EXPLORING PRESCHOOL TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION: PERSPECTIVES OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood care and education continues to evolve in Ghana. In the past decade, many private preschools have sprung up to meet the care and development needs of Ghanaian children, as well as offer working mothers a safe place for their young ones. The teachers in these schools are expected to be the caregivers of these children. In addition, it is expected that they will help the children in their care, develop transition from home to school and enjoy a nurturing school environment. Thus, this requires a specialized training. A qualitative approach utilizing a semi structured interview guide was adopted to explore the views of 20 school administrators (17 females, 3 males) on the factors that influenced pre-school teacher recruitment and retention. Themes derived include 1. gender (female), 2. the potential to enhance interactions with children and the 3. ability to relate well with colleagues and parents. Putting gender of a prospective teacher over qualifications may seem unprofessional at a glance but justifiable in terms of the safety and care of the young children. Gender was augmented by the teacher’s prior experience as a mother and or her willingness to learn. The potential to enhance interactions with children – confirming school administrators’ appreciation of the importance of teacher-child interactions to child development. The ability to relate well with colleagues and parents - basically being a team player to meet the goals of the institution and needs of parents as stakeholders in a professional manner. The paper concludes that the recruitment and retention practices of administrators had implications for child development and teacher education. Administrators’ efforts have been to ensure a teacher (caregiver) was present in helping to create a healthy and nurturing environment for young children early childhood institutions.

Key words: teacher recruitment; retention; early childhood institutions; school administrators; private institutions

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood care and education herein referred to as Pre-school education is to lay the foundation for reading and writing and also counting (Ofosu-Appiah, 2009). Pre-school bridges the gap between parents or guardians responsibilities towards the child and their work responsibilities as they are most importantly believed to aid in teaching children human relations.

The goal of providing quality education requires an adequate supply of individuals willing and able to serve as teachers (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006). The effort to find the right person for the role as a teacher places recruitment at the heart of every school administrator. Recruitment and retention activities engaged in by districts and schools in some developed countries suggest that demand for teachers was influenced by salaries, benefits and rewards the individual derive from teaching. These were summarized into ‘working conditions’ and ‘personal satisfaction’ (Guarino, Santibañez & Daley, 2006). Stornes (2014) refers to working conditions as encompassing all things that are related to work and human existence - the link between work, health and wellbeing. Guarino, Santibañez and Daley (2006) found that the demand for teachers was due to an increase in student enrolment, class size targets, teaching load and budgetary constraints. On the other hand the supply of teachers depended on how attractive the job of a teacher was to them. Attraction was seen in terms of ease of entry and overall compensation package (i.e. salary, benefit, working conditions and personal satisfaction). This meant that to address a shortfall of teachers, policy makers will have to manipulate the ‘working conditions’.

In a study documenting district hiring practices across New York State, Balter and Duncombe (2008) found that most districts advertised openings in local newspapers and on the Internet; working with local colleges by supervising student teachers, posting job notices on campus, and contacting college faculty. Egalite, Jensen, Stewart and Wolf (2014) studied recruitment, classroom assignment, continuous education and policies that existed in private schools to establish their relationship with teacher retention. What they found was that as normal practice, school administrators implemented particular strategies to recruit new teachers. The strategies included signing bonuses, payment of student loans owed by prospective teachers, assistance with relocation expenses and giving money gifts to existing school staff who recommended new teachers to the school. They observed that teacher retention in private schools were more problematic than in public schools. Egalite et al (2014), found some teacher retention strategies in their study to be effective. These strategies included i. higher salaries which were associated with lower attrition, ii. mentoring programmes built around collegial support’, iii. the extent to which schools faculty were allowed to influence decision making. Ingersoll (2001) found that teacher autonomy had lower levels of teacher turnover. In the field of nursing Newton, Chandler, Morris-Thomson, Sayer and Burke (2014) employability events and preceptorship to have a positive influence on attracting newly qualified nurses.

Mukuna and Mutsotsö (2011) in observing that most communities (made up of parents, all stakeholders and the public at large) in Kenya were uneasy and suspicious of men who chose to work with young children rather than working in other higher paying jobs outlined some benefits of having male teachers in ECCD institutions. Mukuna and Mutsotsö (2011) argued that the presence of men enhance the status of ECCD and the status of all present and also improve workplace dynamics. They further stated that children could benefit from the increase in males participation in early childhood if these men would help ‘counter children sex-stereotypes views’ (pp. 1877). However, they remarked that to be successful these male teachers would have to actively
challenge children’s traditional and limiting construction of gender - a task which should involve the whole community. Kameerman (2006), stated that “Kenya has been at the forefront of ECCD in Africa because they identified early childhood services as a key component of local development especially for the rural areas. The preschools operated typically had one of the local mothers identified as the teacher” (pp 26).

From its inception society has accepted females as ‘teachers’ for preschool children. Male children could benefit from male teachers as role models. However according to the concern of not involving more males in ECCD is the background of ‘men’s (un)suitability as teachers in this stage of young children’s development’. The main concern being sexual deviance and or exploitation (Peterson, 2014 pp.2)

Female teachers dominate the foundation phase of schooling in South Africa (Peterson, 2014). Bryan and Ford (2014) reported 1% involvement of males in early childhood Care and Development (ECCD). Nyarko and Addo (2013) in a study also found that of the 103 Ghanaian preschool teachers sampled, only 1% was male. According to Mukuna and Mutotsoto (2011), ECCD is the most gender swerved of occupations. People in and around early childhood care and education (ECCE) believe that women are naturally predisposed to caring for infants and young children than men (Mukuna and Mutotsoto, 2011). The belief is so because in most African cultures, women have been charged with raising children.

This dominance has led to ‘socially and culturally ascribed roles for women as primary caregivers of young children’ (Bem, 1993 pp 355). A teacher in preschool is a substitute primary caregiver, a role often ascribed to women because gender stereotypes are culturally and socially constructed (Bem, 1993). Bem’s (1981; 1993) gender schema and enculturated-lens theories helps in explaining the dominance of women in ECCD. In her theory, Bem (1981; 1993) places emphasis on the ‘social’ and ‘historical’ contexts as ‘lenses’ for gender socialization. She asserted that humans were influenced by the societies they lived in – and since societies were made up of parents, siblings, schools and the media it made humans susceptible to the elements in the society. This susceptibility Bem (1981; 1993) believed led to a cognitive experience which resulted in the formation of a schema. A schema is explained as a ‘cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual’s perception’ (Bem, 1981, p356). This schema stores ideas of feminine and masculine roles as defined by the society leading to ‘gender schema’ (1993, pp 355). Peterson (2014) affirms that people are socialised to have an ‘engendered’ view of themselves, others and society at large which influences their thoughts and behaviours. These then determine individuals’ views and choices about lifestyle, career choice, and self-esteem (Peterson, 2014).

The Israeli government through a partnership with the Ghanaian government have supported ECE efforts in Ghana. Through MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, and with the help of Early Childhood Education specialists from the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC), system of early childhood education was developed. The goal was to implement it in selected public KGs (Hirschmann & Ben-Hefer 2012). These have been done successfully but were however limited to public KGs in selected metropolis. Formal training of pre-school teachers is still at its infancy stage in Ghana (Nyarko & Mate-Kole, 2016). It has been documented that kindergarten teachers in Ghana were trained by government accredited institutions resulting in three tiers of formal qualifications: i.e Certificate, Diploma and Degree (Ministry of Education Ghana, 2012). Other training efforts provided by the private and non-governmental organizations at certificate level have been documented. Additionally, two- private formal training programmes have been accredited (Nyarko & Mate-Kole, 2016).

Statement of the Problem
Training institutions were unable to churn out the number of trained preschool teachers needed for placement in early childhood institutions in Ghana which suggested that teachers in these institutions may not have the requisite qualifications. The strong demand for early childhood teachers, coupled with the inadequate numbers being trained may result in compromises in standards. School administrators are faced with the uphill task and demand of recruiting staff for their preschools in the face of a shortage in supply of trained teachers. This paper therefore sought to substantiate the current teacher qualifications by outlining the views of preschool administrators on factors influencing teacher recruitment and retention in privately run early childhood institutions in Ghana.

Research Questions
The purpose of this study was to determine factors that influenced the teacher recruitment in the ECCD profession in Ghana. This study was guided by the following research questions;
1. How do school administrators of preschools recruit teachers?
2. What factors influenced teacher recruitment in ECCD settings?
   i. What are the expectations of administrators regarding the gender of prospective teachers in preschools?
3. How do school administrators of preschools retain teachers?

The following sections address the research questions that guided the study by explaining the methodology employed; study participants, instrument, procedure for and type of data collected. The results of the data analysed are presented and discussed in a descriptive manner under the results and discussions section.

METHODOLOGY
This study employed a qualitative approach to data collection to explore the views of school administrators on teacher recruitment in early childhood institutions within the private sector. This approach became necessary as this study “emerg
during the process of the research rather than being predetermined at the outset of the study” (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark & Clegg Smith, 2011 pp7). Nyarko and Addo (2013) quantitatively studied the factors that influenced teacher-child interaction and found that most of the preschool teachers were not qualified and their qualifications did not predict teacher-child interactions. They therefore recommended that a qualitative approach be used to investigate how preschool teachers were recruited and retained.

Information on teacher recruitment for preschool was determined through semi-structured interviews. These were conducted for administrators (heads, directors and proprietors) of private preschools. The aim was to find out how they recruited, motivated and retained teachers for preschool classes (i.e. crèche, nursery and kindergarten).

**Participants**

Twenty (20) pre-school administrators were selected for the study. Participants were sampled using the purposive sampling procedure. They were chosen based on the following: they had to hold an administrative position (head/proprietor/director of the preschool), be involved in the recruitment and retention of teachers for preschool, and be willing to participate. They were interviewed to elicit information on preschool teacher recruitment, teacher benefits, professional development and expectations of teachers in preschools.

**Ethical considerations**

Ethical clearance was granted by the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Research – Institutional Review Board from the University of Ghana -ref protocol # 070/12-13. The researcher also worked in accordance with the prescribed set of procedures of the University. Thus, administrators were informed of the purpose of the research and signed consent forms as voluntary anonymous participants.

**Procedure**

Letters of introduction introducing the researcher and the research were sent to the heads of the preschool institutions. An interview date was scheduled to meet the heads of institutions that consented to participate in the study.

On the scheduled date, a semi-structured interview guide was used to elicit school administrators’ views on teacher recruitment. An interview lasted between 30min to 1 hour 30 min.

**Data Analysis**

Administrators’ responses to the research questions formed the data for this study, and thematic content analysis procedures were used to make sense of them (Creswell, 2014). This entailed first coding individual administrator responses, then gathering the codes into different categories which were allocated names representing their content (Peterson, 2014). The categories were then joined into themes from which the researcher could identify pattern/s, which formed the basis of the findings (Creswell, 2014; Bryman, 2008). In the findings, participants are identified through reference to a number assigned to the administrator in the data sets. Where three or more administrators have expressed the same ideas up to two quotes are used to support a theme. The findings are presented in the results section.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Administrators that took part in the interview oversaw schools that had existed from 1 year to 21 years (Table 1). Fifty percent (50%) of the schools were between 1-5 years old. This is evident to the evolving nature of the early childhood sector. Between the academic years 2013/2014 and the 2014/2015 academic years alone, Ministry of Education (2015, p2) reports an increase in the number of private preschool i.e. Crèche from 5,375 to 5,899 and Kindergarten (KG) from 6,608 to 7,132.

**Characteristics of Schools of participating Administrators**

*Table 1: Age of Schools of Administrators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Type of Early childhood programme offered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Programmes offered by the Schools</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool (Crèche to KG) only</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool to Junior High School</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrators’ schools either offered Preschool (from crèche to kindergarten) services only or Preschool (kindergarten) and basic education up to junior high school services as shown in Table 2 above.

The author observed that the schools that had been in ‘business’ for over 10 years were the schools that started out as pre-schools and ‘graduated’ into basic schools. Most of the schools that offered pre-school services only admitted children from 3 months to 5 years. Those with a focus on primary school preferred older babies. One administrator belonging to the kindergarten to basic school criteria had this to say ‘When they are a little old it is easier to care for them’, (P02). Another in the same category also commented that ‘It is too much work when they are little so I prefer it when they are aged two or can at least walk’ (P013).

One administrator whose school focused on preschool only had this to say as her reason for starting a school. “You see when I had my second child, I had to work and as a result when my maternity leave was over I would send my son 4 months at the time to a nearby pre-school. In fact, this woman used her garage as a classroom for the children and you can imagine the heat. Even though the setting was neat ventilation was bad and my baby always had heat rashes. I told myself that one day I will establish a facility where children whose mothers had to work could bring them, leaving with peace of mind. Parents have asked us to establish a primary school as well but no. Our focus is 0-5 years”. (P03)

Recruitment Processes of School Administrators.

How school administrators of preschools recruit teachers for the pre-school classes

From figure 1 below four themes emerged under Administrator’s forms of recruitment. They relied on the National Nursery Teacher Training Centre for teachers (NNTTC) and the social welfare training centres. These were the few government funded certificate awarding training centres. Other means were through teachers dropping by seeking employment. Such applications were filed by some administrators and when there was a vacancy these prospective teachers stood a chance of being interviewed and employed. Some administrators also chose the formal means by advertising positions available in the form of posters (usually a printed out vacancy note/message on white sheets and/or through newspaper publications). Balter and Duncombe (2008) found that most districts advertised openings in local newspapers and on the Internet; work with local colleges by supervising student teachers, posting job notices on campus, and contacting college faculty. The last two modes mentioned were interesting. First, recommendations from teachers already in the schools could gain someone a job as a preschool teacher in that same school. It was uncertain whether the recommending teacher received any bonus(es). Secondly, administrators valued recommendations from parents of the children in their school.

Most administrators assessed prospective teachers through interviews ‘...I conduct an interview; the assessment is both oral and writing-if you can write well then...’ (P014). The interview was the main assessment mode.

Factors influencing teacher recruitment in ECCD settings.

Administrators’ expectations regarding the Gender of Prospective Teachers in Pre-Schools

All administrators preferred females for crèche and nursery one. Two (2) of the administrators were prepared to settle for male teachers in the kindergarten classes. Those who preferred females gave the reasons summarised in Table 3 below.
Cleaning the children up after they have soiled themselves (Biological)- An administrator echoes that ‘I am comfortable with females. Women are generally very kind hearted towards children, not rigid like men’ (P03). Others add ‘because they are more gentle’ (P10). Females were preferred ‘because they have the heart for the job’ (P11) and ‘because they are motherly and can handle babies’ (P12).

They were sensitive and mothered the children (nurturing) – ‘Females are more nurturing, cleaning the children when they have ‘pupued’, vomited. Males are 2 out of 10’ (P04). ‘females are more comfortable with handling children’s diaper issues’ (P06), ‘females are nurturing and males don’t like ‘pupu’ issues’ (P07). Females, because they handle the children well, feeding, toiletry. They behave like mothers (P013) and ‘because a man would find it difficult to clean up a child’ (P020). More so because of the nurturing nature of females they will find it easier’ (P08).

To prevent child sexual abuse (preventive) – ‘It was easier and safer for them to clean the children up after they have used the toilet. You know these days because of sexual abuse and the like, it is always better to have females. I cannot trust a man’. … If children are toilet trained and independent, then I don’t mind having a male teacher. But my preference is female” (P08). Another was quick to say that she had a male teacher for KG, ‘but the assistant is female’ (P05).

Teachers’ Qualification(s)
Administrators preferred individuals with a minimum of Junior High School (JHS) leaving certificate for Nursery Attendants. For the class teachers, administrators preferred a minimum of Senior High School (SHS) leaving certificates (table 4 below). Having a certificate from the National Nursery Teacher Training Centre (NNTTC) and or Social Welfare was a plus. In the national minimum guidelines for Kindergartens in Ghana the basic qualifications of personnel are listed as follows;

1. Teachers: Certificate/Diploma in Early Childhood Education/ Basic Education
2. Assistants should have Junior High School, Senior High School, Middle School Certificate
3. Staff must be literate in the local language of the area in which the centre is located.

(Ghana Education Services, 2016 p8).

The results in table 4 below show that administrators expected teachers’ qualifications to be the same as the basic qualifications listed above. Cooper and Alvarado (2006) recommended effective recruitment initiatives such as casting a “wide net” in recruiting including targeting secondary school students. Administrators however preferred an individual with secondary school certificate who had a ‘calling’ and a ‘willing to learn’ (P05) attitude for the job. Only one respondent mentioned that a diploma in Pre-school Education was preferred whilst another administrator of a Montessori school preferred an individual with Montessori training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JHS</td>
<td>20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNTTC</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Welfare</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma in Preschool Edu</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montessori Training</td>
<td>1**</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*For attendants and assistants ** It was a Montessori school

Teachers Years of experience.
When asked the years of experience these school proprietors looked out for when recruiting for the following classes KG, Nursery and Creche it ranged from 0-5 years. Some were not worried about years of experience because they were involved in training but some also admitted that you seldom find a preschool teacher with the number of years’ experience that you would prefer. This revealed the evolving nature of early childhood care. On the other hand, if they were to go by experience these were the years of experience they will look out for. See table 5 below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRECHE</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURSERY</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KG</td>
<td>4-5</td>
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</table>
Some Administrators mentioned they were not keen on the years of experience of prospective teachers because they (administrators) regarded themselves to be trainers. Besides anytime there was a new teacher, these administrators would attach the new teachers to experienced ones as mentees. Below are some of the responses given by administrators who were 'liberal with experience’ (P01). ‘Not exactly interested about experience because I (respondent) am a trainer, we do in service training’, (P04). Another was ‘Not particular about that. However, within a week of employment it will be clear a teacher does not know how to …that teacher is attached to another who is experienced so they learn from that person’ (P06).

Beesley, Atwill, Blair and Barley (2010), discovered that an induction program for new teachers helped in retaining them. This involved attaching them to experienced teachers who helped them with classroom management, instruction in their first years. Having someone to guide and supervise you helped.

There were those administrators who were particular about experience and specified the kind that counted. One stated that ‘Experience counts especially for crèche- being a mother will be counted as experience’ (P08). Another preferred ‘older teachers’ (P05, Private Special School). Another administrator mentioned that ‘Caring for children at home, at Church as a Sunday school teacher and having worked in an establishment like that is counted as experience’ (P07). These experiences administrators believed offered some practical training though informally to prospective teachers. It also throws light on administrators’ appreciation of the lack of skilled professionals and a willingness to use the available personnel.

Other qualities to be considered when recruiting preschool teachers

Responses on other qualities administrators of preschools looked at when recruiting preschool teachers were summarized into ten (10) themes. These include; classroom management, appearance, good interaction with children, response to children’s needs, communication, personal attributes, professional conduct, religious affiliation and spirituality, age and health and medical concerns.

Classroom Management - An administrator wanted a teacher who had the ‘ability to control the class’ (P07). To another administrator classroom management was the ability to ‘relax a child and make her sleep, crawl, write, etc.’ (P012). Obviously a teacher should have ‘patience… I don’t like teachers who shout on children’ (P013). Managing a classroom doesn’t mean shouting.

Appearance – administrators mentioned that prospective teachers had to have a ‘smart look and decent appearance’ (P02; P012; P013), personal presentation-neatly dressed, the way they carry themselves (P05), ‘hair well kept, general body care should be good’ (P015).

Good Interaction with Children – ‘relates well with the children by responding to their need’ (P014). ‘Easily flows with children, cares about them’ (P06), ‘has an interpersonal relationship with the children’ (P06; P015; P014). This information usually was solicited during interviews of these prospective teachers and whilst on probation.

Response to the needs of children -Administrators were particular about how prospective teachers responded to the children in their care. These include ‘Love for children’ (P018; P019), ‘time for children’ (P010), ‘when on probation how you relate with the children’ (P015), ‘I don’t like teachers who shout on children’ (P013). One of the elements of care identified by Tronto (2001) was responsiveness. It is not surprising that administrators looked out for this element in prospective teachers. Children need adults to respond to their needs to build trust as explained by Erickson (Santrock, 2011).

Communication- ‘good grammar’ (P07) and ‘eloquence’ (P02; P05; P015) contributed to this theme. Administrators looked out for prospective teachers who could speak eloquently.

Personal Attributes- administrators mentioned attributes such as ‘patience’ (P02; P07; P09; P010; P013; P019), ‘humility’ (P017), tolerance (P09; P016), ‘ability to adapt (P09) and passion to work (P08), as a quality they would look out for in a prospective preschool teacher.

Professional /Conduct- ‘punctual’ (P03) ‘eagerness to learn’ (P05; P011) ‘easily taking corrections’ (P017), ‘respectful’ (P017) and ‘adhering to educational principles’ (P03) were raised by administrators.

Religious Affiliation/ - some proprietors were open about the religious affiliation of their school and preferred Christians. ‘Religion’ (Christians)(P09) and ‘Religious beliefs because this is a Christian school’ (P02)

Spirituality - administrators saw the job of a preschool teacher as a ‘calling’, ‘willingness to do the ‘ministry’ of caring for children’ (P04).

Age – An administrator mention that ‘the age of the prospective teacher mattered. The teacher has to be any age between 20-30’ (P08), signifying young adulthood. However she was quick to add the person should be ‘mature’ and ‘experienced’ to qualify as a teacher for crèche.

Health /Medical Concerns - Medical exams and concerns because we work with children with very low immunity as such we do not compromise on medical issues. We pay for teachers to have them done before starting work (P01).
Issues that have led to laying off a pre-school teacher.

Just as some administrators looked out for positive qualities for which to retain teachers, there were other negative behaviours that led to a teacher being sacked.

These issues were grouped into six (6) themes and these are: Attitude towards work, Negative relationship towards parents, Negative relationship towards colleagues, Unprofessional behaviour, Abuse of children, not maintaining standards.

Attitude towards work - ‘Absenteeism without permission, and for a longer Period’ (P03; P013), ‘Lateness’ (P04; P07; P020), ‘Non-commitment to work’ (P08), ‘Making calls during class hours and not heeding to cautions’ (P07).

Negative relationship towards parents ‘disrespectful to parents’ (P017), ‘gross insubordination’ (P05) and ‘rudeness towards a Parent’ (P09), ‘asking parents for favours’ (P019).

Negative relationship towards colleagues – ‘Always quarrelling with other colleagues and this is not healthy for the children’ (P011), ‘Causing division and friction like in the case of a ‘headmaster’ who had favourites’ (P05), ‘Not getting along with other staff’ (P06).

Unprofessional behaviour ‘Incompetence’ (P03), ‘Not able to deliver in the classroom/ unable to teach children’ (P01), ‘Not caring for the Children in her care’ (P01; P06), ‘not effectively teaching’ (P03). ‘Not taking their time to explain things to the children in her care’ (P010).

Neglect and abuse of children – ‘not paying attention to all the children’ (P012), ‘not supervising children’ (P018), ‘physically abusing’ (P08; P014) ‘Fingering’ a child or always alone with one particular child’ (P017), ‘taking the children’s things’ (P019; P015).

Not maintaining standards-One respondent mentioned that Speaking of vernacular was prohibited. This raises questions of teaching children in a language that is familiar to them. A teacher here is prohibited from ‘speaking vernacular’ (P015) even if that will help a child to settle.

Strategies used by school administrators to retain preschool teachers

Themes that emerged include giving teachers benefits in kind and or in cash. Benefits in kind administrators listed included – opportunities for professional development, free medical services and gifts. The other benefits in cash were financial support, transport allowance etc.

Teacher Benefits Offered to pre-school teachers in your school

All administrators offered teachers free lunch. This is positive as it will keep the teachers within the school compound. They do not have to travel far to buy lunch.

Professional development-Most administrators organised ‘in-service training’ (P02; P04; P014) for their teachers. Teachers could ‘further their education’ (P01) as long as it was not going to disrupt the school’s term activities.

Gifts to motivate good behaviour-Some reported that they gave ‘gifts’ to teachers to ‘motivate good behaviour’. These gifts were given on special occasions like ‘end of year get-together’ (P02), and ‘Christmas’ (P09). An administrator allows the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to nominate a deserving teacher for a gift.

Financial Support-These included ensuring ‘salary increment at end of year’ (P08; P13), ‘paying teachers on time by 24th of month’ (P06). ‘Giving teachers a soft loan to care for personal issues’ (P014). Another administrator stated that ‘upon good conduct for five years, a teacher could be given one year’s advance salary if the need arises’ (P019). In cases where teacher’s children are enrolled in the school, ‘free tuition for children of staff in the school’ (P07; P010) is assured. ‘Transport allowance’ (P03; P04; P08) was also offered as support to some teachers.

Though a good number of administrators mentioned that they paid the ‘social security’ (P01; P05; P06; P07; P012; P013; P015; P017) of teachers it was dependent on factors like a teacher’s commitment and performance during probation period. While monetary incentives encouraged teacher retention and performance, teacher’s ability (through empowerment) to impact the lives of the children they teach by making a difference in their academic lives was a more effective motivator (Heneman, 1998; Heneman & Milanowski, 1999). This suggests that teacher empowerment efforts were of a necessity.

Medical care-An administrator reported that she goes as far as offering ‘free medical care because her spouse is a medical doctor’ (P010). Another ‘paid hospital bills for teachers’ (P017) and yet another ‘cares for staff when sick’ (P019).

Administrators’ involvement in Teacher training and continuous Education

Of the 20 administrators interviewed, 12 representing 60% reported participating in teacher training and continuous education. This they did through ‘in-service training, invite people from ministry of education to have workshops for teachers, in-house (people from outside) are brought in by the school to train teachers. Once in a while, teachers with ‘education’ background are brought in to train the teachers. The other eight (8) proprietors making 40% answered in the negative. Though they were unable to give any reasons, they mentioned they had done some training in the past.
All twenty administrators agreed to allowing a teacher the opportunity for further education. They however attached some conditions for allowing a teacher time off to study.

**Conditions Administrators set for allowing a teacher to Study**

Administrators agreed they would allow teachers to study during weekends, after work, for a short time, it will be without pay, if it is after school hours and doesn’t coincide with school time and finally if it is a long-distance education. Administrators’ opinions about the price a teacher will have to pay to be released for further studies highlights the truth that though they were willing to let teachers go for further studies, they may not offer the teachers study leave with pay. The best case scenario is when the position of a teacher, if vacant, is given back upon return after further studies whereas the worst case is a complete resignation on the part of the teacher. Or at best on your return after further studies if the position is vacant, it can be given to you. ‘If it’s longer than two weeks, I will have to arrange with her to receive maybe half pay and or get a trusted person who can teach to replace you, that is all’ (P03). Another responded, ‘we don’t pay salaries but we reinstate the teacher after training’ (P020), another suggested that the said teacher ‘may have to leave post where necessary’ (P06). One administrator insisted that ‘if we are sponsoring, she will have to sign a bond to come back’ (P012), or as another stated ‘you resign’ (P013).

All administrators preferred an online option of study for their teachers.

**Limitations of the study**

Qualitative findings may be limited by the capacity to draw inferential generalizations (Atieno, 2009; Griffin, 2004). The study utilized data from a small sample size of 20 school administrators, which may not be representative of all preschools. It also focused on perspectives of administrators of privately run preschools. It could be argued that the private sector was ahead in terms of preschool education as such the study focusing on them. This is not entirely the case as there are few public preschools. The author noted that the public preschools started from KG level, and teachers were posted to districts to be further posted to schools. Heads of public KGs often had no control over teacher recruitment. It would have been interesting to compare both recruitment and retention processes in the two sectors.

**Conclusion**

Teacher recruitment and retention is a challenge worldwide. While developing countries are faced with teacher shortage because of increase in access to schools and enrolment, teachers in many western countries are faced with a shortage of minority teachers. Several strategies have been employed to manage the situation. Administrators of private preschools have also responded to the challenge by making use of the ‘willing’ individuals who were prepared to learn to serve as teachers. Policy efforts of government in terms of training preschool teachers have been slow and not many trained preschool teachers were available for employment. Although Ghana has an early childhood policy covering birth to eight years, which incorporates previous child related policies, the guidelines for recruiting personnel for early childhood is specific to kindergarten only. At the time of writing this paper, there was no document responding to staff recruitment for childcare (for children 0-3years) facilities. The administrators interviewed were prepared to recruit willing individuals and as trainers train these teachers on the job. This has implications on the type and quality of training and eventually on the teachers’ childcare practices. The reason being that these trainings are not based on any nationally standardised modules. Hence, private preschools are ‘plagued’ with teachers with all kinds of background training. Preference for female teachers further buttresses the view of Bem in that we are socialised to see things through the society we live in. In Africa and in Ghana particularly, we are socialised to see a woman as nurturant and thereby responsible for the care of children. Motherhood counted as worthwhile experience. It is no wonder this idea has transferred into recruiting of teachers for preschool classrooms. It may seem logical to have females as preschool teachers, however it is suggested that future national policy address the incorporation of males as role models for the holistic development of the nation’s young children.

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