

Recruitment and Retention of Early Childhood Educators in Ghana

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine factors that influences and shapes early childhood educators decision to choose early childhood education as a profession, and also to determine their level of job satisfaction and intention to stay at their jobs. As part of the aims of the study, recruitment processes prevalent at the study area with regards to early childhood education was also investigated. Purposive sampling was used where 143 early childhood educators from public and private early childhood centers volunteered to participate in the study. Using a descriptive (quantitative) research method of the survey type, questionnaires were administered to participants. In all, four research questions and two hypothesis guided the study with participants ranking love of teaching at the early childhood level and teaching in general as the most important reasons for choosing early childhood as a career, and good salary and job security been the lest of the factors influencing career choice. Also, overall responses by participants reflected job satisfaction though most participants had intentions to leave their jobs. With regards to recruitment processes, 'word of mouth' and 'walk-in' as opposed to advertisements in the media served as the most sourced channel of job advertisement.

Keywords: Career choice, early childhood education, job satisfaction, retention

INTRODUCTION

In Ghana just as in many other African countries around the world, there is evidence to the fact that there is a short supply of qualified early childhood educators which makes it a challenge in providing quality early childhood education for all. The Ministry of Education of Ghana (MOE, 2011) based on its education statistics of that period state; of the 31, 500 early childhood educators in the country as at that period, a whopping 62% were untrained. In fact the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); International Bureau of Education (IBE) country profile on early childhood care and education programs in Ghana for the year 2006 pegged the number of trained early childhood educators at 22.2%. Of course every institution or educational program undoubtedly is measured based on the skills, knowledge and abilities of its staff and personnel in that program, hence it comes as no surprise that Ghana is challenged when it comes to the provision of effective quality early childhood education.

A competent early childhood educational workforce capable of been able to work with various stakeholders (children, parents, colleague educators, and the community at large) in the integration of the early child into mainstream education is extremely necessary (McCain & Mustard, 1999). In Ghana, as the need and demand for early childhood education represented as education from birth through age eight continues to expand at an unprecedented proportion (Sivan, 2010), definitely the need for qualified and competent educators to manage such an important educational sector has become necessary. There is growing interest on the part of

stakeholders of early childhood education in matters of who teach at the early childhood level, and most importantly the commitment of those vested with such responsibilities especially at such a delicate and sensitive period of the child's educational development. This interest is partly informed by the tremendous challenge associated with identifying, recruiting, and retaining the best caliber of staff for such an important sector of the Ghanaian educational enterprise, and also the proliferation of early childhood centers especially by private individuals and organizations. Hence, this study looks at factors that affect the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators in Ghana.

In the case of Ghana, it would be of interest both practically and theoretically to understand the career choice of early childhood educators, what attracts them to work at the early childhood level, their satisfaction with working conditions, and perception about their long term plans as far as their stay at that sector is concerned. This study intends to make a critical study of the above highlighted issues and is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine factors that affects recruitment and retention of early childhood educators in the Tamale municipality.
2. To determine early childhood educators' level of satisfaction at their respective jobs.
3. To determine if early childhood educator's intend to stay at their respective jobs, and
4. What tools or procedures are used in recruitment of early childhood educators?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recruitment and Retention as phrases are interpreted and understood differently depending on the context in which they are used. However, for the purposes of this study; recruitment is used as the processes involved in the hiring or employing of early childhood educators, while retention is viewed as factors that influences the early childhood educator to stay at the new found job.

Literature on recruitment of early childhood educators especially in Ghana is very scanty if not unavailable. However, Olson (2002) argues that attracting and retaining highly qualified professionals into early childhood care and education remains such a challenge. Writing on factors that makes the profession unattractive; Whitebrook, Howes, & Phillips (1998) argues that it is one of the most poorly paid professions in the teaching field. In fact, the challenge of recruitment is even more profound in the difficulty in retaining the few qualified staff in the field. For example, Whitebrook et al (2001) opines that those who teach young children even though are relatively educated; nonetheless there is concern the few educated will leave to be replaced by less qualified staff.

There is no doubt that the essence of every institution is its ability to attract and retain first – class academic staff (Horwitz, 1991; Ssekamwa, 1999), and the early childhood profession arguably is no exception. However, just like most professions, employee retention has been a major challenge for most organizations and institutions. Literature abound when it comes to factors that influences an employee to stay at the job or quit. Most of the literature provided though sourced from the corporate business environment yet are relevant and applicable to this study.

On the question of factors that may motivate employees to stay at their job, one of the sticking out factors as revealed in the literature is remuneration represented as salary packages. For example, Shoaib, et al (2009) stresses that attractive remuneration packages are one of the very important factors of retaining employees because as the authors put it, it fulfills the financial and material desires of the employee. This position is well articulated in some studies (see; Manlove & Guzel, 1997) where better wages or compensations are described as

important factors in teacher retention. Again, Tettey (2006) opines that dissatisfaction with salaries is one of the key factors undermining the commitment of academics to their institutions and career hence a recipe to quit.

Deviating from financial rewards as incentive to retention, Dockel (2003) calls for employees not to be rewarded financially instead the offering of opportunities for workers to grow within the institution. Contributing to this position, Chew (2004) is of the view that compensation devoid of financial inducements provides employees recognition and appreciation of their contribution to the growth of the organization. Price (2001) uses the phrase; distributive justice. According to the author, it is the extent to which punishments and rewards are meted to employees relative to performance. A number of studies (see; Haarand and Spell, 2009, in Kipkebut, 2010) have affirmed distributive justice as being an important ingredient in employee retention. Aside fairness at work place, Daly et al (2006) observes that heavy workloads including assignments to teach large class sizes mostly generate hostility towards the institution and may lead to leaving the job. The above notwithstanding, there are others such as Mitchell et al (2001) who contend that some employees may leave with reasons unrelated to their jobs.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In attaining the objectives guiding this study, four research questions were formulated to direct the study. The questions are:

1. What factors influences Early Childhood Educators in the Tamale municipality of Ghana's career choice?
2. What is the job satisfaction level of Early Childhood Educators in the study area?
3. What are the ratings of participants in this study relative to their intention to stay at their jobs in the study area?
4. To what extent does contacts, connections and advertisements affects Early Childhood Educators recruitment?

METHODOLOGY

The trust of this study was to determine factors that inform early childhood educators' choice of their profession and their level of job satisfaction, as well as their intention to stay at their job place and what informs or influences such decisions. Perspectives were sought from educators who served as participants for the study. The instrument used in data collation was a questionnaire of closed and open-ended items because it was deemed as appropriate in a study of this sort and also convenient and easy to administer. In all, the questionnaire consisted of five sections with section A capturing the demographic data of participants whiles subsequent sections addressed the four research questions that guided the study. Population sampling was done through purposive sampling where questionnaires were administered to early childhood educators in 32 public and private early childhood centers in the Tamale municipality of the Northern region of Ghana who volunteered to participate in the study. 160 questionnaires were administered with 143 returned fully or partly answered.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 1 exhibits the findings for research question one. In respect of gender profile in early childhood care environment, 78% (n=111) of educators surveyed in this study were females with only 22% (n=32) males. However, when teachers were asked why they found themselves in early childhood centers, 35.6% (n=51) stated love of teaching in general was the prime factor. 49.6% (n=71) said love of early child care compelled them to accept appointment at the

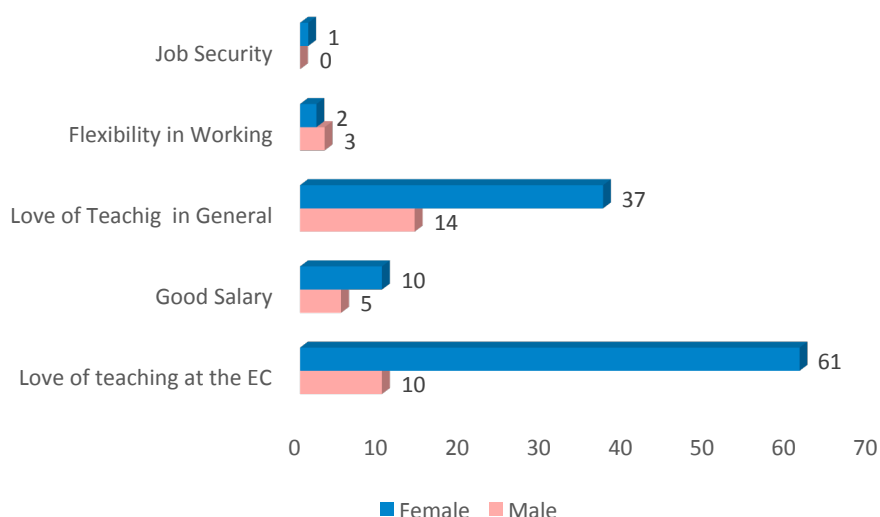
early childhood level, with only 3% (n=5) of participants indicating flexibility of work as a factor. Also in Table 1, 10% (n=15) of participants indicated good salary as a reason for their choice in early childhood education while 0.6% (n=1) indicated job security. The gender distributions of participants relative to response on attractions to early childhood education are represented in Figure 1 of this study.

Table 1: Reasons to work at EC level Crosstabulation

| Count | | Reasons to work at EC level | | | | | Total |
|-------|--------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------|
| | | Love of teaching at the EC | Good Salary | Love of Teaching in General | Flexibility in Working | Job Security | |
| Sex | Male | 10 | 5 | 14 | 3 | 0 | 32 |
| | Female | 61 | 10 | 37 | 2 | 1 | 111 |
| Total | | 71 | 15 | 51 | 5 | 1 | 143 |

Figure 1

Choice of Early Childhood Career and Gender



With respect to research question two; early childhood educators job satisfaction level in the study area, descriptive statistics scores as presented in Table 2 shows; Kindergarten educators were 55% (n=75) of the sample used in this study. However, 13% (n=17) of educators worked at the crèches in the municipality, and 32% (n=44) worked at nursery. The mean scores for the educators' job satisfaction were computed within the 95% C.I. Thus, on a scale of 1 to 5, early childhood educators at the crèche level will score mean values between 1.7 and 2.19 (Strongly Satisfied), while those at the nursery will score between 2.0 and 2.5 (Satisfied), and those at kindergarten will score 2.2 to 2.4 (Satisfied).

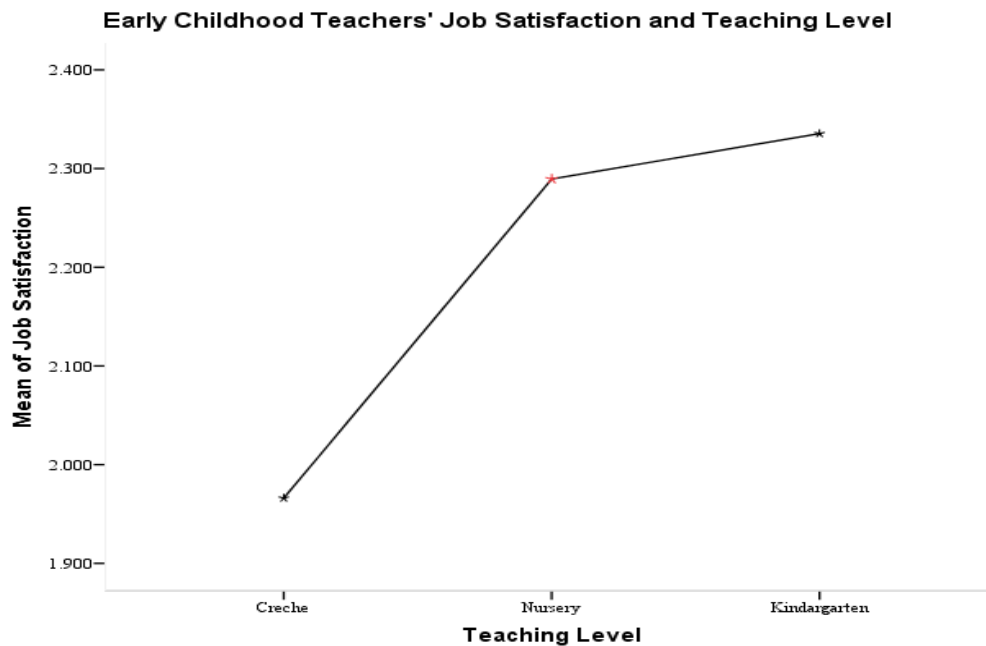
Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Early Childhood Educators' Job Satisfaction

| N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% CI | |
|---|------|----------------|------------|--------|-------|
| | | | | Lower | Upper |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Crèche | 17 | 1.96611 | .430090 | .104312 | 1.74497 | 2.18724 |
| Nursery | 44 | 2.28939 | .746045 | .112471 | 2.06258 | 2.51621 |
| kindergarten | 75 | 2.33540 | .583447 | .067371 | 2.20116 | 2.46964 |
| Total | 136 | 2.27435 | .632384 | .054226 | 2.16711 | 2.38160 |

Early Childhood Educators mean plots are shown in Figure 2, indicating that crèche teachers scored highest on job satisfaction scale relative to other educators in the study.

Figure 2



In addition, the study further subjected the descriptive scores on educators' job satisfaction to significance testing using the one-way ANOVA for Hypothesis 1(early childhood educators' mean scores will not differ significantly across the three levels). The Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was violated ($p < .05$) in this study (Table 3).

Table 3: Test of Homogeneity of Variances

| Job Satisfaction | | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|------|
| Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
| 3.498 | 2 | 133 | .033 |

Table 4: ANOVA Job Satisfaction

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|------------|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 1.905 | 2 | .952 | 2.432 | .092 |
| Within Groups | 52.083 | 133 | .392 | | |
| Total | 53.988 | 135 | | | |

In addition to the above, a further probe into early childhood educators' intention to stay at their job was done. When asked to indicate their willingness to stay at their current jobs as

early childhood educators, in sharp contrast to responses of being satisfied with their jobs as revealed in responses to research question 2; 75% (n=102) indicated “No”, with mean score ranged between 1(Strongly Satisfied) and 2 (Satisfied). Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Educators’ Intention to Stay Using Categorical Measures

| intention to stay | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|-------------------|-----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| Yes | 34 | 1.21 | .410 | .070 |
| No | 102 | 1.09 | .285 | .028 |

In fact the high attrition rate of early childhood educators represented in their intent to leave their jobs is evidenced in the results provided in Table 6. A look at the number of years of service (tenure) reveals that 79% (n=34 plus n=79) had worked between below a year and five years, hence Table 6 validates intention of educators to leave their jobs.

Table 6: school type tenure Crosstabulation Count

| school type | Tenure | Tenure | | | | Total |
|--------------|--------|------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------|-------|
| | | Less than a year | 1-5 years | 6-10 years | 15-20 years and above | |
| private | | 32 | 61 | 12 | 0 | 106 |
| public | | 2 | 18 | 11 | 5 | 37 |
| Total | | 34 | 79 | 23 | 5 | 143 |

Aside determining early childhood educators’ intention to stay, the study went further to investigate recruitment practices among early childhood education centers in the Tamale municipality. The relationship between contacts, connections, and advertisement were explored. Using a Chi-square statistics, data from 131 responses were used to test Hypothesis 2; that there will not be any statistical association between ‘whom you know’ and recruitment procedure.

Table 7: Contacts and Connections * Recruitment Source Crosstabulation

| | | Recruitment Source | | | Total |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| | | Radio/TV/Newspaper Advertisement | Walked to the School to Enquire | Word of Mouth/through someone | |
| | Count | 1 | 11 | 29 | 41 |
| Contacts and Connections | Yes % within Contacts and Connections | 2.4% | 26.8% | 70.7% | 100.0% |
| | % of Total | 0.8% | 8.4% | 22.1% | 31.3% |
| | Count | 14 | 50 | 26 | 90 |
| | No % within Contacts and Connections | 15.6% | 55.6% | 28.9% | 100.0% |
| | % of Total | 10.7% | 38.2% | 19.8% | 68.7% |
| Total | Count | 15 | 61 | 55 | 131 |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| % within Contacts and Connections | 11.5% | 46.6% | 42.0% | 100.0% |
| % of Total | 11.5% | 46.6% | 42.0% | 100.0% |

Table 7 shows descriptive statistics for the two categorical factors explored for Hypothesis 2. The results revealed that 88% (n=116) of early childhood educators who responded to this question mentioned word of mouth/through someone and walked in for enquiries as the main sources of recruitment. Only 12% (n=15) of educators in the study indicated that they got hint of job openings in their respective job places through radio, television, and newspaper commercials. Indeed, 69% (n=90) of participants in this study indicated that their job was obtained without 'whom you know' syndrome with 31% (n=41) acknowledging that contacts and connections were key for their recruitments into teaching at the early childhood level. As a result of this, the Pearson's Chi-square test was used to establish the statistical significant relationship between contacts, connections, and sources of advertisement for early childhood centers. Table 8 shows a highly statistical relationship ($p < .05$) between the factors. Consequently, it is appropriate for the null hypothesis that advertisement, contacts, and connections would not be related in this study.

Table 8: Chi-Square Tests for Hypothesis 2

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 20.970 ^a | 2 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 21.822 | 2 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 19.141 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 131 | | |

CONCLUSION

Considering the place and importance of early childhood education in the total educational process of the child, this study sought to determine what factors informs the career choice of early childhood educators and most importantly to gauge the intentions of educators to stay at their job. Results revealed in this study indicates that with specific reference to choice of early childhood education as a career, love of teaching at that sector ranks high with good salary and job security lingering at the bottom. Thus, these findings replicates other studies that state that financial consideration may not be the most reason for people picking up certain jobs (see for example; Mitchell, 2001; Dockel, 2003; Chew, 2004). Indeed as revealed in this study a greater majority of educators choose to work at the early childhood level devoid of financial consideration.

A hypothesis regarding differences among early childhood educators level of job satisfaction was retained. Descriptive statistics among three groups of educators in this study revealed differences in the mean scores of participants but when placed on ANOVA no significant differences were detected. This notwithstanding, findings on the intention of educators to stay were negative. In fact majority of educators contrary to their level of job satisfaction had intentions to leave. Reasons to the contradiction were not investigated by the study and this is worth pursuing in future studies. Finally, a second hypothesis that there will not be any statistical association between 'whom you know' and recruitment procedures were rejected.

Findings revealed that most educators got hint of job openings through 'walk-in' and 'word of mouth'.

Stemming from the forgoing findings, the contributions of this study towards career choices and retention of early childhood educators though not exhaustive, cannot be disputed. In fact the study provides an insight into what informs early childhood educators' choice of working at the early childhood level. Information of this sought naturally should be useful in any recruitment process and most importantly its enhancement should affect retention (Torquiti, Raikes & Huddleston-Casas, 2007). This notwithstanding, the study fell short in determining what influences the factors identified in the findings and how they can be enhanced especially with regards to an immaterial variable such as love of teaching. Future studies in this direction are needed. In addition, it is also revealed that early childhood educators based on their responses are satisfied with their jobs but are however unwilling to keep their jobs. A disconnection of this type warrants a probe into why this is the case. Definitely, job satisfaction should have a positive correlation with job retention but this is not the case as pertain to educators involved in this study. Finally and most importantly, this study brings to the fore recruitment processes surrounding early childhood education in the study area. 'Word of mouth' and 'walk-in' served as the bane of recruitment in the Tamale municipality. Why this is the case is worth investigating and it should be directed to heads of early childhood centers.

It is important to note that this study as limited as it is has succeeded in contributing to the discussion surrounding effective early childhood educational practices within the Ghanaian society. Results even though limited to a small location of Ghana; Tamale municipality, the findings by extension are useful to early childhood educational practices in Ghana as a whole and the world at large. These contributions can be relevant in the spectrum of providing information relative to what informs early childhood educators' choice of early childhood as a profession, their level of job satisfaction, intention to stay, and how they got hint of vacancies at their respective jobs. Such information undoubtedly serves as an addition to every efficient and effective recruitment program. After all, the success of an organization depends on the quality of staff, and one cannot attract the right staff if one is oblivious of what inspires them. Hence, it will be convenient to conclude that this study provides important insight in the discussion of teacher recruitment especially at an important sector of the educational enterprise; early childhood education.

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