

# Teachers' perception of job satisfaction and retention in Ghana: Perspectives from special needs educators

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## ABSTRACT

The study aimed at examining special education teachers' perception of job satisfaction and retention in Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to find out if teachers' perception of their job has any impact on their retention in the special schools. The study employed descriptive survey design and utilized quantitative methods in data collection and analysis. Data for the study was collected from 140 teachers sampled across the country from the three categories of special schools in Ghana. In this study, the independent variable of teachers' perceptions of their job satisfaction was examined to find out their effect on the dependent variable of teacher retention. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were computed. Further statistics such as regression analysis and independent sample t-test were also employed. The study found that generally, the three categories of teachers expressed dissatisfaction of their job and indicated that given the opportunity, they would quit the job of teaching in special schools. The test statistic revealed that there were no statistically significant differences among the teachers in these three school categories in relation to their job satisfaction and retention. The study further found that teachers with more teaching experience in the special schools were more satisfied with their jobs compared to those with less teaching experience. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education through the Division of Special Needs Education should recognize the unique and challenging roles of special school teachers and motivate them to remain in the special needs schools. These teachers can be recognized through the Annual National Best Teachers' Awards.

**Keywords:** Perception, retention, job satisfaction, special needs education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a significant role in human resource development of any country. Special needs education teachers in particular train individuals with special needs education and People with Disabilities (PWDs) to become independent, self-sufficient and economically useful to their communities and the nation at large. Therefore, it is important for governments to recognise the roles of teachers and reward them accordingly. When the working conditions of the teachers are improved, it will not only motivate them to stay at post but also get them committed to their job and ultimately translate into academic performance and school effectiveness. However, Chambers (2008) reported that teachers in special education have not been satisfied with their job.

In Ghana, the issue of teachers' job dissatisfaction have raised a lot of concerns among major stakeholders in education for some time now. In a study conducted by Vendepuuye and Somi as cited in Dampson (2010) revealed that teachers in Ghana were highly dissatisfied and demotivated to perform due to low salaries and poor teaching conditions. These situations present a negative picture in terms of teacher retention in Ghana. This in the view of the researcher makes the issue of teacher job satisfaction and retention very crucial if any meaningful success is to be achieved.

At the conceptualization stage of this study, the researcher had not come across, any study on special education teachers' perceptions of their job satisfaction

and retention in Ghana and as a result, not much literature is available on the subject. Most of the job satisfaction studies in Ghana focused on teachers in regular schools and examples of such studies are common to find (Boateng, 2001; Cobbold, 2010; Saani, 2013; Sam et al., 2014). Therefore, wide knowledge gap exist in the current literature within the context of special education teachers' perception of their job satisfaction in Ghana. The outcomes from this study could inform stakeholders to make teachers in the special schools more satisfied with working in the special schools which could help reduce the current trend of high teacher dissatisfaction among special educators in Ghana.

Employees' satisfaction is highly influenced by the individuals' beliefs, attitudes and perceptions. Barnyak and Paquette (2010) noted that teachers' attitudes and perceptions are transferable to the students through their teaching. Stockard and Lehman (2004) explored influences on the satisfaction and retention of 1st-year teachers in Western State in America. The study found that the most critical factor that influence teachers' retention decision is job satisfaction. In a related study, Boyd et al. (2011) examined the relationship between school factors and retention of teachers in New York City and found that teachers' perceptions of the school administration has significant influence on teacher retention decisions. Therefore, attitudes and perceptions of teachers can impact either positively or negatively on teachers' job satisfaction, retention and attrition decisions.

Cristina-Corina and Valerica (2012) analysed Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards professional activity among Romanian public school teachers in primary, secondary and high schools and found that teachers' job satisfaction is related positively with different teachers' perceptions of their professional assignment and are differences in the levels of job satisfaction depending on the perceptions of teaching profession or nature of work. In a study conducted by Eggen and Kauchak as cited in Cristina-Corina and Valerica (2012), the researchers reported that teachers' attitudes and perceptions are important for effective teaching, and teachers' perceptions and attitudes influence students' school performance. This is supported by Ispir (2010) who reported that positive teacher attitude towards the teaching profession have significant effects on their delivery skills and teaching practices, and are related to teacher burnout. Perrachione et al. (2008) also conducted a study on perceptions among public elementary school teachers in Missouri. The study found that job satisfaction was perceived to significantly influence teachers' job satisfaction and retention while extrinsic motivators such as low salary and work overload did not have any impact. Further analysis found that teachers who experienced satisfaction at their school and/or satisfaction with the profession of teaching were more likely to remain. No relationship was found between

satisfaction with the job of teaching, suggesting that retention was determined by teacher satisfaction with the profession and not with work-related duties.

Cunningham (2015) undertook a study entitled "a quantitative analysis of the factors associated with teacher attitudes and perceptions towards job satisfaction" in a United States of America and found that attitudes and perceptions of the teachers were the significant predictors of job satisfaction. In the same vein, Baakile (2011) investigated teachers' perception of equity, pay satisfaction, affective commitment and intention to quit among junior and secondary schools teachers in Botswana. The study found that teachers' perception of these variables is similar irrespective of the type of school they teach or work place. In a related study, Achchuthan et al. (2014) focused on the relationship between school teachers' perception towards pay satisfaction and personal characteristics among teachers in Northern Province of Sri Lanka. Results of the study revealed that there is a significant mean difference in pay satisfaction among family size, subject for teaching, educational qualification and working experience. In relation to teaching experience, school teachers who have served between 1 – 5 and 21 and above years hold the high level of pay satisfaction in terms of pay structure and administration. Similarly, Bolin (2007) examined job satisfaction of elementary school teachers in Shanghai, China. The aim of the study was to determine if there were differences in various dimensions of job satisfaction among teachers of different gender and ages and from different types of schools. The study revealed that, the higher the teachers' years of teaching, the more the teachers were satisfied with their jobs. In a related study, Sargent and Hannum (2005) explored how parental education affects various parental investments in goods and time used in children's human capital production in rural China. Specifically, the study sought to examine how variables such as teacher characteristics, community factors and school environmental factors are associated with teacher job satisfaction. The study found that, younger teachers were significantly less satisfied with their jobs than their older counterparts.

With regard to teacher job satisfaction and retention, Coskuner (2001) undertook a study involving hundred teachers from nine colleges and found that low salaries were the major reason for teacher attrition. Similarly, Luckner and Hanks (2003) examined the perceptions of a national sample of teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing to assess how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with their jobs. The findings for these four groups were similar to those for the group as a whole. The results of the study showed that teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing were in general, satisfied with their jobs. In a related study, Ngimbudzi (2009) investigated job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Njombe District of Tanzania. The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that are associated

with teachers' job satisfaction. The inferential statistics techniques revealed significant differences in teachers' job satisfaction in relation to gender, age, school location and school type, but there were no significant differences in relation to marital status, teaching experience, teacher type and promotional position.

The current study sought to address the following questions:

1. To what extent does job satisfaction influence retention of special needs education teachers in Ghana?
2. How do the special education teachers differ in their perception of job satisfaction and retention in relation to teaching experience?

## METHODOLOGY

The study sought to explore perception of special education teachers in Ghana with regards their Job Satisfaction and Retention. Quantitative research methods were utilized to answer the research questions. The population included the 395 specialist teachers working in the country's special schools. However, the study was limited to only special educators who teach in nine out of 29 residential special schools in Ghana. Thus, the accessible population was drawn from nine schools in Southern Ghana with a total teacher population of 272. This was made up of 181 teachers for the Deaf, 49 teachers for the Blind and 42 teachers for the Intellectually Challenged (Special Education Division, 2017). The final sample size consisted of 150 teachers which was found to be 38% of the population. Simple random and stratified random sampling techniques were adopted in selection of the schools and the participating teachers. The special schools within the study area were stratified into three strata: Schools for the Deaf, the Intellectually Challenged as well as the schools for the blind and the teachers were randomly picked from each of the schools. According to Kombo and Tromp (2006), stratified random sampling involves putting the target population into similar subgroups and then selecting members from each subgroup using simple random technique.

A close-ended questionnaire designed in the 5-point Likert scale format was used in the collection the data. The instrument produced a Cronbach alpha value of 0.73 which was deemed to have adequate reliability. The questionnaire was administered to 150 respondents and 140 was retrieved giving a response rate of about 93%. Frequencies and percentages were used to explore teachers' perception of their job and retention while One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the perceptions of the three different groups of special education teachers with regard to their job satisfaction and retention. Finally, the independent sample t-test was used to measure the difference in

perception of job satisfaction and retention between experienced and less experienced teachers.

## RESULTS

### Research question 1

Research question one sought to find out the extent to which special education teachers' job satisfaction influence their retention in the special schools in Ghana. The teachers were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to certain statements. Table 1 presents the responses to the statements by the three groups of teachers.

Table 1 clearly shows that all the teachers had the intention of quitting the job of teaching in special schools at the least opportunity due to their negative perception of their job satisfaction. Item 1 focused on finding out whether with the present salary, the teachers felt like quitting the job of teaching in special school. Majority of the teachers, 62(63.0%) and 20(87.0%) of the teachers of the Deaf and intellectually Challenged respectively affirmed the statement. Only about half (N=8, 44.0%) of the teachers of the Blind affirmed to the statement. On the other hand, 19(19.0%), 6(33.0%) and only 1(4.0%) of teachers of the Deaf, Blind and Intellectually Challenged respectively disagreed or said "No" while 18(18.0%), 4(22.0%) and 2(9.0%) of the teachers were undecided. Those who disagreed to the statement suggest that with their present salary, they would want to be retained in the special schools. With regards to item 2 that sought to find out whether if the teachers would quit special education profession to another job that pays the same salary, a total of 62 representing 63.0% of the teachers of the Deaf and 15 representing 65.0% of the teachers of the Intellectually Challenged agreed with the statement. In the case of teachers of the Blind, only 6 representing 33.0% agreed to the statement while half (N = 9,50%) of the teachers of the Blind disagreed to the statement that they would leave special needs education to a job that pays the same salary.

When teachers were asked whether their thoughts of leaving special school job was due to their poor conditions of service, majority of the teachers of the Deaf (73, 74%) and Intellectually Challenged (17, 74%) agreed with the statement while less than half of the teachers of the Blind (8, 44%) agreed with the statement. With regards to the statement that "leadership practices of head teachers contributed to teachers' intention to quit teaching in special school" as much as 14 representing about 78.0% of the teachers of the Blind and 11 representing 48.0% of the teachers for the Intellectually Challenged responded in the affirmative while 53 constituting about 54.0% of teachers of the Deaf also disagreed to the same statement indicating differences in the opinion of some of the teachers. Finally, responses to

**Table 1.** Teachers' perception of job satisfaction and retention.

Statement	Teachers of the Deaf Total = 99						Teachers of the Blind Total = 18						Teachers of the Intellectually challenged Total = 23					
	A		U		D		A		U		D		A		U		D	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
With my present salary, I feel like quitting my job of teaching in special school.	62	63	18	18	19	19	8	44	4	22	6	33	20	87	2	9	1	4
If I had another job that pays the same salary as in special school, I will quit immediately.	62	63	20	20	17	17	6	33	3	17	9	50	15	65	3	13	5	22
I think a lot about leaving special school due to poor conditions of service.	73	74	13	13	13	13	8	44	5	28	5	28	17	74	-	-	6	26
The leadership practices of my head teacher contribute to my intention to quit teaching in special school.	37	37	9	9	53	54	14	78	1	5	3	17	11	48	4	17	8	35
Teaching in special school is too demanding.	79	80	3	3	17	17	13	72	3	17	2	11	18	78	-	-	5	22

Key: A= Agree U= Undecided D= Disagree.

**Table 2.** One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29.604	2	14.802	.353	.703
Within Groups	5748.532	137	41.960		
Total	5778.136	139			

item 5 show that teaching in special schools was very demanding. Responses from the majority of the teachers across the three categories were in agreement with the statement while the minority disagreed with the statement. However, insignificant number of teachers across the three categories was not sure as to whether teaching in special needs schools was demanding or not.

Further analysis through hypothesis testing was

performed to determine whether there was a significant difference among the category of teachers in special schools in terms of job satisfaction and the disability groups they teach. Table 2 represents the results obtained from One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test.

Table 2 clearly shows that no significant differences were found with regards to job satisfaction and retention among the three groups

of teachers namely teachers of the Deaf, teachers of the Blind and teachers of the Intellectually Challenged ( $F_{(2, 137)} = 0.353$   $p > 0.05$ ). The results of the current study clearly show that there is no evidence that there are differences among the three groups of teachers in relation to their opinion on job satisfaction and retention. This may be due to the fact that their conditions of service remained the same. The implication of this finding

**Table 3.** Independent t-test results.

Level of experience	(N)	Mean (X)	SD	df	Calculated t- value	Critical value	p- value
More experienced	89	84.32	23.12	139	2.17	1.94	0.006
Less experienced	51	81.65	10.79				

is that job satisfaction or dissatisfaction has the propensity to influence the retention of all the teachers irrespective of the schools they teach.

Hence, it was deduced with 95% confidence that the perception on teacher retention among the three categories of special education teachers studied is the same.

From the analysis, it can be concluded that though teachers from various categories had slightly different opinions on retention, there was no statistically significant differences among the teachers in these three school types in relation to their job satisfaction and retention.

### Research question 2

The second research question investigated the mean difference between experienced and less experienced teachers' perception of job satisfaction and its impact on retention of special education teachers in Ghana. The experienced teachers refer to those who have taught for five (5) or more years in a special school while less experienced teachers are those who have been in the special school for less than five (5) years. The independent sample t-test was used to identify if there is significant difference in teachers' perception of their job and retention in relation to teaching experience. Table 3 presents the analysis of the t-test results.

The t-test shows that statistical significant difference exist between more experienced special education teachers and less experienced ones at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Those with five years or more teaching experience were found to be significantly more satisfied with their job as compared to those with less than five years teaching experience as shown by their respective means in Table 3. The Table further shows that the calculated t-value of 2.17 is greater than the critical value of 1.94 at 0.05 alpha level of significance and therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. The findings from this study may be due to the fact that teachers who have taught for five or more years in the special schools have become more used to the working conditions existing in their schools or they are intrinsically motivated by the nature of their work by providing education to the less privileged children in the society in order to make them more useful to the individuals, family and the entire society. In other words, the more experienced teacher has the tendency that, he or she may have higher knowledge of working conditions, responsibilities and what is expected of him or her as a special education practitioner.

### DISCUSSION

In the first place, results from teachers' responses regarding their perceptions about job satisfaction and retention indicate that majority of the teachers from the three category of schools (schools for the Deaf, Blind and Intellectually Challenge respectively) had similar negative perceptions about their job satisfaction and wished to leave the profession at the least opportunity. According to the findings of the study, as revealed in Table 1, all the teachers showed their dissatisfaction with their job and that demonstrate their intention to quit special education profession. This dissatisfaction mostly relates to external human motivators and poor conditions of service such as low salaries, work load and stress etc. This is in consistent with findings by Coskuner (2001) who reported that low salaries were the major reason for teacher attrition. However, this finding is inconsistent with a similar study conducted by Perrachione et al. (2008) on perceptions of elementary school teachers on factors that influence teacher job satisfaction and retention in Missouri and found that extrinsic motivators such as low salary and work overload did not have any impact on job satisfaction and retention. The findings of the present study is again a departure from the finding by Luckner and Hanks (2003) who examined the perceptions of a national sample of teachers of students who are deaf or hard of hearing to assess how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with their jobs. The results of the study found that teachers of students who were deaf or hard of hearing were in general satisfied with their jobs. As indicated earlier, these findings contradict the finding of the present study. However, the possible reasons for these varied and sometimes contradicting findings could be due to the fact that the studies were undertaken in different countries and at different times. Moreover, the working conditions for the teachers may differ across space and time. Additionally, the use of different methods and sample populations may account for the differences in the findings. For instance in the Luckner and Hanks (2003) study, the teacher participants were reported to be satisfied with their job because the teachers themselves were also known to be individuals with some form of disabilities.

Though the study further established that, teachers of the Blind showed a slightly positive attitude towards retention than the other category of teachers, there were no statistically significant difference in the opinions of the three groups of teachers regarding job satisfaction and retention. Thus, in relation to differences in teachers'

perceptions among the three teacher types, the study found that there was no significant difference. The findings of the present study are not an isolated case because a similar study conducted by Baakile (2011) on teachers' perception of equity, pay satisfaction, affective commitment and intention to quit among junior and secondary schools teachers in Botswana revealed that teachers' perception of these variables that constitute job satisfaction is similar irrespective of the type of school they teach or work place. The current study is supported further by the findings of Ngimbudzi (2009) who investigated job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Tanzania and found no significant differences in relation to teacher type. The findings of the present study is again in line with Sheldrake (2013) who compared administrator and special education teacher perceptions of special education teacher attrition and retention in the Mountain Park School District and found that there was no statistically significant difference between the perception of administrators and special education teacher. On the contrary, Cristina-Corina and Valerica (2012) analyzed teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards professional activity among Romanian public school teachers in primary, secondary and high schools and found that differences exist in the levels of job satisfaction depending on the perceptions of teaching profession or nature of work. Cristina-Corina and Valerica (2012) revealed that teachers' job satisfaction is related positively with different teachers' perceptions of their professional assignment.

Finally, the study has showed that there is a significant difference in the perception of experienced and less experienced special education teachers regarding job satisfaction and retention. This finding is consistent with the findings of the existing studies. The finding that teachers with more years of teaching in the special schools were significantly more satisfied with their jobs than the less experienced teachers supports the study conducted by Bolin (2007) who found that the higher the teachers' years of teaching, the more the teachers were satisfied with their jobs. Similarly, the study by Sargent and Hannum (2005) reported that the younger teachers were significantly less satisfied with their jobs than their older counterparts. Additionally, the findings of the present study is corroborated by a similar study conducted by Achchuthan et al. (2014) who found that there is a significant mean difference in pay satisfaction among teachers with different working experience. It was emerged from the study that school teachers who have served between 1 – 5 and 21 and above years hold the high level of pay satisfaction in terms of pay structure and administration.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that teachers have negative perceptions about their job satisfaction. Poor working

conditions particularly salaries and allowances were identified as significant factors responsible for dissatisfaction among special education teachers in Ghana. In the light of the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that special education teachers must be motivated in order for them to be committed to their job and provide quality education to learners with disabilities in Ghana. To do this, an enhanced pension scheme is instituted to attract, motivate and retain young or newly trained specialist teachers into the special education sector. It is further recommended that long serving teachers who have taught for fifteen years and above in the special schools should be identified and rewarded during the Annual National Best Teachers' Award.

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