and 'to gain promotion in my current job' ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ).

On the other hand, three factors that received the lowest ranking by respondents were 'to fulfil my family's expectations' ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ), 'to be a member of the University of Ghana community' ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ), and 'to gain the acceptance of friends' ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ).

### **Factors Influencing Students' Decision Gathered from the Interview Data**

This section presents on the key factors influencing student's decision to enrol a course in educational leadership and management obtained through the interview data. Key factors that emerged from the interview data include professional growth and development, future aspirations and expectations, improving social status, and improving income/earnings.

#### ***Professional Growth and Development***

One notable theme that emerged from the interview data was for professional growth and development. A critical analysis of the interview data under this theme revealed two groups of interviewees which were those who were currently occupying leadership positions and those who did not hold any leadership position in their respective occupations. Interviewees who were currently occupying leadership positions indicated that they sought to enroll in the programme to acquire leadership skills and competencies to enable them carry out their leadership roles effectively and efficiently. They explained that a postgraduate degree in educational leadership and management would help them to consolidate their positions and also help them to guide and direct their followers appropriately so that collectively they can achieve their organisational goals. For example, Mr. Opoku indicated that 'I am pursuing this course to update my knowledge to enable me to perform more effectively as a headteacher'. Mrs. Essel added that:

I decided to enrol in this programme to enhance my professional growth and development. I had my last professional development in 2006 and I needed to take this programme to refresh and upgrade my professional competencies. Moreover, I took this programme so that I could obtain the necessary competencies, skills and knowledge that would enable me to function effectively and efficiently as a headmaster of a Senior High School.

Mr. Austin further commented that:

Although I work as a head of an educational institution, I have not had any intensive professional course in leadership and school management. As a result, when the course was advertised, I decided to apply and pursue it to enable me know how to professionally manage my staff. Moreover, it will enable me to be professionally developed.

However, interviewees who did not hold any leadership position in their respective schools reported that

enrolling in the programme for professional growth and development would help enhance their professional competencies in the field of education and help improve the learning outcomes of their students. In this vein, Mrs Baffoe commented that:

My choice to pursue MA Educational Leadership and Management was influenced by my desire to acquire knowledge in education. I realised my knowledge on educational issues was limited and need to be exposed to new ideas. Also, in pursuing this course I wanted to be able to bring about change in my institution, since I realised there were issues of education challenges facing the institution.

Mr. George further added that:

As a government teacher who wants to be effective and knowledgeable in my chosen field, I felt the need to enrol in this programme to enable me acquire relevant knowledge in my chosen field so that I can impart knowledge that will improve my students' learning and performance.

In sum, students who principally held leadership positions expected to sharpen their leadership skills and competencies, while those without leadership positions intended to exposed themselves to new ideas in education and improve the learning outcomes of their students.

### ***Future Expectations/Aspirations***

Another theme that emerged from the interview was future expectation/aspirations motive. Interviewees indicated that they were influenced to enrol in the educational leadership and management programme due to their future expectations and aspirations. First, four interviewees reported that they had a future aspiration of becoming leaders in the education sector and that enrolling in the educational leadership and management programme would propel them to achieve such future goal. For example, Mr Yeboah commented that:

Future expectation is another motivating factor for me. I am hoping that in future I will be able to lead an educational institution. So, to meet this expectation, it will be good for one to upgrade himself academically and professionally by enrolling in educational leadership and management programme.

Mrs. Baffoe also pointed out that:

We all wish to grow professionally in our respective endeavours. It is my wish to become one of the educational leaders in the organisation and so chose to pursue an M.A in Educational Leadership and Management which will educate me to be effective and efficient in my leadership role in the educational sector in future'.

In addition to the desire and aspirations of interviewees to attain leadership position in future, nearly all interviewees reported that they had future aspiration of establishing their own school. In that respect, they hoped that acquiring skills and competencies in Educational Leadership and Management would enable them to establish and manage their own school in future. In this vein, Mr Austin intimated that:

I have a vision of establishing my own school in the near future. For that reason, I needed the necessary training and qualification. Based on the advice of a friend who happened to be a past student in the programme, I became convinced that I will gain the needed skills and competencies to achieve my vision of establishing and managing my school'.

Relatedly, there were other interviewees who disclosed that they had enrolled to acquire competencies to take



over the management of their family educational institutions. For instance, Mr Yeboah indicated that 'My parents own an educational institution. As part of their succession plan, I was encouraged to take this Maters' degree in educational management and leadership'. Also, Mrs. Dankwah added that:

My parents run a school and I intend to take over in running the school in some years to come. Due to the fact that my parents did not have the opportunity to take up courses in education, it was best I did to gain knowledge that will add up and also improve that school's management'.

Students enrolling in the programme intends to secure competencies that will enable them to gain leadership roles as well as establishing their own schools in the near future.

### **Improve Income/Earnings**

Interviewees further noted that they enrolled in the programme to improve their income and earnings. They intimated that there is direct relationship between once level of education and earnings hence the need to enrol in further studies to secure improvement in their earnings. Mrs. Bandoh indicated that:

I realised my salary was not worth the job I was doing. That is to say, I was underpaid partly because of my qualification. I needed an increase in my salary to be able to meet my family responsibilities. I therefore decided to pursue the course.

Mr. Ayisi also added that:

My decision to pursue the course is also for financial gain. The higher one's qualification, the more one stands to gain financially. Thus, this course will enable me climb the ladder quickly in terms of position thereby leading to more financial gain in terms salary improvement.

They explained that once they successfully complete the programme, it would facilitate their promotion in their profession which will ultimately result in improvement in income. In this regard, Mr. Opoku commented that 'the MA educational leadership and management will facilitate my promotion on the job to earn additional income. Once my salary improves, my standard of living will increase, and I will feel a little bit alright'. There was therefore a high expectation among the interviewees that they would reap financial benefits by successfully completing the programme.

### **Improving social status**

A number of respondents also intimated that they enrolled with the aim of improving social status. By pursuing postgraduate degree in educational leadership and management, they explained that their status would be raised. Mr. Opoku noted that "there is pride in having a high certificate or degree. Truly being able to attain a high education or degree raises the status of a person. Therefore, prestige is another motivating factor. Also, Mr. Adawudu pointed out that:

Taking a course in educational leadership and management will improve my status in the society and also increase my confidence in the society. Society cherishes people who have taking an advance course in their profession which will make them effective and responsible citizens.

They believed that successfully completing the programme could aid improve their educational status among their peers in the school and enable me them to highly respected and improve their social status in their communities.

## DISCUSSION

This study sought to investigate the key factors that influence practising teachers' decision to pursue postgraduate degree programme in educational leadership and management in Ghanaian higher education institutions. Results from the study suggest that respondents were principally influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors in pursuing the programme in educational leadership and management. This is in recognition that out of the seven motivation factors that were highly ranked as important and informed their decision to enrol in the programme two were intrinsic motivation factors while four were extrinsic motivation factors. This finding is consistent with studies that found that motivations for following graduate education were explained by both internal motivations and external motivations (Incikabi et al., 2013). Again, research suggests that some learners are motivated by a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic factors which have to be effectively balanced to enable them to be successful (Bryne & Flood, 2005).

The study further showed that the most emphasized theme as a motivation factor influencing student decision was 'for professional growth and development'. Insights drawn from the qualitative data confirms the ranking in the quantitative data. Views expressed by interviewees indicated that respondents who were holding leadership positions enrolled in the programme to acquire leadership skills and competencies to enable them carry out their leadership roles effectively and efficiently while those who did not hold any leadership position in their respective schools enrolled in the programme to enhance their professional competencies in the field of education and to help improve the learning outcomes of their students. This finding corroborates the study of Starret et al. (2013) where respondents indicated enhancement and development of leadership skills as the key motive for pursuing a master's degree in education with concentration in educational administration. Badu-Nyarko et al. (2010) argued that learning for self-development and professional growth has almost become a necessity due to the rapid socio-economic growth, technological advancement, and knowledge explosion across the globe. Moreover, when teachers become motivated to engage in professional development programmes, they are likely to profit from such engagements and experiences (Karabenick & Conley, 2011).

This result is not surprising considering that school leaders in Ghana are not required to possess certification in a standardized preparatory programme in educational administration before they are appointed into leadership roles (Amakye & Ampah-Mensah, 2013; Donkoh, 2015). The Ghana Education Service has no requirement that prospective school headteachers are obliged to complete a specified post-graduate studies in educational administration or educational leadership. In such situations, practising school leaders may voluntarily perceive themselves unfit to successfully lead their schools as they would lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions for successful leadership. Such leaders may therefore take advantage to enrol in the available educational leadership and management courses run by the Ghanaian universities to grasp the required knowledge and competencies to lead their schools successfully. Research suggest that theoretical knowledge is critical component that successful school leaders need to apply to inform critical decisions and to address pertinent school problems adequately (Kowalski, 2012).

Even though a number of respondents were currently not holding any leadership in schools, they felt it was crucial they engage in the programme to gain deeper understanding in education and to help improve student learning outcomes. Increasingly, although school leaders perform vital roles in school improvement and transformation, teachers are equally positioned to contribute special assets to the school leadership (Donaldson, 2007). Thus, even though such teachers are currently not holding any leadership in schools, once they successfully

complete their studies in educational leadership, they will complement the efforts of their heads to transform their schools.

Another factor that attracted a high rating that warrant discussion was the respondents' intention to enrol in the programme to achieve their goal of establishing their own schools in future. Due to the rising disparity in achievement that exist between public and private basic schools in Ghana (Ankomah & Hope, 2011), and the inability of the public education system to cope with the rapidly increasing demand of education (Grant, 2017; Mourné & Saudemont, 2015) many parents have been patronising private basic education in Ghana. Private basic education in Ghana has therefore become a huge business and consequently teachers who are currently enrolling in postgraduate programme in educational leadership and management intend to establish and manage their own with the aim of making profits from fees and other additional cost paid by families. While the decision for more serving teachers to establish their own private educational institutions remain a laudable idea as it would increase the number of private educational institutions to create wider access to interested pupils, it could affect the quality of education in the public sector as more talented brains may eventually drift into private education sector. This could affect the quality of leadership in the public educational institutions in Ghana. Nonetheless, there is growing evidence that poor school leadership amount to poor school performance and high teacher turnover while effective school leadership lead to significant school improvement (Asia Society, 2012). Moreover, privatisation and commercialisation of the education system could have dreadful consequences on the poor segment of the Ghanaian society if it is not adequately monitored, and regulated (Mourné & Saudemont, 2015).

Finally, another interesting finding from the study was that respondents ranked several motivation factors highly important than improving their income. Research has shown that teachers in Ghana have been leaving the profession to seek employment in professions that are considered to lucrative and hold promises of better pay and prestige for them (Adjei & Amofa, 2014). Others do not leave the profession but work with lower level of commitment which obviously affect the standard of performance of students (Salifu, 2014). Because of this, one would have expected that teachers who are currently pursuing a postgraduate programme would have ranked improvement in income as the top-most motive but that was not the case as they rather sought to improve their professional growth and development and to perform their job better. This reaffirms the received wisdom among occupational psychologists that pay on its own does not increase motivation (Bennell, 2004) and hardly motivate teachers (Seebaluck & Seegum, 2013).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This exploratory study has illuminated the key motives informing practising teachers' decision to enrol in postgraduate degree programme in educational leadership and management in a Ghanaian higher education institution. To really create an enabling learning environment to stimulate students learning outcomes, it is imperative for educational authorities to be conscious of the underlying motives that might have influenced students' decision to enrol in their programmes. These factors can impact on the learning strategies, achievement levels, and the extent of engagement of students in higher education institutions (Bryne & Flood, 2005). Considering that professional growth and development and the desire to do their job better emerged as the two highly ranked motive for enrolling in the programme, it places greater responsibility on higher education institutions to effectively blend theoretical knowledge with field work experience in their training to stimulate student learning. There is equally the need to centre students' learning on practical problems that they are likely to experience in their daily work and the immediate utility of their learning should be guaranteed. Indeed, adults learn what they

perceive as relevant to their personal and professional needs and they would desire to work on immediate problems that can be applied to their work or other responsibilities of value to them (Knowles et al., 2005; Merriam et al., 2007).

Despite the invaluable insights drawn from the study, one key limitation is that the sample was drawn from one single university in Ghana even though postgraduate programmes in educational leadership and management is run in other public and private universities in Ghana. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalised sufficiently to the entire higher education landscape in Ghana. Future studies could therefore replicate this study in other higher education settings in Ghana so that generalisations can be made to inform policy formulations. Again, future research could explore students' perceptions on the effectiveness of the school leadership programmes since for professional growth and development emerged as the topmost motivational factor influencing students' decision. This can take the form of longitudinal studies that will collect data at multiple stages of the programme. Finally, studies can explore the extent to which graduating students occupying leadership roles apply their learning into their leadership roles as well as facilitating and hindering factors confronting effective transfer.

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