

Perception of Private Basic School Headteachers on Teacher Retention at the Kwadaso Municipality in Ashanti Region, Ghana

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Abstract

Teacher retention has emerged as a pressing concern in private education due to its implications for student achievement, school productivity, and educational equity. This study explored the perceptions of private basic school headteachers about teacher retention at the Kwadaso Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study was conducted, using a qualitative research design with face-to-face interviews. Five participants were purposively sampled through census from the accessible population of headteachers from five schools within the municipality for the data gathering. The data was analyzed, using thematic analysis. It was discovered that factors that promote the retention of private basic school teachers in Kwadaso Municipality were: (i) Personal (ii) Professional, and (iii) Environmental. Furthermore, the study revealed that if there is retention of teachers in Kwadaso private basic schools it will contribute to school improvement. In this study, it is recommended that Private Schools Association, proprietors, management and all other stakeholders of private basic schools should increase teacher retention by acknowledging the personal, professional and environmental factors that teachers experience and expect from them to promote teacher retention in private basic schools in Kwadaso Municipality.

Keywords: Retention, Teacher Retention, Privatisation, Private Education

Introduction

Globally, teachers contribute substantially to the development of human resource capacities. Teachers are a source of inspiration and motivation for students in their pursuit of reaching their full potential (Davies, Harris, Christensen, Hanks & Bowles, 2019). They play an essential role in creating an environment conducive to quality teaching and learning (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). In addition to educating students with care, and guiding them in the direction of honesty and integrity, they also assist them in achieving the goals and aims in life. According to Nazeer-Ikeda and Gopinathan (2022), many professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, journalists, and politicians, to name a few, would not be who they are today if their professors had not undergone the appropriate training offered by teachers.

Despite this tremendous contribution, teachers encounter unfavorable situations, such as poor working

environments, excessive demands, and unrealistic expectations in the course of discharging their duties and this normally leads to their attrition, especially in the private basic schools (Geiger & Pivovara, 2018).

Therefore, the capacity to attract and retain teachers has become crucial to the success of any nation's educational program. Literature from the past and present use the terms "attrition" and "retention" to describe the variables that cause teachers to leave or remain in the teaching profession, respectively (Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022). Due to the inherent difficulties provided by teacher attrition, retaining teachers in the classroom has become an extremely difficult task over the years. There is a widespread belief that basic school teachers and staff are likely to leave their postings in pursuit of greener pastures (Kukano & Mafora, 2020). Research aimed at addressing or mitigating the negative consequences of teacher attrition has received the urgent attention of all educational stakeholders on a worldwide platform.

In the United States, for example, the problem of teacher turnover is rising uncontrollably. These turnover rates cost the United States about \$7 billion yearly and exceed 20% in urban and other schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). In Ghana, researches undertaken to determine why teachers quit their employment willingly in different social environments include (Effah & Osei-Owusu, 2014; Brako, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Contemporary works have shifted from focusing on attrition to investigating more into factors that facilitate teacher retention in educational institutions (Gunn & Mcrae, 2021). The study conducted by Gunn and Mcrae (2021) indicates that despite the challenges teachers face in school they are still being supported by administrators, colleagues, parents, and students, and their plans to remain in the field are strong.

It appears that within the Ghanaian context, existing studies focused more on teacher attrition than the factors that enhance teacher retention (Opoku, Asare-Nuamah, Nketsia, Asibey & Arinaitwe, 2020; Brako, 2016; Abotsi, Dsane, Babah, & Kwarteng, 2020). Also, even those who attempted to conduct studies on teacher retention appear to have focused more on public schools than particularly private schools. Specifically, at the Kwadaso Municipality, there are a number of private basic schools most of which experience the problem of attrition, and there are yet others that are booming in popularity, suggesting that all is well with their teacher retention. It is in respect of this that the study sought to explore the perception of private basic school headteachers on teacher retention at Kwadaso Municipality in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, with the objective of finding out the factors that promote teacher retention in the private basic schools at Kwadaso Municipality.

Research Question

This study was guided by the research question -- What factors promote the retention of teachers in private basic schools at Kwadaso Municipality?

Literature Review

Literature, in this respect, was reviewed on teacher retention in basic school education, Ghana's private education landscape, the concept of teacher retention, and factors influencing teacher retention.

Ghana's Private Education Landscape

In Ghana, Article 38 (2) of the 1992 constitution states that government should provide free quality basic education for all Ghanaian children, irrespective of gender, geographical location, religion, socio-economic status, or one's disability. Consequently, the Education Act of 2008 (Act 778) also mandates that all students complete a free and compulsory cycle of basic education consisting of two years of kindergarten, six years of primary, and three years of junior high school.

Ghana has, over the past decade, made gains in expanding access to basic education by increasing primary school enrolment from 3,809,258 (47.5%) in 2010 to 4,511,268 (48.4%) in 2019. However, the infrastructure and facilities that might facilitate universal access have been critically inadequate, while teacher quality, morale, and commitment, which could ensure the quality of basic education, continued to deteriorate (Osiesi, 2023). This condition gave private schools a good chance to contribute to Ghana's basic education. Hence the Education Act of 1961, Ghana's first significant post-independence education law, acknowledged and institutionalized the involvement of private schools in educational provision.

The Act provides for private institutions as follows: "Subject to the requirements of this Act, any person may create and operate a private institution in a specified way." This clause has remained in effect to the present day, with periodic revisions to the operational guidelines and regulations (Ghana Education Act, 2008).

Literature on private participation in education shows that private provision has also increased enrollment in rural areas and among low-income households at a substantial cost, despite free public basic education. The purpose of such reviews is to guarantee that schools perform their services by Ghana Education Service laws. Ghana's privatization of education operates within the Ministry of Education and is supervised by the National Schools Inspectorate Authority (NASIA) agency. Consequently, they are regulated by the Ghana National Association of Private Schools (GNAPS) body which seeks to promote and protect the economic and social interests of private school owners in the development and management of effective, high-quality schools at all levels of education (Gnaps. org, 2019).

The Concept of Teacher Retention

The concept of teacher retention is referred to as the percentage of teachers who remain at the same school in subsequent years (Zavelevsky & Lishchinsky, 2020). Reitman and Karge (2019) also described teacher retention as the capacity to minimize teacher migration and offer more stable learning environments. Another definition by Kukano and Mafara (2020) also refers to teacher retention as the number of teachers who remain in the education sector.

According to UNESCO (2015), teacher retention is a field of education study that focuses on how school factors and teacher characteristics influence whether teachers remain in their schools, move to other schools, or leave the profession before retirement (Hagaman, 2018). The field was established in the 1990s in response to a projected shortage in the education labor force, and it has gradually contributed to contemporary studies as well. Garcia and Weiss (2019) argued that knowing what retention is, how to retain it, and the positive impacts it comes with go a long way to helping establish teachers in the occupation.

Factors influencing Teacher Retention

As previously noted, the current debate in the field of teacher retention aims to enhance the educational

system by enhancing teacher-working standards. The next section outlines several retention-promoting factors such as: administrative support, good working conditions, effects of teacher retention on teaching and learning and negative impacts of teacher retention.

Administrative Support

After schools hire talented teachers, solid induction and support for novice teachers can increase their retention and accelerate their professional growth (Leugers, 2018). This includes feedback from experienced teachers in the same subject area or grade level as the beginning teacher, the opportunity for novice teachers to observe expert teachers, orientation sessions, retreats, and seminars, as well as reduced workload and additional classroom assistance (Harms, 2016). Literature has it that instructors who get this collection of services remain in the profession at rates greater than twice those of teachers who lack this assistance (Thompson, Jones, Holman, & Silver, 2019). However, only a small percentage of teachers, particularly in public basic schools, receive this extensive system of assistance (Thompson et al., 2019). Over the past two decades, mentorship and orientation programs have been widely accessible throughout the globe, yet their quality varies greatly. High-poverty schools typically have inferior programming, presenting beginning teachers with more complicated and varied student demands and obstacles. According to research, schools may engage in quality induction programs to boost the recruitment and retention of exceptional instructors (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, & Darling-Hammond, 2016).

Good working conditions

The next factor that promotes the retention of teachers is the provision of favorable working conditions. Teaching conditions, sometimes referred to as student learning conditions, are a powerful predictor of instructors' decisions over where to teach and whether to remain. Working circumstances at high-poverty schools are frequently substantially worse than in low-poverty schools, which contribute to the high teacher attrition rate in these schools (Pepra-Mensah, Adjei, & Agyei, 2017). On the other hand, school leadership and administrative support, the availability of teaching and learning resources, and opportunities for professional collaborations and shared decision-making are factors related to working conditions that are consistently regarded as significant in teacher career decisions (Agezo, 2013). Schools with appropriate instructional resources and supplies, safe and clean facilities, acceptable student-to-teacher ratios, and sufficient support staff can significantly influence teacher retention rates and the type of teaching and learning that can occur (Wanyonyi, Maiyo & Likoko, 2023). According to (Jacobson, 2016), poor school resources contribute to teacher attrition. The importance of school leadership techniques for teacher support is reinforced by allocating time for teacher cooperation (DeAngelis, Wall, & Che, 2013).

Other variables include soliciting input from teachers, utilizing observations and feedback to assist teacher improvement. Teachers need more time for cooperation and possibilities for professional growth, as well as recognizing teachers' work. With the demand for teachers at an all-time high and the teacher attrition rate rising gradually, school leaders must make changes to their leadership models and school settings that enhance teacher job satisfaction and retention (Holmes, Parker & Gibson, 2019).

Negative effects of teacher retention

Poor teacher retention has been demonstrated to adversely affect student academic achievement (Shank-

ar & Nayaken, 2020). Despite their lack of qualifications, teaching was a final choice for several teachers seeking jobs (Craig, 2017). Retaining teachers who do not wish to improve themselves but value job stability and pension plans have a significant negative influence on the entire population of students (Mueller, Wang, Fox, Yeo, B. Sepulcre, Sabuncu, Shafee, Lu & Liu, 2013).

Again, when low-performing teachers are maintained, they in turn adversely decrease the quality of management owing to the promotional strategies of educational institutions needing to do with periods served in a particular role (Mueller et al., 2013). Older teachers tend to be resistant to educational innovations of any kind, preferring instead to continue using the ways with which they are most familiar with or at ease (Davies et al., 2019). Looking at a new trend in events such as the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into various educational sectors, older educators tend to be more resistant to change. The reason for this is that they are neither technically skillful to completely comprehend the changes, nor do they enjoy the concept of change, both of which have detrimental effects on the educational industry. This results in monotony and the inability to execute fresh ideas and activities (Jacobson, 2016).

Supporting and motivating teachers

When teachers believe that pupils are not learning effectively, they begin to question their abilities, due diligence, and the school's dedication to high-quality education (Stronge & Xu, 2021). Teachers may therefore consider a career change. A principal of a school who can provide teachers with consistent positive reinforcement will increase student learning and retain a greater number of teachers (Gunaretnam, 2021). Some of the motivation factors to be considered comprise motivating teachers, celebrating achievements, collaborating in problem-solving, developing a conducive school-work environment, and offering excellent professional development (Acar, 2014).

Methodology

This study used the qualitative research design consisting of one-on-one in-depth interviews and focus group discussion to provide an understanding of the retention of teachers in private basic schools in Kwadaso Municipality. The population of the study consisted of all headteachers in five private schools, being the oldest and most popular within the Municipality. The five headteachers were purposefully chosen through census by virtue of their positions as heads of the schools for the study. An interviewer's guide was used in a face-to-face interview with the headteachers. Before an interview session with the participants, the researchers would explain the purpose of the interview though the participants seemed already knowledgeable about the exercise. They would seek the consent of the participants, in respect of the recordings to be made on the interviews and assure them of anonymity, and followed all ethical considerations. They then explained that the discussion might prolong a bit – about one hour, and respectfully ask them not to hide anything but to come out sincerely from their hearts and give answers to the questions they were going to ask. The researchers told them to seek clarifications, in case any question was not clear to them. The researchers got the opportunity to meet four headmasters in two days, and the fifth headmaster was met on the third day. An interview session with a headmaster lasted for an average of forty minutes. After the interviews the themes that emerged were listed and the discussions were focused on them in relation to the research question.

Findings and Discussions

Research Question: What factors promote the retention of teachers in private basic schools at Kwadaso Municipality?

On factors that promote retention of teachers, there were a number of items on the interviewer's guide, and the interviewed headteachers (HT), who were all in agreement about their answer to the first item on the interviewer's guide, had the following to say about demotivating factors.

"There are so many factors that lead to low retention of teachers in a school, and I believe these factors have to be addressed quicker than other issues. Of course, if motivation is on the low side you don't expect teachers to stay long in the school to work to achieve good results" (HT-2). *"Low salaries are demotivating enough for teachers to stay in a school"* (HT-1). *"Lack of accommodation is a factor that should not be glossed over if we are considering demotivating factors of teacher retention"* (HT-3).

"I can mention poor sanitary environmental conditions. If the school environment is nice, teachers can even take pride in that and boast of teaching in the school. In such a situation, teachers and all other workers contribute their quota in the delivery of their duties in a healthy manner" (HT-5).

The headteachers also talked about factors that could motivate the teachers to stay in the schools for long. An observation that (HT-2) made in respect of a female teacher, regarding incentives and relief packages for teachers, was quite interesting. According to him, the school did not allow her to pay school fees for two of her wards because of her dedication to duty and the manner she took care of the children she taught as if they were her own. The female teacher, in appreciation to what the school had been doing for her showed appreciation to him and the proprietor this way: *"What you have been doing for me has relieved me and my husband from a lot of burdens and arguments at home. I even believe the situation has solidified our marital relationship"*.

(HT-4) also commented on how another teacher in his school had admitted as follows: *"I am encouraged to remain in this school because I am always appreciated for my good work done if not always, at least, annually"*. According to (HT-4), this teacher was awarded for being punctual in school during their 10th Anniversary.

Other headteachers pointed out how some teachers had expressed similar sentiments in their schools for being assisted in different ways. In effect, the heads were of the view that incentives and relief packages like bonuses for Christmas holidays, free meals, extra allowances, scholarships for teachers' children, and accommodation were some of the innovative packages that had encouraged their retention so far in their current schools.

When asked to mention some factors that can retain teachers in a school, the headteachers were, once again, in agreement about most factors. In answer to an item on the interviewer's guide about the kind of motivation considered appropriate in getting the teachers enticed, one headteacher mentioned several intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

"The motivation I am talking about includes self-drive of teachers, accommodation, promotion, and salary levels" (HT- 2).

"I am in love with end-of-year packages – packages like rice, sardines, drinks, and especially, financial packages" (HT-1).

"For me, I will say, give the teachers accommodation, and most of their problems will be solved" (HT-3).

"Nothing is more motivating than giving the teachers breakfast and lunch. If you can do that, they will come to school early and may even stay longer for extracurricular activities" (HT- 4).

On recommendation concerning teacher retention in the schools, the headteachers in their respective interviews mentioned many things. Two of them said,

“Treat the teachers well and you can retain them” (HT-3 and HT-5).

Some expressions used by one headteacher were:

“Respect the teachers and pay them well. Take their professional development at heart and monitor them in your supervisory role as head. With these, they will perform positively, and you can be sure of their continuous stay in the school” (HT-1).

Another headteacher said,

“Have a good environment, and maintain a cordial relationship with them. With these and a little upward push of their salaries, you are sure of keeping them in the school” (HT- 4).

One headteacher said in confidence:

“There is good communication here. You would hardly notice a significant difference between employer and employee. The management accords teachers with respect, and this in itself encourages them to stay here for long as teachers” (HT-3).

Another headteacher interviewee stated:

“Our teachers are made to feel like a family and they are treated well. This, I believe, is what makes them eager to assist us to deal with personal issues involving either students or teachers” (T-5).

Another headteacher added:

“One thing I have realized and I think is keeping our teachers here for long is management’s willingness to try and help teachers solve their problems when they bring them before us” (HT-1).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The researchers held the participants on one-on-one interviews with five headteachers to produce the study's findings. The data revealed a vast and varied list of criteria that exhibited common patterns in the factors that promote teacher retention in private schools in Kwadaso Municipality. Factors promoting teacher retention include personal factors like value, belief in long service, job opportunities, part-time teaching, and proximity to school. Professional factors include job security, training, school policies, incentives, and relief packages. Environmental factors include good management practices, school culture, staff holidays, and resources. The study recommended that:

1. Individual private schools, based on their context should acknowledge the personal, professional and environmental factors that teachers experience and expect from them to promote teacher retention in private basic schools in Kwadaso Municipality.
2. Private Schools Association in Kwadaso Municipality should also provide education to private basic school stakeholders about the need to retain their teachers for longer years.
3. Stakeholders of the Private Schools Association address the effects of teacher retention on the academic performance of students in private basic school education to encourage teacher retention.

Implications for Practice

The private Schools Associations, proprietors, management and all other stakeholders of these schools within the Kwadaso Municipality should consider the current status of teacher retention to inform policy and interventions aimed at promoting it. This will contribute to improvement in the practice of teacher retention at private basic education in Kwadaso Municipality to retain their teachers for longer years. If management of private basic schools can establish an effective school culture, and if teachers of any

schedule or class can develop positive relationships with their pupils, they will have a positive relationship with the school management. In such a situation, pupils can have a close relationship with teachers, and they will feel comfortable sharing their problems with them. The school can also foster an enabling environment by providing teachers with incentives such as accommodation, end-of-year packages, breakfast and lunch, etc. and these can go a long way in retaining teachers in the schools. Provision of such environment demonstrates management's interest in enhancing teacher retention and learning outcomes, which eventually will result in improved student performance.

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