

Exploring Strategies to Retain Basic School Teachers in Ghana: What can We Learn from the Literature?

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Abstract

Debates about the major causes of teacher shortage have centered on issues such as insufficient numbers of people preparing to teach, early attrition of those in the teaching pool and increased student enrolments and teacher retirements. While each of these factors may be particularly significant in a given country and at a given time, there is evidence that in Ghana and many countries currently facing a teacher shortage problem, attrition, that is, those teachers who leave the profession for reasons other than retirement, is the driving force. Yet, issues pertaining to teacher retention have received little attention in teacher education policy in Ghana. This paper surveys and presents a comprehensive review of the literature on teacher attrition and retention. The paper aims to identify cues and pointers that could inform policies of retaining qualified teachers in the classrooms of Ghana and other countries experiencing disturbing rates of teacher attrition.

Keywords: Attrition, qualified teachers, retention policies, teacher retention, teacher shortage, turnover.

1. Introduction

The general literature on teacher education reveals that the shortage of teachers and efforts to address it remains a pressing global issue. Projections of teacher demand at the beginning of the 21st century indicated the enormity of the problem in various countries. For example, Protheroe, Lewis and Paik (2002) reported an estimated 2.2 million teachers required to staff schools in the United States during the period 2000-2010. In Australia the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2001) projected that teacher recruitment needs in government and non-government schools for the period 2000-2003 would total between 12,000 and 13,000 each year, with possible increase in subsequent years due to expected rise in retirements during the decade 2000-2010 (Bradley, 2003; Kalantzis, 2002; Ramsay, 2000). In the United Kingdom (UK), Horsley (2001) reported that 14,000 extra teachers would be needed in the following three years, despite the launch of a financially enticing recruitment drive since the year 2000. In Africa, Lewin (2002) estimated annual demand for primary teachers over five years (using baseline data available in 1999) for Lesotho and Malawi at 1,600-2,060 and 9,000-14,000 respectively. Consequently, in both developed and developing countries, efforts to solve the teacher shortage problem are at the centre of the national educational agenda.

In Ghana, the problem of teacher shortage at the beginning of the century and in the years that followed immediately appeared serious. Using a critical demand and supply analysis, Lewin (2002) projected that over the period 1998-2010 Ghana would need 22,000-29,000 teachers annually for its basic schools. His analysis was based on 1998 student and teacher variables such as student-teacher ratio, gross enrolment rate, teacher attrition rate and dropout rate. Reports on the number of teachers who were leaving the education sector indicated that the estimated figures were more likely to rise. Cobbold (2010) recalled that in the local news of Wednesday, 19th June 2002, reported by the Ghana News Agency (GNA), the GES expressed concern about teachers not returning to the classrooms after pursuing further studies in tertiary institutions¹. Figures from the GES reported by the GNA indicated that out of 16,446 teachers who went on study leave between 1997 and 2002, only 4,914 (about 30%) teachers returned to their posts. A national study conducted by the then Unilever Chair of Teacher Education at University of Cape Coast (UCC), reported a shortage of 40,000 trained teachers in basic schools. The study also identified “the number of teachers that are permitted to go on study leave each year” as the most serious cause of the shortage (Quansah, 2003, p.1).

Cobbold (2010) prognosticated that the number of teachers pursuing further studies was likely to increase in the near future because of new teacher education programs which were being offered by the two teacher education universities in the country – University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). Today these programs continue to be offered by distance and sandwich modes and enable basic education teachers to upgrade their professional qualifications to diploma, bachelors and masters degrees without leaving the classroom during school time. Thus, added to those who go on study leave with pay to upgrade their qualifications via the regular on-campus programs in the universities, the number of teachers who

¹ Basic school teachers generally hold diploma or certificate-level qualifications acquired after initial training in colleges of education. But most of them upgrade their qualifications to degree level through a study leave with pay (SLP) facility by which they are paid their full salary while pursuing full time tertiary courses.

are acquiring degree qualifications is increasing. Unfortunately, this positive development is having a negative effect on staffing in basic schools in that once they acquire degree qualifications, most teachers move on to teach at the senior high school level or to other careers (Akyeampong & Lewin, 2002; Cobbold, 2010; Hedges, 2002). Cobbold's prediction was confirmed by a study conducted by GNAT/TEWU (2010), and which covered basic school and senior high school teachers in all the ten regions of Ghana. The study reported the following findings:

- nearly 10,000 teachers leave the classroom annually.
- Many teachers (90%, N=890) intended to further their education at the tertiary level to obtain qualifications ranging from bachelors to doctorate degrees.
- About a third of the teachers (31.7%) intended furthering their education without applying for study leave (implying using the distance or sandwich modes).
- Of the teachers who intended furthering their education, 35.6% indicated leaving teaching for other jobs after their studies.
- 50% of the 890 respondents intended leaving teaching before they retired.
- The respondents' reasons for contemplating exiting teaching were to seek improved conditions of service (59.8%), higher pay (24.8%), change of profession (6.5%) and other reasons (8.9%).

The above statistics present a staggering picture in terms of teacher retention. A recent small-scale quantitative study, involving 116 teachers selected from four senior high schools in one district (Sam, Effah & Osei-Owusu, 2014), does not allay the fears of the concerned Ghanaian. The study concluded that most of the senior high school teachers were dissatisfied with their job and may leave the teaching profession in the nearest future if their conditions of service and salaries as well as school and classroom environments are not improved.

Clearly, Ghana has its share of the global teacher shortage and, for the basic school sector, this has reached critical proportions. This is bad news for a country with a constitutional responsibility to improve access to, and participation in basic education, and enhance teaching and learning in basic schools (Government of Ghana, 1992; MOE, 1994). It also threatens the achievement of the objectives of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to which Ghana is committed.

In the current context, the problem appears to emanate, not so much from recruitment (in terms of insufficient output from the colleges of education) but from the retention side of the teacher supply equation. This also happens to be the observation made in other countries. In the USA, Ingersoll (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004) has demonstrated through numerous studies that the shortage of teachers in the country is fundamentally the result of many teachers leaving their jobs for other occupations. Writing about the situation in England, Menter (2002, p. 2) observes that teacher shortages have, historically, been a recurrent problem but would not have become critical had more teachers remained in the profession for longer without turning to other occupations. This evidence shifts the puzzle of solving the teacher shortage problem "from a debate about supply to a debate about retention" (Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003, p. 100).

Employee retention has become an issue not only for a large profession as teaching; it is equally a challenge to individual organizations in the business world. In an American study on how to attract and retain top employees, 90% (N=109) of the executives surveyed reported difficulty in retaining the best people in their organization (Dell & Hickey, 2002). The glare of publicity to which the issue of retention has been brought and its importance in the business, financial and executive community is captured in the following words:

The topic [employee retention] has reached widespread visibility through countless articles and books bringing the issue to the attention of managers and specialists...It has become a mainstream topic in business and professional literature...[and] has been elevated to the strategic levels of the organization (Phillips & Connell, 2003, p. 3).

Unarguably, in all occupations which depend more on human rather than physical resources for their operation, the issue of employee retention cannot be left to chance. Yet, issues pertaining to teacher retention have received little attention in teacher education research in Ghana. Relatively few studies, have investigated the factors which affect the retention and recruitment of teachers at various levels of the education system (Adongo, 2003; Agyemang, 2002; Soglo, 2000; Utuka, 2000; Winbila, 1999) and further factors which determine teachers' job satisfaction and motivation to remain in the profession (Bame, 1991; GES/UNICEF, 1995). A second group of related studies that examined demand and supply for basic school teachers (Akyeampong, 2002; Akyeampong, Furlong & Lewin, 2000; Mereku, 2000; Quansah, 2003), concluded that more teachers were needed to fill critical vacancies. A third set of studies (Akyeampong, Ampiah, Fletcher, Kutor & Sokpe, 2000; Akyeampong & Lewin, 2002; Apt & Grieco, 1994; Hedges, 2002) looked at other facets of teacher education with some of their findings having implications for retention. In this last class of studies, the evidence is almost uniformly consistent in indicating that many newly qualified teachers do not accept posting to rural areas and they also aspire to upgrade their qualifications and move up to secondary teaching, or desert teaching for better paid jobs in the private sector and in NGOs. Teachers' lack of enthusiasm for basic school teaching as a long-term career and the resultant shortage of teachers at that level are, thus, clear and demonstrable. The issues which remain unexplored are: What about teacher retention is Ghana not doing at all,

or not doing well? Where and how should Ghana focus its teacher retention policies, plans and strategies? These issues form the thrust of the present study. The paper reviews the extant literature on teacher retention with a view to unearthing issues and best practices which Ghana can focus on in its efforts to retain qualified teachers in its classrooms. The review is structured into four parts. The first part considers teacher characteristics that are found to affect retention. This is followed by studies which seek to identify the causes of attrition in the teaching profession. The third part deals with the effects of attrition, and the final section explores areas where retention policies and strategies should focus in order to maximize their potential to keep teachers in the profession for relatively long periods.

2. Teacher Characteristics

One group of retention research has focused on individual or micro-level analysis. These studies, which seek correlation between teacher characteristics and retention, have created a consistent portrait of the so-called 'leaver' or 'stayer' (Quartz and TEP Research Group, 2003). Across different cultures and school systems, researchers have shown that younger teachers (below 30 years) are less likely to remain, or express intent to remain, in teaching for the long run than older teachers (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Maislin, 1999; Education Week, 2000). Also, teachers with less years of experience are more likely to leave or indicate intent to leave. For example, Ingersoll (2001) reports that teachers with less than 10 years experience in the field have the highest rate of attrition. This is confirmed by other research findings in the US and UK that about 30% of new teachers quit the field within the first five years (Bradley, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2003; OECD, 2005; Smithers & Robinson, 2003).

Research relating teaching or academic qualification to teacher retention suggests that young teachers who are university graduates tend to get out of teaching than their counterparts who have only certificates (Murnane & Olsen, 1990). Similarly, teachers who have earned higher degrees within the prior two years leave at the highest rates (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener & Weber, 1997); and majority of early leavers are individuals with higher IQs, GPAs, and standardized scores and those with academic majors or minors along with an education degree (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Dolton et al, 2003; Murnane, 1996; Sclan, 1993). It is believed that these "ablest candidates have a lower threshold for accepting some of the bureaucratic routines and infantilizing expectations found in many public schools" (Darling-Hammond et al., 1999, p. 189).

Related to the above studies are those which link certification status to teacher attrition or retention. Generally, these studies report a higher level of attrition among uncertified teachers than certified teachers (Boe et al., 1999; Boe et al., 1997; LaTurner, 2002; Smith, Young, Bae, Choy & Absalam, 1997). In a study that investigated the relationship between certification status and teacher career commitment, LaTurner (2002, p. 660) found that teachers who had subject preparation but were uncertified and those who had neither minimum subject preparation nor certification were least likely to continue in teaching for the long term. In contrast, teachers who had the required subject preparation and certification were most likely to be committed to teaching long-term for "they state their long-term tenure commitment more positively" than those with less certification status. This confirms Kemmerer's (1990) findings that where teacher shortage has been addressed by staffing schools with poorly prepared or unqualified teachers, the neophytes are unable to face the demands of teaching and often become the early leavers. In contrast, in Ghana such uncertified teachers stay for as long as their appointments are not terminated by the Ghana Education Service.

Other researchers have found a correlation between teachers' pre-service preparation programs and their commitment to teaching and/or retention in the profession. Darling-Hammond (2000) compares 5-year, 4-year and alternate certification (AC) programs and notes a link between the level of retention among teachers and the nature as well as duration of their pre-service preparation programs. Graduates of extended (typically, 5-year) programs, she reports, are more satisfied with their preparation and are much more likely to enter and remain in teaching than their colleagues prepared in 4-year and AC programs. Consequently, Darling-Hammond (2000, p. 166) argues for "reforms of teacher education creating more tightly integrated programs with extended clinical preparation inter-woven with coursework on learning and teaching" as a better alternative for producing effective teachers and retaining them. This reiterates her earlier conviction that better preparation and support increase career longevity and are "as integral to the task [of addressing the teacher shortage problem] as the development of incentives to boost up the supply of people coming in" (Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 18).

Subject field is also found to relate to attrition although the data are inconsistent at times. In the USA, mathematics, science and special education are typically found to be the fields of highest turnover (Boe, Bobbitt & Cook, 1997; Grissmer & Kirby, 1992). Australia and many other OECD countries have problems retaining teachers in the same fields, including information technology (MCEETYA, 2001, 2003; OECD, 2005; Santiago, 2002, 2004).

Together, the research evidence indicates that the early years of teaching is a critical period, during which teachers are most vulnerable to leaving the field, and that younger teachers (usually with less years of experience) tend to leave the profession at higher rates, particularly when they attain higher qualifications.

Despite the invaluable insights which such evidence provides for retention-based research like the present study, they leave out the more important motives behind the migration of teachers. This is what Theobald and Michael (2001) recognize when they contend that teachers' decisions to leave their classrooms are the result of the thoughtful actions of individuals responding to incentives inside and outside of education, not just because of characteristics possessed. Echoing these sentiments, Billingsley (2002) urges that efforts to reduce attrition and retain teachers should be based on an understanding of the factors that contribute to teachers' decisions to leave the field. This suggests a macro-level analysis, one which shifts the discourse from *who leaves teaching* to *why do they leave?* It is studies with the latter orientation that the next section examines.

3. Reasons for Leaving or Staying

A number of studies offer economic explanations for teachers leaving the field. Low salaries have been identified as a primary cause of attrition (Boe et al., 1997; Cunningham, 2000; Dolton & van der Klaauw, 1999; Ingersoll, 2001; Murnane, 1991; NCTAF, 2002; Smithers & Robinson, 2003; Stinebrickner, 1999; Stoel & Thant, 2002; Wagner, 1993; Wolter & Denzler, 2003). In a comprehensive study of pay and turnover in the USA, Gritz and Theobald (1996) reported that teachers' decision to remain in teaching was most influenced by their comparison of teaching with non-teaching salaries. Kirby and Grissmer (1993) also found that while former teachers did not believe that increases in their salaries would have changed their decision to leave teaching, mathematics and science teachers (still teaching at the time of the study) thought higher salaries would encourage them to remain in teaching. In Ghana, 98.2% of teachers were not satisfied with their pay; higher pay was stated as a reason by almost 25% of teachers who planned to leave teaching (GNAT/TEWU, 2010), and ranked third by teachers among the list of factors that would attract them to other professions (Sam et al., 2014). It would seem that "with greater access to alternative careers that offer significantly higher pay scales, the opportunity cost of staying in teaching is unreasonable" (Quartz & TEP Research Group, 2003, p. 101). This appears to be the case, particularly, with teachers who have higher levels of education but less experience (Cross & Billingsley, 1994).

Studies which analyze attrition from a sociological perspective cite the declined status of teaching and teachers, and poor working conditions as influential factors. According to the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (Senate) (1998) in Australia, the perceived decline in the status of teachers from the perspective of how teachers are seen by others as well as how they see themselves is a major reason for teachers quitting the profession. It notes that "those familiar with teachers' work are supportive of them [but] many do not appear to translate their positive views of individual teachers known to them to the profession as a whole" (p. 41). Also, teachers see their status as low, in comparison with that of other professionals with equivalent qualifications and training. They generally consider that their status has declined over the years and continues to decline (Senate, 1998, p. 71). This reflects a profession much of which is demoralized and which continues to feel undervalued. Again, in Australia, public perceptions of teachers and the teaching profession are considered to have been adversely affected by "negative reporting and stereotyping by the media" and "the increasing politicization of education and the scapegoating of teachers by politicians for short term political advantage" (Senate, 1998, p. 42). In a wide-scale study in New Zealand (Kane & Mallon, 2006), teachers reported "an accumulating lack of respect" from the government, students, parents, media and the public, though this was not stated as a reason for leaving the profession. Similar perceptions are held in England where Hutchings, Menter and Ross (2002) reported of loss of morale and prestige in the teaching profession and related this to negative government and press statements about the quality of teachers.

In Europe, Australia and the USA, reported outcomes of policies purporting to professionalize teaching suggest that teachers have become dissatisfied with workplace conditions, including burdensome administrative tasks and expectations for curriculum change; increased levels of accountability, surveillance and role conflict (Macdonald, 1999). Leavers often cite their schools' failure to encourage their autonomy or leadership (Ingersoll, 2001), thus, belittling their personal interests and capabilities and imposing on them external opinion and observation. Beginning teachers who leave complain of excessive and multiple course loads, student misbehavior, and delays in salary payment or tenure regularization (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Delors, 1996; General Teaching Council of England (GTC), 2003; ILO, 1991a; Smithers & Robinson, 2003).

In Ghana, among five most important factors likely to push them out of the profession, teachers ranked poor conditions of service first, lack of non-monetary incentives placed second, low status or prestige ranked fourth and poor school and classroom environment placed fifth (Sam et al., 2014).

4. Effects of Turnover

The overall flow of teachers from schools has two components: those who leave the occupation of teaching altogether (attrition) and those who move to different teaching jobs in other schools (migration). Migration has not received much attention in the teacher turnover research literature because of the assumption that it does not affect the overall supply of teachers. But Ingersoll (2001) challenges this premise, contending that the departures

of those who move to a similar job in another organization or leave the occupation altogether similarly impact and are impacted by the organization. By application, whether basic school teachers in Ghana move to secondary teaching or leave the profession completely, their movements affect and are affected by the basic level of education. Sharing this view, I use the terms *attrition* and *turnover* interchangeably as I discuss their effects in this section.

Generally, employee turnover is considered important because of its link to the performance and effectiveness of organizations (Ingersoll, 2001). It has been argued that it is virtually impossible and undesirable to achieve a continuous zero turnover rate in an organization and that some amount of turnover is normal and efficacious in a well-managed organization (Ingersoll, 2001; Phillip & Connell, 2003). Extremely low turnover rate is considered dysfunctional and unhealthy, particularly when new thinking and fresh ideas are needed. Such turnover rates for extended periods can also add tremendous costs as incumbent employees reach higher salaries (Phillip & Connell, 2003). But these arguments prompt the question of what rate of turnover is desirable for an organization, a question whose discussion is beyond the scope of this paper.

Despite the alleged positive effects of turnover, most research discusses its negative impact on the organization and the individual. Writing from business and organizational management perspective, Phillip and Connell (2003, pp. 5-6) list some of the negative effects of turnover on the organization as high financial costs, survival problems, productivity losses and workflow interruptions, low service quality, lost of expertise, job dissatisfaction for remaining workers, and negative image of the organization. On their part, individuals may suffer loss of benefits of job security, stress associated with the transfer and change, loss of social network and emotional support, relocation costs in terms of non-reimbursable personal expenses, as well as amount of time and effort.

Macdonald (1999) appears to find some of the presumed merits of employee turnover applicable to the teaching profession. She argues that staff stability per se is not necessarily good as it can generate stagnancy and complacency, and “limit the possibilities of introducing new materials and approaches to a resistant teaching population thereby curtailing school improvement” (p. 841). She further thinks that attrition from the teaching profession may positively impact other sectors of the economy as teachers infuse such sectors with their expertise and, in case they return, inject “potentially added vitality and depth in[to] the profession (ibid.).

Balancing her argument, Macdonald (1999) admits that attrition can hinder the realization of the educational, social, cultural and economic goals of schools and communities. She notes, in particular, that discontinuity of staff can inhibit the efficacy of schools in promoting student development and attainment, and where those who leave are the younger, more successful and/or qualified (as is usually the case), there remains a less capable pool of teachers left to take up leadership positions. Another negative consequence is the effect on the age profile and morale of those who stay:

In accelerating the ageing of the profession, attrition makes it more difficult for older teachers to compete for promotion opportunities, extended responsibilities, and access to long service leave conditions and the like. Also the stayers, more often women, reportedly may develop a sense of failure as they see themselves as an underclass who have few choices...If attrition exceeds the intake of qualified recruits, these stayers may also find themselves working alongside those who fulfill the role of teacher although they do not have specific qualifications or commitment to the profession (Macdonald, 1999, p. 841).

Furthermore, attrition in particular subject fields and locations generate inequity in the spread of the teaching service across a region or country thereby creating pockets of limited or poorer quality educational provisions.

The consequences of employee turnover vary among different types of employees and among different types of organizations. The extent of an organization's dependence or non-dependence on particular types of employees and, therefore, the ease with which an organization can replace employees determines the degree of its vulnerability to the disruption caused by their turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). Organizations that have uncertain and non-routine technologies and production processes requiring extensive interaction among members tend to depend on the commitment and cohesion among employees and management and, hence, especially vulnerable to employee turnover. Schools have traditionally been identified to fall into the category of such organizations (Bidwell, 1965; Lortie, 1975). Many educational researchers believe that the presence of a sense of community among families, teachers and students is one of the most important indicators and aspects of successful schools (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Kirst, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1989). From this perspective, high turnover of teachers can have dramatic consequences on school performance and on school-community relationship. In essence, attrition levies instructional, financial and organizational costs (Johnson, Berg & Donaldson, 2005).

5. Retention Policies and Strategies

Strategies to retain employees are as many and varied as the causes of turnover. Phillip and Connell (2003) note that most approaches used to encourage employee retention are reactive rather than proactive; develop too many

programs and attempt too many solutions; search for solutions without an up-front evaluation to identify the specific causes of turnover; and embark on solutions that do not address the need or problem. They call for “a strategic accountability approach” which they define as a “process that brings accountability to the retention issue [and], positions the organization in a preventative stance, working to maintain the appropriate levels of staffing and reducing the risk of turnover” (pp. 22, 23). In other words, organizations need to anticipate employee attrition, rethink the causes and costs of such movements and, cognizant of the potential and actual impact of possible solutions, put in place measures to ensure optimal staffing levels at all times.

Some arguments advocate focusing on a single factor such as salary increases (Macdonald, 1999) while others favor a thorough examination and restructuring of human resources policies and the revaluation of the currently devalued profession (Neave, 1992). Those who espouse faith in the link between teacher characteristics and attrition suggest micro level policies and strategies which target the individual teacher with the modification of their behaviors (Kemmerer, 1990). In general, the discussion of retention policies and strategies in the literature tends to focus on the following themes.

5.1 Monetary Rewards

A crucial factor in the educational debate addressing teacher retention is salaries (Macdonald, 1999). This is not surprising because, worldwide, teachers’ salaries are perceived to be relatively low. Furthermore, in developing countries, teachers’ salaries constitute a large proportion of educational expenditure when compared to developed countries. Over the years, individuals and international institutions (e.g. Delors, 1996; ILO, 1991b) have argued for higher teachers’ salaries that place them at par with other professionals possessing comparable qualifications. Chapman (1994, p.19) corroborates this stance when he contends, though with reservation about its fiscal feasibility, that increasing salaries is the “single most direct and effective way to reduce attrition.” Most studies testing this premise have been conducted in the USA and the UK.

Murnane and Olsen’s (1990) USA study established a positive correlation between beginning teachers’ salary and their retention, albeit this trend of retention differed across subject fields and National Teacher Examination scores. Science teachers and those with higher scores were less inclined to stay or stayed in teaching for shorter period despite salary increases. Congruent with this finding, was that of a study by Hanushek, Kain and Rivkin (1999). They demonstrated that a 10% increase in starting salaries could cause a 2% fall in the probability of leaving for probationary teachers, and a 1% fall for those with 3-5 years experience. This has been confirmed by Stinebrickner’s (2001) study which simulates the effects of changing teacher wages. Other state-level studies (e.g. Brewer, 1996; Mont & Rees, 1996; Theobald & Gritz, 1996) have the common finding that salary paid to teachers is inversely related to their propensity to leave, or positively related to the duration spent in first teaching jobs.

Turning to the UK literature, Dolton and van der Klaauw (1995a, 1995b, 1999) found similar relationship but noted that teachers’ quit or stay behavior in response to higher salary would also depend on the outside labour market and alternative opportunities. Teachers are more likely to leave if they sense a higher predicted wage in the non-teaching sector. Other studies (e.g. Conde, 1995; Eilor, 1996; Ravindranadham, 1993) argue, though with little empirical details, the positive effect of increased salaries on teacher retention in Guinea, Uganda and India respectively.

Besides salaries, other pecuniary rewards such as allowances for housing, dependants, travelling, rural locations, performance and overtime have been suggested (Chapman, 2002; Conde, 1995; Edwards, 1993; Eilor, 1996; Kemmerer, 1990; Murnane, 1993). Synthesizing various research reports, Macdonald (1999) cites instances in both developed and developing countries where some of these arrangements have proved ineffective in retaining teachers. For example, in Eritrea, a 40% increase in some allowances did not deter teachers from leaving difficult areas; and in Australia, the introduction of merit pay for teachers brought about divisiveness, for the very bases of the scheme were shaky given that it was difficult to effectively define the skills, behaviors, and output which were being rewarded. However, other research (e.g. Metais, 1991) report success in using performance and subject field allowances to reduce attrition in England and Wales. This makes the issue of whether increased salaries and other monetary allowances alone can have a high and long-term impact on retention contestable.

5.2 Workplace Conditions

Researchers have reported a link between workplace conditions and teachers’ commitment and intentions to stay. In a qualitative study of a group of experienced elementary school teachers, Stanford (2001) reported participation in decision making and collegial support as important retaining factors. Cockburn (2000) interviewed primary teachers in the UK “who enjoy their jobs.” She noted that what encouraged the teachers to remain in the profession were the opportunity to work with children, good relationship with colleagues, and the suitably demanding challenges in their work. In her study of first year teachers in the USA, Weiss (1999) also found that a school culture that supports collaboration and teacher participation in decision making was strongly

related to teacher intention to stay in the field. Other studies have reported appropriate workload and professional development (Yee, 1990), organizational support for new teachers (Odell & Ferraro, 1992), upgraded school buildings and teachers' accommodation and increased parental and community support for schools (Macdonald, 1999) as factors which increase teachers' organizational commitment and, by implication, retention.

The research evidence thus appears to support policies and strategies that aim to improve the social, emotional and physical dimensions of teachers' work in an effort to retain them. Rodgers-Jenkinson and Chapman (1990) argue for such strategies, contending that although they involve some cost, they are frequently less expensive than the costs of teacher dissatisfaction, loss, and retraining.

5.3 Appointment and Placement

The process of school appointment and teacher placement has also been identified as a potential retention factor. The common argument is that teachers could be better matched to their school of appointment by taking into account the teachers' demographical data such as sex, age, teaching interests, and cultural and socioeconomic background (Chapman, 1994; Delors, 1996; National Board for Employment, Education and Training (NBEET), 1994). With respect to beginning teachers it is suggested that they be placed as soon as possible after graduation (Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1987) and in familiar and supportive environments (Rosenholtz, 1989). Furthermore, there is support for the appointment and transfer process to be more collaborative and flexible so that teachers are not forced to leave the profession due to inappropriate placements (Conde, 1995; Gottelmann-Duret & Hogan, 1996; Konadu, 1994; Neave, 1992; Thompson, 1995).

5.4 Career Opportunities

Many educators consider that to stay in teaching, the present and future generation of teachers need opportunities to work with, and learn from, other teachers in professional learning environments; they expect variety and adaptability in their work and opportunities to move up a career ladder (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Johnson, 2004). This calls for improved career structures with diversified leadership roles, flexible pathways and well-conceived, systematic in-service training and support spread across an entire career from recruitment to retirement (Macdonald, 1999). Continuous access to quality in-service education is regarded an important tool for eliciting and sustaining teachers' interest, commitment and effectiveness (Chapman, 1994). Such in-service training could take place in other areas of society's life such as the economic sector as teachers can bring the knowledge and experience gained to bear on their professional practice (Delors, 1996). But education systems need to put in place effective safeguards to forestall the likely event of teachers using in-service education as a spring board to other occupations (Chapman, 1994), as currently happening in Ghana where many basic school teachers use the study leave facility of the GES to exit the profession. Such precautionary measures may include recognizing and rewarding professional development through continuous appraisals (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), 1994).

5.5 Induction and Mentoring Programs

The importance of induction and mentoring programs in the transition from initial training to full-time teaching has been acknowledged by teacher educators (e.g. Darling-Hammond et al, 1999; Tickle, 2000). But more important has been the positive impact of such programs on teacher retention. A social learning model of the multiple influences on teacher retention proposed by Chapman (cited in Odell & Ferraro, 1992, p. 200) encourages the expectation that long-term teacher retention can be improved by mentoring teachers during their first year of teaching. This model suggests that the roots of long-term teacher retention are longitudinal and traceable to the teachers' early commitments to and experiences in teaching.

Studies conducted in the early 2000s (e.g. Bubb, Heilbronn, Jones, Totterdell & Bailey, 2002; Moir & Baron, 2002; Kelley, 2004; Southeastern Center for Teacher Quality, 2002; Totterdell, Bubb, Woodroffe, & Hanrahan, 2004) appear to validate this premise in that new teachers who were served by support programs were reported to have had higher retention rates after their first year than their counterparts who did not have such programs. These findings are congruent with those of earlier studies (Fideler & Haselkorn, 1999; Odell & Ferraro, 1992), lending credence to the assertion that teachers who are formally initiated into the profession through quality induction stand a better chance of developing norms encouraging self-perpetuating growth and are more likely to develop greater commitment to teaching, and find satisfaction in their jobs (Menter, Hutchings & Ross, 2002; Rosenholtz, 1989).

5.6 The Recruitment Process

Heafford and Jennison (1998) have pointed out the need to link any recruitment policy with a comprehensive policy of retention, urging that the former should be dependent on the latter. The human resource management literature corroborates this stance. Dibble (1999), for instance, asserts that retention starts long before an employee's first day on the job and that the foundations of retention are laid in recruitment, selection and

orientation. And Denton (1992) does not miss the point when he emphasizes the necessity to recruit the right caliber of people in order to maximize the chances of retaining them: “If you are careful whom you recruit, then... you are more likely to retain them” (p. 47).

One suggestion offered for selecting the right type of teachers is that we can investigate prospective teachers’ reasons for choosing to teach as a proxy for their retention (OECD, 2005). The rationale for this suggestion appears to be that the degree of match between what motivates people to choose a career and the extent to which such expectations are met has a crucial effect on their decisions to remain in it or quit (Brown, 1992; Yong, 1995). Studies exploring motivations to teach are many (e.g. Akyeampong & Stephen, 2002; Carrington & Tomlin, 2000; Hammond, 2002; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbott, Dallat & MacClure, 2001; Spear, Gould & Lee, 2000). A common finding from these studies is that those who choose the teaching profession as a career do so for predominantly altruistic and intrinsic considerations. Consistently demonstrated is an interest in working with children and a desire to make a positive influence in their lives, a wish to serve society, commitment to lifelong learning, and a desire to impart knowledge. Generally, students preparing to teach in the primary grades tended to be attracted to teaching by a love of children and a sense of vocation whereas those preparing for secondary teaching were more strongly influenced by the prospect of continuing to be involved in and to share their own subject. To a lesser extent, however, extrinsic factors also motivated teacher candidates.

Studies conducted in the USA and the UK reveal other forms of a strategy to link the retention of teachers with their recruitment. These include forgivable loans and scholarships for candidates training to teach, signing bonuses, and targeting those already teaching (Johnson, 2004; Southeastern Center for Teacher Quality, 2002; Whitehead & Postlewaite, 2000). The common feature of these programs is that prospective teachers are sponsored in different ways to pursue required teacher education programs in return for some years of service in the states or districts that sponsored them. While anecdotal evidence suggests positive effect of these practices in terms of retention, too little empirical data are available. Cobbold’s (2006) qualitative study of a district sponsorship scheme in Ghana found that the scheme had insignificant effect on the retention of the beneficiaries.

6. Summary and Conclusion

This paper has been concerned with an explication of the main issues that frame the discourse on teacher retention. The paper emerges from the background of teacher shortage in Ghana, and in other countries of the world primarily due to attrition. The central point in the paper is that retaining qualified teachers by eliciting and sustaining their interest and commitment in their work has remained a daunting task for educational policy makers and administrators internationally, but more specifically in Ghana. This is particularly so in the present age when teachers are increasingly aspiring to learn and seeking value for their learning. Teachers’ broad-based and diversified preparation also makes them versatile and competitive in a globalised labor market that offers them more career choices. Therefore, education policies need to recognize and engage the emerging dynamics in the labor market and in teachers’ aspirations and values if efforts at retaining teachers are to succeed.

Using issues emanating from a comprehensive review of the extant literature, areas to target for retaining teachers in Ghana’s schools, especially at the basic school level, are examined. The lesson seems to be that successful teacher retention policies and strategies need to be embedded in the interrelated processes of selecting and training prospective teachers, posting them to schools after training, socializing them into the profession and encouraging their continuing professional development in multiple ways. As teachers do extend their knowledge and skills throughout their career (Hammond, 2002), they should gain value for such upgrading and updating by giving them motivating economic compensation packages alongside other non-pecuniary benefits.

Additionally, the findings from the review suggest not only a model of teacher preparation but also a policy of teacher retention “that aims to make teaching intrinsically more attractive by recognizing and integrating the altruistic values beginning teachers bring into training” (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002, p. 272). Furthermore, teacher educators ought to be cautious in recruiting candidates who are motivated mainly by extrinsic factors such as career prospects, salaries and other economic benefits as it is doubtful whether such inducements would sustain teachers’ long-term commitment to teaching (Yong, 1995). All in all, the review suggests a holistic retention approach which, if pursued, would help us avoid the ‘holes in the buckets’ (Ingersoll, 2002) syndrome which has characterized most retention strategies Ghana has implemented in the past.

7. Limitation and Contribution

Most of the studies reviewed above involved very small samples and collected data using questionnaires, which have been criticized for their inability to probe for accurate information, and gauge respondents’ motivations for their answers (Burns, 2000). However, since the findings are based on data gathered from practicing and prospective teachers with different educational backgrounds, from diverse cultures, and teaching or preparing to teach various subjects at both primary and secondary levels, they point useful directions and raise critical issues

for consideration in teacher retention policy.

The study makes a contribution to the realization of the objectives of Ghana's current education reforms. As indicated earlier, Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution requires it to provide free, compulsory basic education for its citizens (Government of Ghana, 1992). The Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) program aimed at achieving this and allied goals of EFA and MDG, places emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning in basic schools (MOE, 1994). Improved quality in teaching and learning, with subsequent increased levels of student achievement, calls for a caliber of teachers who are capable of delivering, effectively, revised curricula and who stay in the job, while continually improving on their skills and competencies. Such teachers, the current evidence indicates, are not available in the required numbers, though pupil enrolment has increased significantly (Cobbold & Asamani, 2015). Within this context, a study that aims at providing direction for policy makers for retaining qualified teachers could not be more important.

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