TRIGGERS OF TURNOVER INTENTIONS OF EARLY CAREER TEACHERS IN THE CAPE COAST METROPOLIS IN GHANA

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Abstract  
This study investigated the triggers of turnover intentions of early career teachers in the Cape Coast metropolis. The phenomenological research design was used in the study to gain insight into the phenomenon that plagued many schools in the metropolis. The simple random sampling technique was used to get the desired participants in the study. A total of 20 early career teachers were selected to be part of the study. The interview was the data collection method used. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and then coded into themes and analysed accordingly. The study established that early career teachers in the metropolis really had turnover intentions. Poor conditions of service, large workload, lack of support during teaching and poor motivation were some of the triggers for their intentions of leaving the service. Some of the recommendations made were the use of mentors; organization of intensive induction programmes for beginning teachers in their subject areas; and payment of extra duty allowances for extra work done as practiced in most other organizations.
Introduction

Background to the Study
A major issue which is of utmost importance to a school administrator is having the full complement of staff so that work can properly be implemented as planned. The most indispensable staff within the school set up is the teacher. Training enough teachers has been the priority of governments in Ghana over the years. Ever since the introduction of formal education in the country, governments have been making the necessary effort to progressively develop education for the citizens of the country. Ghana Education Service has been making every effort to ensure that standard of education in the country is raised to a level that can be compared with others elsewhere in the world. In view of this, various policies have been introduced to attract and retain academically good people to be trained for the education sector. Education plays a central role in every society by bringing change in the lives of people. In this regard, teachers play a critical role in nurturing the minds and hearts of the youth (Dike, 2009). Teaching is one profession which no single nation in the world can do away with, and Ghana is no exception. This the teacher does by conscious socialization of the child, introducing the learner to moral tenets of life such as hard work, honesty, respect, and cleanliness. The teacher further discovers and develops the talent of the learner through the transmission of knowledge. It implies that a teacher is a key success factor in providing quality education. Thus, teachers are an indispensable asset to any country.

Considering the roles played by teachers in shaping the future of the nation, their supposedly turnover which emanates from the disappointments they encounter on the field is a source of worry (Pamu, 2010). Teachers are expected to remain in the classroom and prepare future leaders. Though, people do not always carry out their intentions, to some extent, the phenomenon of wanting to exit from teaching, deters them from giving their best in the classroom. According to Colb (2001), up to one-third of all newly hired teachers will leave teaching within the first three years of teaching. Up to 50% of new teachers will leave the profession within five years.

Over the years, varied problems have been identified as triggers for turnover intentions of teachers. Among them are the
issues of poor conditions of service (Mondak, 2004; Vanderpuye & Sonni, 1998; Grubis, 1986; Bennel and Akyeampong, 2007), heavy workload (Goddard & Goddard, 2006), improper transition of being a student to becoming a teacher (Kelchtermans, & Ballet, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hannu, Hannu & Jouni, 2005) and lack of respect for teachers (De Botton, 2004).

Almost all over the world, the problem of turnover of early career teachers is felt. In the Netherlands, the 2011 Commission on Teaching noted that, by 2014, about 75 per cent of the teachers in secondary education will have left the profession because of retirement and attrition (MacBeath, 2012). In Australia, a study found that teacher exodus occurs after a short period in a post. The research team found that teachers who left did so within the first five years of teaching. In Ingersoll’s (2003) metaphor, the ‘revolving door syndrome’ is indicative of a profession that loses new recruits very early as teachers, who suffer from lack of sorting out their problems in the early stages of their profession. While the rates of teacher turnover in Australia are difficult to obtain, as no official statistics are available, conservative estimates in 2003 suggested that one out of every four teachers did not teach beyond five years, and teaching is no longer considered a career for life (Manuel, 2003).

To the school administrator, it is indeed important to arrest such a situation of high early career teacher turnover because no nation can dispense of the services of teachers and expect to have a better future. There is the need for heads to know the turnover intention of teachers so that their problems could be dealt with to help retain them.

**Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, in some of the high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis, there has been high teacher turnover. This problem of leaving the service is made bare from the initial evidence gathered from interactions with some of the early career teachers in the schools in the metropolis. In one school, as many as nine teachers left at a time, five of whom had not taught for five years. Since the situation does not help in the development of the country’s education, it becomes crucial for the triggers of the turnover intentions to be unearthed and dealt with. Though the government of Ghana has over the years been at the forefront in improving the
status of the Ghanaian teacher, not much result has been realized. It is very obvious that not much in terms of paying realistic salaries, improved working conditions and the projection of the image of the Ghanaian teacher, have been made.

Turnover intentions are influenced by various factors, and it is important that the administrator identifies the causes, since the situation does not help in the development of the country's education. There is the need for the triggers of the turnover intentions of teachers within the Metropolis to be unearthed and dealt with.

Research Questions
1. Do early career teachers in Cape Coast Metropolis intend to leave the teaching profession?
2. How do administrative practices trigger turnover intentions among early teachers of Cape Coast Metropolis?
3. How do conditions of service in the education sector inform the turnover intentions of early career teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis?
4. How do personal orientations of early career teachers of Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis affect turnover intentions?

Method
For the purpose of the study, the phenomenological qualitative study approach was used. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is concerned with studying things in their natural setting and attempting to make sense or interpret phenomenon. It was deemed fit to select the phenomenological study approach to help delve deeply into the problem. This qualitative method allowed a face to face interaction with participants through interviews.

Population
The Cape Coast Metropolis has 11 Senior High Schools. Ten of these schools were used for the main study and one for the pre-testing of the interview instrument. The population for the study comprised early career teachers who have taught for not more than five years in the 10 Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana. A total of 193 early career teachers were obtained from the schools’
staff lists with the help of the Assistant Heads for academic in each school.

**Sample and Sampling Procedure**
A sample size of 20 was used for the study. For the purpose of this study, the simple random sampling, using the lottery method, was used. In the lottery method used, each element of the larger population was assigned a unique number and the required number was picked which represented the sample. In all, two participants were randomly selected from each of the 10 schools using this lottery sampling technique.

**Instrument**
The instrument for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide. The interview protocol consisted of 5 sections with each section dealing with a particular research question. To ensure the instrument for the data collection was appropriate, a pre-testing was conducted in one of the schools in the metropolis which had almost the same characteristics. The participants were identified from the staff list with the help of the Assistant Headmaster (Academic).

**Data Collection Procedure**
In collecting the data for the main study, the participants were interacted with at the school setting which was more convenient to the interviewees. Permission was sought from the Assistant Head for Academic in each school to conduct the interviews. Dates were negotiated for with the interviewees. The data collection covered a period of 4 weeks. Each interview session lasted between 30-45 minutes. Their consent was sought for the interview to be recorded. Participants were assured of confidentiality by giving them pseudonyms. After each section, the recorded voice was played back to the participants.

The data was carefully transcribed into word document. To keep faith with credibility and trustworthiness, member checking was done as copies of transcribed data were given to participants for their confirmation or otherwise. Corrections were made when participants decided to delete part of the transcribed data. The interview data were coded and analyzed to identify recurring themes which came out of each research question.
Results

Biographical Data
The first section of the interview guide dealt with the biographical data of participants. The number of years as beginning teachers and positions held which were the issues participants responded to are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Biographical Data of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Position Held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kenneth</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Teacher/Computer Technician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Joana</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Assistant Housemistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Bismark</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Form Master / Cadet Patron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Form Mistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Barnabas</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Co-Housemaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>Form Mistress / Patron of Clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>In-charge of the school band/Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Augustus</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Form Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Eric</td>
<td>5 Years</td>
<td>Counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Paulina</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Form Mistress / Special Asst. to the Asst. Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Form/Dining Hall Mistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Agatha</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>No Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Henry</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Dining Hall Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Agnes</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Form Mistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Gifty</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Form Mistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Samuel</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>Club Patron/Secretary to the Science Dept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Form Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Co-Housemaster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Sylvester</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Desmond</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>No position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 reveals that the largest number of participants had been in the teaching profession between two (5) and three (8) years. The mean number of years they have been in the teaching profession is three years. Apart from two teachers, the rest of the participants held various positions in their schools.
Section 2 of the interview considered the research questions. Themes that emerged from the interview with participants are presented and discussed with quotes. Participants commented on their turnover intentions and how administrative practices, conditions of service, and personal orientations affect their turnover intentions.

**Research Question 1**: Do early career teachers in Cape Coast metropolis intend to leave the teaching profession?

The early career teachers in Cape Coast metropolis were asked whether they had intentions of leaving the teaching profession since they started teaching. The main theme that came out was that they had intentions of leaving the profession as soon as they get new jobs which were more lucrative. Kenneth, Paulina and Jerry indicated that they will definitely leave the teaching profession because their initial experiences had not been pleasant. Their intentions of leaving started right from the first day they got to their schools. They were left on their own to adjust and this made them feel rejected and unwanted and made them decide that the earlier they found the means of leaving the profession the better. Sylvester, Gifty and Eric indicated that they were overloaded with so many classes and as new teachers, coping became difficult and as such, the decision to leave in the near future. Lucy, Desmond and Agatha decided on leaving. They have decided to go back to school for their postgraduate course after which they will not come back to teaching. Agatha had this to say:

> There is no option but to leave the teaching service. Coming in was a mistake in the first place. My initial experiences as a new teacher in the system confirmed my fears that I had made a wrong choice. As a beginning teacher, my head of department felt I had come with fresh ideas and decided to give me examination classes. This became a burden because I had to put in extra effort. My spare time was used in preparing these students for exams. I am just waiting for an opportunity to go back to school as it is difficult to get a job these days.

According to Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002), research has proven that there is ample evidence to prove that the transition from being a student teacher to professional teacher is often difficult and a stressful experience. He finds the profession to be fraught with
frustrations and heavy workloads. “Beginning teachers, who have access to intensive mentoring by expert colleagues, are much less likely to leave teaching in the early years” (Darling-Hammond, 2003, p. 11).

**Research Question 2:** How do administrative practices trigger turnover intentions among early teachers of Cape Coast metropolis? The prominent themes that came up when administrative practices were considered as turn-over triggers were (a) inadequate motivation for teachers and (b) low level of support for early teachers in the schools.

**Inadequate Motivation for Teachers**

Considering administrative practices that influenced turnover intentions of early career teachers in the Metropolis, almost all without exception, said that forms of motivation such as meals and accommodation was virtually nonexistent.

James said “We are not being motivated. The only incentive given us is the GH₵100.00 given at the end of the term by the Parent-Teacher Association. Even with this, rent charges are deducted from this for those who live on campus”.

Barnabas talking on the same subject of motivation was quick to say that:

In this school, the kind of motivation given especially to the new teachers is rather demotivating because there is a policy that the number of years spent in the school is used to share the PTA allowances. Much work is expected from us as new teachers, yet when it comes to motivation, we are pushed to the background.

There were several other participants who confirmed that motivation for the early career teacher was nothing to write home about. Out of such bitterness, many indicated that they will not hesitate to take up appointments with other institutions that may be attractive to them. This point of view was strongly supported by Bennel and Akyeampong (2007) that:

Teachers compare their own efforts and rewards with those of peers. The peers in question may be in other occupations as well as within the teaching profession. Such comparisons are likely to influence teachers’ perceptions of their own status and are just as relevant to motivation in developing countries as in industrialized ones (p. 5).
Low Level of support for Early Teachers in the Schools
Another theme that emerged was the issue of low level of support for the early career teacher by the administration so far as in-service training and resources for teaching were concerned. The early career teacher who was inexperienced was left to find his/her own level. When asked how often in-service training was organized for the early career teachers in their various schools, these were some of the answers given by the participants. Barnabas said “Internally, nothing of the sort had ever been organized for us”.

In her response to the same question, Gifty had this to say: Well, I have not had any since I came. I believe that if it were to be organized for us, especially we the young ones who are new in the system, it will be beneficial. At least the experienced ones will also let us know some of the challenges of the classroom situation and help us with coping strategies.

It could be deduced from their responses that several of the early career teachers felt handicapped in their subject areas and went through some level of frustration in the classroom.

To the question of whether the school administration supports teachers with funds and other materials needed for their classroom work, all without exception responded negatively. When the need arises, teachers must find their own way to get things done. For example, Lucy said: No, I don’t think so. In fact if you look at the efforts teachers put in to prepare these students for their future by what they are given, then one becomes disappointed. Just recently, four experienced teachers have left the school for other sectors where conditions are better.

Kenneth on the other hand had this to say: “Well, on the issue of materials, I will say that in this school, there are some few spare parts that can be used to fix the computers and the printers when they breakdown, but funds, no”.

All these give credence to the fact that the early career teacher needs to be supported financially and materially to make work easier and interesting for them.
Hannu, Hannu, and Jouni (2005) explain clearly that “initial teacher education cannot transmit all the knowledge and skills that a teacher needs in their work. New teachers are still in the process of learning to teach and to construct a professional identity” (p. 219).
Research Question 3: How do conditions of service in the education sector inform the turnover intentions of early career teachers in the Cape Coast metropolis?

How the conditions of service in the education sector inform the turnover intentions of early career teachers in the metropolis were considered. When participants were asked to comment on the conditions of service for teachers, their responses produced four major themes which were, (a) low salary, (b) heavy workload/ lack of time to rest (c) lack of opportunity for advancement, and (d) inadequate accommodation facilities.

Low Salary
Participants were asked about how comparable their salaries were to other colleagues in other sectors. Several of the participants agreed that theirs, as teachers, was on the lower side. They basically agreed that the basic pay could be compared, but because their colleagues were entitled to other allowances, it swelled up their monthly salaries. Kenneth for example did not hesitate to say that: Theirs are far, far better than what I take here. I know that for a fact, because I talk to them, so I know what I am saying. Some of them collect salaries twice what I receive here. This is true.

According to Vanderpuye & Somi (1998), teachers in Ghana generally were highly dissatisfied and de-motivated to perform due to low salaries, poor teaching conditions and conditions of service.

Heavy workload/Lack of Time to Rest
Lack of time to rest, which indicates a heavy workload was another issue that came out as the condition of service were discussed. A good number of them (about 70%) were concerned about the heavy workload they have. Eric responded that:

Sometimes people have the erroneous impression that teachers have more time at their disposal. Even when you are not teaching, you are either marking, preparing lesson notes, updating your teaching notes, or you are even engaged by the school in some co-curricular assignments. Even when we are on holidays, we mark end of term examination scripts and fill students’ reports. With such large classes, one can spend a good chunk of the vacation period on these exercises.

When the participants were asked whether they enjoy allowances for extra work done, all without exception responded in
the negative. They made statements to indicate that they do all extra work for free.

It is expected that in the Ghana Education Service, teachers who teach more than 26 periods a week are given extra-duty allowances but the study revealed that most heads of High Schools refuse to follow this directive. Thus, teachers are deprived of what is rightfully theirs.

Lack of Opportunity for Advancement
Another theme that came out of issues of conditions of service was the lack of opportunity for advancement in the profession. Most of the participants were not enthused with the kind of bureaucracy that exists in the process of obtaining study leave with pay. Some even stated that the study leave with pay is virtually non-existent. Kenneth responded that:

As a young teacher, I tried to find out the opportunities that are there for advancement and it's like virtually there is nothing of the sort. Study leave with pay is very difficult to assess and the frustrations one may go through is enough to discourage the teacher from pursuing it.

The Ghana Education Service has drastically scaled down the number of teachers who are granted study leave with pay. Most teachers who are now doing post graduate courses are combining that with their teaching. Thus, most of them after completion of their courses decide not to come back to the classroom.

Inadequate Accommodation Facilities
The last theme on conditions of service was the inadequate accommodation facilities in various schools. With the exception of the few who had accommodation on campus, all others were in rented accommodation and had to come to school by public transport.

In her reaction to the issue, Lucy said; “If you are not given accommodation on campus, then you need to make your own arrangement for it in town, the school has no plans for you”.

Desmond also confirmed this and responded that, “well, at my school, about 30% of the teachers live on campus and the others in rented apartments in town. As a new teacher, you don’t get accommodation on campus. It is a first come first served basis. It
will take at least five years for you to get accommodation on campus”.

All these revelations go to confirm that the early career teacher in the metropolis has some challenges to contend with. Even though some of the schools have some bungalows and flats for their staff, they were still not enough, looking at the staff strength in each school.

According to Grubis (1986), in locations where housing is not affordable or available, schools have difficulty attracting teachers and the provision of adequate housing in remote or isolated areas is imperative in the retention of teachers.

Research Question 4: How do personal orientations of early career teachers of Senior High Schools in the Cape Coast metropolis affect turnover intentions?

How personal orientations of early career teachers affect turnover intentions?

When the responses of participants were coded on how personal orientations of early career teachers affect turnover intentions, the themes that emerged were (a) low recognition for the teacher by the public, (b) lack of confidence in the teaching profession, and (c) poor conditions of life of retired teachers.

Low Recognition for the Teacher by the Public

Most of the participants lamented about the low public recognition of their profession. They intimated that teachers do not command any higher respect as doctors, lawyers, bankers and others do. Participants were not actually happy with the low level of recognition the public gives to them. Kenneth, responded this way; “Oh, most people do not have any regard for teachers”. In her reaction to the same question, Paulina was very emphatic in her answer. She said: “Sometime ago, teachers enjoyed a lot of respect because of how they conducted themselves. But now this respect has faded, not only because of low salary they receive, but also as a result of misconduct of some teachers”.

The participants also expressed the view that, people do not attach the needed importance to the profession because they see it as a profession that does not require any specialized skill or knowledge to practice. To some, any educated person can teach,
unlike law or medicine. This was what Agatha said: “Many are those who do not value the work of the teacher. They think its one profession where everybody could enter without having to go through any special training, thus the low recognition given to teachers”.

De Botton (2004) indicated that, especially among the business community, teachers were not given the required respect, which becomes a worry to the early career teacher. It did not give them the encouragement to want to be teachers for long. High status “is thought by many (but freely admitted by a few) to be one of the finest of earthly goods” (De Botton, p. 3).

Lack of Confidence in the Teaching Profession
Lack of confidence in the teaching profession came out when participants were asked whether their own experiences in teaching will make them recommend teaching as a profession to their relations. Most participants indicated that they would not readily do so. Lucy said; “As for that, it has never occurred to me, and I will never encourage them to pursue a career in teaching in Ghana”. Elizabeth also said; “It's a big no”. I will not do so because the system itself is frustrating. When you enter fresh from the university, you suffer for a long time before you start receiving your salary. How can one work for over a year without salary?”

It could be deduced from the reactions that experiences that the early teachers go through actually make them lose confidence in the profession. That is the reason for their unwillingness to recommend it to their relations.

Poor State of the Life of Retired Teachers
Poor condition of the life of retired teachers came out as an issue that discouraged teachers. Majority of the participants expressed the opinion that many retired teachers were not living well. To the participants, those who were living well were those who had investments that fetch them income. But those who depend on their pension pay as teachers do not find it easy to make ends meet. Barnabas supported this assertion by saying that:

For those I know, a lot of them are in a miserable state. What could they have achieved with the small salaries they were being paid? Some of them I know were even headmasters, but their living conditions are very bad, to be frank with you.
Conclusion and Recommendations
The study established that the early career teachers in the Cape Coast metropolis had turnover intentions due to the prevailing poor conditions of service such as low salaries and lack of fringe benefits; heavy workloads; lack of induction programmes; low public image of the teaching profession and poor end of service benefits.

The following recommendations were made in the light of the findings:

- The organization of intensive induction programmes for beginning teachers in their subject areas should be a must. This can become a major source of encouragement and adjustment programme to help new teachers overcome many of the challenges that they may face in the course of doing their work.
- The use of mentors for new teachers is also recommended. This will be a support system which will provide guidance and support.
- Extra duty allowances should be paid for extra work done as is practiced in most organizations.
- Schools in the metropolis should have a policy of providing accommodation facilities for beginning teachers for the first year, since they may be new in the town, until they find their own appropriate accommodation.

References

Bennell, P. S., & Akyeampong, K. (2007). *Teacher motivation in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia: Knowledge and Skills for Development*


