

# Determinants of Job Satisfaction among Ghanaian Teachers

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## Abstract

This study investigated the determinants of job satisfaction among Ghanaian teachers using 270 teachers randomly selected from five (5) public Senior High Schools in the Asuogyaman District of Ghana. The study tries to address the paucity of research into the determinants of teacher satisfaction and consequently teacher retention especially in non-urban areas in Sub Saharan Africa. Findings show that indeed, teacher satisfaction Ghana was determined by school factors, community factors and the characteristics of the teacher. The study also confirms a significant link between job satisfaction among teachers and their retention as well as accepting postings and remaining to teach in under resourced districts.

**Keywords:** Job satisfaction, Ghana, Teachers, Retention, School

## 1. Introduction

Job satisfaction has been defined as a pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job; an affective reaction to one's job; and an attitude towards one's job (Ubom, 2001). It has also been shown that when job satisfaction in the teaching profession increases, turnover decreases (Robert et al, 2004).

Though teachers are a crucial element of educational opportunity structures, the recent opening-up of labour markets in general and within the school system has raised concerns about retaining qualified teachers especially in schools serving poor communities. While several factors have been identified as accounting for the above phenomena, recent studies conducted in some developing countries underscore the fact that more than one quarter of the teachers who left teaching did so because of job dissatisfaction (Henke et al, 1997). Teacher dissatisfaction also accounts for reduced ability to meet students' needs, significant incidences of psychological disorders leading to increased absenteeism, and high level of claims for stress-related disability (Faber, 1991). Most importantly, teacher dissatisfaction appears to be a main factor in teachers leaving the profession in many countries.

Teacher dissatisfaction and its effects on teacher retention with recourse to the foregoing therefore pose a grave threat to a profession with an increasing demand for members (Darling-Hammond, 1999). This demand is even direr in developing countries where literacy rates are far below the accepted minimum levels. Consequently, it is paramount to research into improving job satisfaction as a means of reducing turnover among teachers in developing countries. This study therefore sets out to investigate the determinants of job satisfaction among teachers using senior high school teachers in Ghana as an example. The study also focuses on how job satisfaction among teachers could be improved in schools in Ghana.

## 2. Understanding teacher Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction of teachers has been the focus of considerable research in recent decades (De Nobile, 2003; Dinham and Scott, 1998). Given the links that have been established between job satisfaction and employee commitment, turnover, absenteeism, productivity and occupational stress (De Nobile and McCormick, 2005; Luthans, 2002; Singh and Billingsley, 1996; Spector, 2000), such interest is, perhaps, not surprising.

Lawler (1973) explains that the concept of teacher satisfaction refers to a teacher's affective relation to his or her teaching role and is a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from teaching and what one perceives it is offering to a teacher. On the other hand, Maeroff (1988) describes it as the teacher's power to exercise his craft with confidence and to help shape the way that the job is to be done". More recently, Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2006) have defined teacher job satisfaction as the teachers affective relation to his or her teaching role and is a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from teaching and what one perceives it is offering to a teacher.

Based on these definitions, we simply define teacher job satisfaction as a teacher's feelings and perceptions of happiness and contentment with teaching.

### 2.1 *Satisfiers and dissatisfiers among teachers*

Dinham (1995) in a study involving resigned teachers unearthed that the factors contributing to teacher satisfaction were largely discrete from those contributing to teacher dissatisfaction. Further, when teachers made the decision to resign, the sources and strength of their satisfiers were basically unchanged, while it was the increase in the strength of their dissatisfiers that had "tipped the balance" and precipitated the "resignation decision".

Consequently, he saw satisfiers as the rewards "intrinsic" to teaching, such as pupil achievement, teacher achievement, changing pupil attitudes and behaviours in a positive way, recognition from others, mastery and self-growth, and positive relationships. Satisfiers were largely universal across sex, teaching experience, position held, location, and type of school.

"Dissatisfiers", on the other hand, were "extrinsic" to the teaching of students and included impacts of changes to educational policies and procedures, greater expectations on schools to deal with and solve social problems, the declining status of teachers in society, poor supervision, being treated impersonally by employers, new responsibilities for schools and increased administrative workloads. In short, dissatisfiers were phenomena perceived as detracting from or militating against the "core business" of teaching students.

### 2.2 *Determinants of teacher satisfaction*

It generally accepted that demographic factors (Bogler, 2002) may play a role in the level of job satisfaction perceived by teachers. In particular, literature suggests four variables that may have significant interactions with teacher job satisfaction, namely; gender, age, tenure and position. Ramsey (2000) also identifies experience level as a key determinant of teacher satisfaction such that there was a positive correlation between teacher satisfaction and level of experience.

More importantly, De Nobile and McCormick (2006) present three categories of determinants of teacher satisfaction. These determinants are more pronounced in developing countries and relate to whether teachers perceive teaching as their ideal profession, whether teachers want to change their profession, and whether teachers are satisfied with the local education bureau. These three (3) categories of determinants of teacher satisfaction, which would be the focus of this study include

- Community factors: teachers are more satisfied in communities with greater economic and social resources, and in communities that are less remote;
- school environment: Teachers are more satisfied in schools with better economic resources, in larger schools, in schools where there are more opportunities for professional advancement, and in schools where there is an organizational climate that supports teacher collaboration);
- Teacher background: Young teachers, male teachers and teachers with greater human capital are less satisfied, while teachers who are more socially similar to the local community are more satisfied.

## 3. **Methods, procedure and participants**

The survey approach was used to collect data from Senior High School (SHS) teachers in the Asuogyaman District of Ghana. The district was selected because of relatively high levels of attrition and resignations among SHS teachers especially in public or government-owned schools (Asuogyaman District Assembly, 2011). Out of the estimated 270 public SHS teachers in the district, 15 teachers each were randomly selected from the 5 government owned SHSs. Thus, a total 75 teachers were selected from Boso Senior High Technical, Anum Presbyterian Senior High, Apeguso Community Senior High, Akwamuman Senior High and Ajena Senior High Schools.

The structured questionnaire used to collect data had three parts. The first part assessed the study participants' demography. The second part asked respondents opinions on the three categories of determinants identified by De Nobile and McCormick (2006) while the third part required respondents to suggest ways of improving job satisfaction among teachers. The questionnaires were self-administered and conducted in the staff common rooms of the participating schools. Appropriate permissions were sought from the head teachers of all the participating schools before the data collection. Comments as well as other responses to some follow up questions during the data collection process were also recorded. The data collected was mainly analysed and discussed qualitatively using the content analysis approach. This involved grouping the various responses under

the defined themes before discussing them in the context of relevant literature. However, responses to some key questions were also analysed quantitatively and presented in percentages before being discussed qualitatively.

Of the 75 teachers who participated in the study, 22 (29.3%) were female and 53 (70.7%) were male. The participants were also aged between 20 and 60 years and possessed certificates (8%), diplomas (25.3%), degrees (57.3%) and postgraduate degrees (9.3%). The ranks of the respondents ranged from assistant superintendent of education (10.3%), superintendent of education (6.3%), senior superintendent of education (24.7%), principal superintendent of education (45.3%), assistant director of education (5.3%) to director of education (2.7%)

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Job satisfaction

Teacher satisfaction has been heightened in recent times by the various actions and pressures being initiated by unionized teachers (both Ghana National Association of Teachers and the National Association of Graduate Teachers). Also poor performance of students and pupils in the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) and Basic Education and Certificate Examination (BECE) especially in rural and peri-urban areas have been attributed to lack of facilities and teacher dissatisfaction. It was therefore not surprising that all respondents had good knowledge on issues of job satisfaction and motivation. However, only 51% of participants were satisfied with their jobs. Though it may seem alarming that 49% of respondents were not satisfied with the jobs, this result is far more encouraging than results of Glewwe and Kremer (2006), Duflo and Hanna (2005) and other studies conducted in similar environments.

Providing further reasons on what satisfied about teaching, respondents identified the recognition and respect accorded to them by community members, the ability and opportunity to impart knowledge to children and the opportunities for further development as key factors. Some were also satisfied because they had relatively more time to pursue other activities because of their relatively flexible work schedules while others were satisfied because of the relatively low cost of living in their community. This is consistent with Dinham and Scott (2002) and Furnham (1997) who identify that teachers are most likely to be satisfied by matters intrinsic to the role of teaching: student achievement, helping students, positive relationships with students and others, self-growth and other socio-economic factors. On the other hand, respondents who were dissatisfied cited the unfavourable government and Ghana Education service policies, their conditions of service and remuneration as the main reasons. Though their reasons are similar to those found in Saptoe (2000) and Dinham (1992), they however, appear contradictory to Herzberg's (1959) stance that factors that make teacher unsatisfied with their work have more to do with Psychological needs (the need to achieve and grow) than by physiological needs that can be fulfilled by money.

Interestingly, in answering why they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the factors identified above, respondents who were satisfied believed that given the current circumstances, the educational sector was doing its best to motivate teachers and all efforts were being made to further enhance the sector. On the contrary, those who were dissatisfied opined that little was being done for teachers in comparison to other professionals.

All respondents however believed that there was a direct relationship between job satisfaction and teacher retention. They further identified problems/frustrations with the variety of administrative routines and accompanying paperwork; poor communication channels; low pay; few possibilities for career promotion or growth; and the declining respect for the profession as key issues on teacher satisfaction that often influenced teacher retention. This confirms earlier studies by Tuffour (2000), Tye and O'brien (2002) and Lumsden (1998) which identified similar factors as major determinants of teacher retention especially in non-urban areas.

The final part of this section asked respondents whether they would leave teaching if they had other opportunities. Responses provided show that only 13% of respondents admitted that they would not leave the teaching profession. A significant number of such respondents were mainly past the age of 50 and had progressed above the rank of principal superintendent of education. As explained by one respondent, considering how far they had risen in terms of their ranks and the fact that they were approaching the retirement age of 60 years, it was not a good option to change jobs. The remaining 87% who were prepared to leave teaching in favour of other resourceful opportunities cited poor service conditions as a key reason.

### 4.2 Determinants of job satisfaction

#### 4.2.1 Community factors

All respondents supported De Nobile and McCormick's (2006) stance that community factors were key determinants of teacher satisfaction and subsequently retention. Community factors revolve round the community within which the teacher resides and works and, per De Nobile and McCormick, implied that

teachers were more satisfied in communities with greater economic and social resources, and in communities that are less remote. In support, the respondents explained once they were compelled to move into the community where they were teaching together with their families, the nature, culture, economic opportunities, social amenities and infrastructure as well as security in the community was a major concern. In particular, majority of respondents expressed that they will be dissatisfied and unlikely to accept posting or remain working in an area with fewer economic resources. Economic resources in simple terms refer to the factors needed to engage in productive, profit-making activities. These factors include but are not limited to markets, arable or mineral rich land, labour in their right quantity and with the right skills, both fixed and/or current capital which are needed to produce goods and services for a fee. Ultimately, because these factors are needed for productivity in the community, their absence according to De Nobile and McCormick (2006) creates a community poverty situation. The teachers explained that they considered these factors because of the likely impact it will have on the health, safety, convenience, security, comfort, lifestyle and quality of life of their family as a whole. Respondents also claimed that their satisfaction was likely to be higher in communities that offered opportunities to their dependents. Consequently, in deciding whether to continue or stop teaching in a community, they would take into account the opportunities that were available not only for themselves but also for their dependents especially, their spouses and children. Such opportunities included, but were not limited to, jobs for their dependents and good schools for their wards. Another key issue raised by the teachers was the availability of other part time opportunities in the community to supplement their incomes. Most teachers believed that their satisfaction was higher in communities where parents could afford private part-time tuition for their wards and where there were opportunities to teach part-time in other private schools than in communities where such opportunities did not exist. In the words of one teacher “even though the conditions of service are not so good, I’m satisfied here because I get extra money from teaching during the vacation, in the evenings and weekends to supplement my salary”.

Respondents were also split on whether teaching in communities with small population size had a positive or negative influence on their satisfaction. Proponents of the view supported their arguments with the fact that teachers in small communities are closely bonded, known, recognized, encouraged and have a personal relationship with the community members. Opponents rather they suggested that teachers in small communities felt no drive to excel and may not have the necessary socio-economic factors they need within the community. While evidence from literature suggests that indeed, the size of the community has an effect on job satisfaction, focus is placed on the size of the community not in isolation but in relation to the remoteness or otherwise of the community. Majority of respondents, along this line, pointed out that they were more likely to be dissatisfied in communities with limited connections to the outside world. Specifically, respondents identified adequate road networks and other means of commuting, as well as communications network as indicators of satisfaction that even influenced whether teachers accepted or refused posting to particular communities.

Respondents also claimed that they would have higher satisfaction in communities with adequate social resources than in communities with limited social resources. Social resources are the social amenities and infrastructure necessary for living with an acceptable level of comfort in a society. Notable social amenities identified by the respondents include the presence of potable water, electricity, education and health facilities, thriving markets and social centers among others.

Quite apart from the above, respondents also unanimously agreed that the level appreciation of education in the community was also important when it came to their satisfaction. If though they agreed that it was not a direct determinant, they also suggested that it strongly influenced the value placed and support given to education and teachers within the community. In relation, they also mentioned the attitude of community members towards education as another important component. Majority of teachers said they will be satisfied teaching in communities which in spite of the absence of economic and social resources, appreciated the efforts of teachers and supported them in their work. Such support came in sometimes rendering services to teachers in need, helping new teachers integrate into the community, making teachers feel appreciated, encouraging students to attend schools and so on. There have been instances where communities which lack residential facilities for teachers have made provisions for teachers to stay in the homes of some residents, volunteered to fetch water or do some household chores for the teachers to encourage them to stay in the community. Additionally, the respondents also explained that they got some intrinsic satisfaction from the knowledge that they were making a difference in the lives of students in these communities. Sometimes, the cooperation of parents and other community members in supporting students also influenced the satisfaction of teachers. This was especially true for communities that had vibrant strong Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). Importantly, respondents confirmed Pii (2003) study that teachers were more satisfied in communities that had strong links with schools and educational sector workers especially where governmental efforts in education were inadequate.

#### 4.2.2 *School factors*

Another determinant of teacher satisfaction identified by De Nobile and McCormick (2006) is school factors. In their view, teachers are more likely to be satisfied in schools with better economic resources, where there are more opportunities for professional advancement, and in schools with organizational climates that supported teacher collaboration.

All respondents confirmed the results of earlier studies including Ingersoll (2001) and Lee and Dedrick (1991) that school size had an impact on teacher satisfaction. What was however the issue among the respondents was on the nature of effect (whether positive or negative) large of small school sizes had on teacher satisfaction. Ideally, school size is not measured in terms of the physical size of the school alone but looking at other factors like available facilities, student size and number of courses offered. Based on the findings of Ingersoll (2001) and Lee and Dedrick (1991) teachers were likely to be satisfied in larger schools. In contrast, the study identified that teachers were more likely to be satisfied in smaller schools than larger ones. Especially, considering the paucity of academic infrastructure, teaching aids, and other learning materials for students, large schools implied that the teachers had to put in extra efforts and hours. Quite apart from that, teachers were likely to be dissatisfied because remunerations provided did not take into account the size of your school and in effect the size of the class and students under your supervision. Consequently, teachers in large schools earn just as much as teachers in small schools. Additionally, the respondents also put forward that smaller classes meant smaller work load and assignments and in effect less effort being put into teaching.

Motivation theorists have identified opportunities for personal development as a major predictor of employee motivation and to a large extent job satisfaction and retention. These theorists maintain that employees, being economical beings, would always want to maximize their benefits and will do anything in line with the maximization of these benefits. Thus employees who are provided opportunities for professional development in addition to their remuneration are more likely to work harder and stay on longer since such opportunities aside maximizing the benefits derived by the employee from the organization also enhances the knowledge, skills and abilities of the employee and prepares him for greater occupational challenges. It was therefore not surprising that all respondents identified that their level of satisfaction will be very high in schools which offer them opportunities for professional development. Respondents were however not interested in the mere existence of the opportunity for professional development but also in issues like the length and requirements of the opportunities, the opportunity cost as well as other issues. Particular mention was made of the existence of a study leave opportunity for teachers. In their view, though the opportunity existed, not all who applied for it were successful because quite a number of applicants are always unsuccessful even though they may have met the criteria. Even for those who are given the leave, some have it with pay, while others had study leave without pay. Also of importance to their satisfaction were the long and unending processes as well as the cumbersome process they had to go through to access opportunities for professional development.

Another issue which they claimed affected their satisfaction was the nature of relationships and social interactions in the school. This confirms studies by Zhongshan (2008) that links higher levels of teacher satisfaction to positive organizational climates. Thus, teachers were satisfied when they worked in schools that supported teacher collaboration that stressed on norms of continuous improvement, collegiality and professional interactions among the staff, administrative support for teaching, and internships and mentoring programs. On the contrary however, respondents in this study were more particular about the cordiality and ease of communication between teachers especially across ranks. As such, they suggested that they were more satisfied in schools where there was no professional or personal conflict among staff, where colleagues appreciated and respected their work, and where members of staff worked together instead of competing against each other.

Just as all respondents expressed that they would be very dissatisfied in communities with poor social and economic resources, respondents unanimously pointed out that schools with poor socio-economic resources were a negative influence on the level of job satisfaction and subsequent retention. Evidence from the literature strongly supports this and recognizes the inherent challenges faced by teachers in such facilities where socio-economic resources are lacking, inadequate or mismanaged. This may account for why there were few teachers in under-resourced schools in most rural and peri-urban areas in Ghana. Teachers believed that such schools made their work tiresome and offered very little prestige as well as prospects of honing their profession.

The final school factor considered was remuneration. Simply seen as the returns accruing to the teacher for his time and effort, remuneration is often considered one of the main determinants of job satisfaction among teachers. As explained by Perie et al (1997), poor salary is one of the most important reasons for job dissatisfaction in public schools in developing countries. Phurutse (2005) also maintains that low salaries and truncated salary scales are among the main reasons that the most academically able—those with alternative career options—are dissatisfied and hence leave teaching. Thus, not only is the quantum of remuneration an

issue but also the reliability of the remuneration. Respondents were very emphatic in stating that salaries was a key determinant of their satisfaction with teaching and were thus likely to be satisfied in schools that paid more. Of importance too were the delays in salaries and as well as the stagnant nature of their salary scale in public schools. As put by one teacher, 'how will I be satisfied when my meager salary is not even consistent?' These assertions hold weight when account is taken of the volatile economic conditions, dysfunctional bureaucracy and resource constraints that continually challenge the compensation of public sector employees in general. Comments from respondents also show that teachers in schools that organized other activities to generate extra income for teachers were more satisfied than those in schools that had no such arrangements. This may also explain why teachers leave public schools for private schools where such opportunities exist.

#### 4.2.3 *Characteristics of the teacher*

De Nobile and McCormick (2006) also point out that the teacher's characteristics may be used as a predictor of his job satisfaction. In their view, young teachers, male teachers and teachers with greater human capital are less satisfied, while teachers who are more socially similar to the local community are more satisfied. In the United States and later in developing countries, a number of background attributes of teachers themselves have been found to be linked to levels of satisfaction (Ingersoll, 2001; Perie et al, 1997) which raises concerns on the influence of demographic factors. Though previously ignored, the characteristics of the individual teacher have been proved in research to be another major determinant of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with teaching.

Interestingly, respondents confirmed that indeed the characteristics of individual teachers vis-à-vis their individual opportunities influenced their satisfaction with teaching. From their explanations, it was evident that quite a majority of young teachers in Ghana got into the profession as a means to earn money to pursue other careers or because they did not get admission to pursue the courses of their choice in the university. Such persons have very little intrinsic motivation to teach and are thus more likely to be dissatisfied with teaching. Further, most of the young teachers involved in the study explained that teaching in Asuogyaman district was temporary and that they had plans of moving to teach in bigger towns like Accra and Kumasi. Thus, young teachers were not satisfied because they felt they still had options of changing their career. However, the opposite was mostly true for old teachers who are more likely to stay as they have reached the peak or twilight of their careers. In addition, women have been generally found to be more satisfied than men (Ma and MacMillan, 1999). It was thus not surprising that majority of respondents in the study who (per their responses) were satisfied with teaching were female.

Additionally, married teachers involved in the study were found to be more satisfied than those unmarried. According to respondents, married teachers were more likely to be satisfied with teaching and in particular areas if their stay there offers opportunities to their dependents. Further, they claimed that married teachers were content with the accommodation and security of tenure offered by teaching. Also, married teachers, especially those who were the sole breadwinners of their families were less likely to risk changing careers or even moving from teaching in one area to another because of the risks and inconvenience in resettling their families. Of particular interest was the account of one respondent who claimed to have had plans of leaving the district to go find another job in Accra. However, he his plans did not come to fruition because he married someone and started raising a family in the district and has thus had to stay.

Also, respondents opined that better with higher educational qualifications tend to be more dissatisfied than teachers who possess only the professional teaching qualification and thus more likely to leave teaching. This finding may be in part attributable to the fact that teachers with higher degrees are exposed to more alternative job opportunities and may think that they are missing out on the conditions enjoyed by the their colleagues of similar qualifications in the non-educational sectors. Similarly, teachers in communities similar to their backgrounds with a were likely to have high satisfaction levels because they will easily blend and find a place in the community and thus feel accepted rather than an outsiders.

#### 4.3 **The way forward**

Respondents identified that even though there were some government-led strategies to enhance satisfaction among teachers especially in under-resourced districts, these efforts were still inadequate. Further, these strategies were not easily accessible or adequately and evenly distributed. In the case of salaries for instance, respondents claimed that what they were paid was not commensurate with the required job done. Further, when the compared with that of other persons with similar qualifications in other sectors of the economy, their salaries fell woefully short. Additionally, respondents intimated that though opportunities for further development were sometimes made available to employees through the granting of study leave, the cost of such development was borne by the teacher as it was becoming increasing difficult to get study leave with pay. Additionally, teachers on study leave were sometimes not paid and sometimes not even guaranteed re-appointment after their course.

Teachers were thus not motivated to develop themselves which consequently leads to lower levels of job satisfaction.

Further recognition for all categories of teachers and effective but respectful communication in their view could motivate workers to put in the extra effort rather than head teachers ordering teachers about and treating them with officiousness. Importantly, respondents identified that the local communities, parents and the district assembly pay more attention to educational matters and complement the efforts of government in the industry. Adequate accommodation and staff common rooms, tools and materials, socio-economic resources and other accoutrements needed by teachers and the entire school for effective teaching and learning must be provided by these stakeholders to enhance the satisfaction of teachers and in effect increase the retention rate of teachers in the district.

## 5. Conclusion

It is evident that job satisfaction among teachers remains a critical condition for the thriving of education in Ghana and other developing countries. Its importance cannot be overemphasized considering that literacy rates and access to education are far below the acceptable targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially in rural and under-resourced communities. Importantly, evidence provided by this study points strongly to specific school, community and individual determinants in rural districts that influence the level of satisfaction of teachers. Further, the results of the study show a significant link between job satisfaction among teachers and their retention in the teaching profession generally as well as accepting postings and remaining to teach in under resourced districts. Though the study was limited by the relatively small sample, it still provides a clear picture not only of the determinants of teacher satisfaction but also the factors that must be tackled to enhance satisfaction among teachers in Ghana and other developing countries.

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