



## ADDRESSING TEACHER ATTRITION IN THE NKORANZA NORTH DISTRICT: INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING EDUCATORS IN GHANA

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**ABSTRACT:** *There appears to be a massive exodus of teachers from the educational field to other sectors in Ghana. Educational scholarships in Ghana, however, have centred more on the role of teachers in educational outcomes than on teacher turnover in underserved areas. This study delves into the persistent issue of teacher attrition in the Nkoranza North District of Ghana, seeking to understand the root causes and propose effective retention strategies. The study employed a qualitative research approach with a narrative design to gather data from 30 participants using focus group discussions and personal interviews. The collected data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis. The major findings reveal a consensus among participants on the pivotal role of salary increments, professional development opportunities, recognition of the teaching profession, involvement of teachers in policy-making, and prioritising teacher well-being in mitigating attrition. To address this critical issue, a multifaceted approach focusing on competitive salaries, on-going professional development, involvement in policy decisions, recognition, and holistic teacher well-being support is recommended to foster a motivated and dedicated teaching workforce, ultimately benefiting the education system in the Nkoranza North District and beyond.*

**KEYWORDS:** Teacher, Attrition, Salary, Education, Nkoranza, Ghana.



## INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a fundamental role in advancing any country's education system. For a nation to achieve its educational goals, it is imperative to have an accountable and responsive educational system that focuses on recruiting, training, and retaining skilled and high-performing teachers (Elyashiv, 2019; Farmer, 2020). However, a significant challenge has emerged, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa's secondary school levels, where keeping teachers or academic staff has become problematic (Opoku et al., 2020).

Although, the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers are global challenges, with England and the USA experiencing attrition rates of 11% - 13% and 7% - 8% respectively (Craig, 2017; Elyashiv, 2019; Gallant & Riley, 2017), developing nations, like those in Sub-Saharan Africa, face even higher shortages, with attrition rates ranging from 5% to 30%. This issue was predicted to hinder the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDGs) (Madigan & Kim, 2021). Factors such as increased student enrolment, financial constraints, and teacher job dissatisfaction exacerbate the situation (Elyashiv, 2019; Farmer, 2020; Kukano, 2020).

Ghana, like many other African nations, views education as a crucial tool for national development. To improve access, pre-tertiary education in Ghana was made entirely free, leading to a higher demand for teachers. However, according to the Ghana Education Service (GES, 2022), teacher attrition rates in Ghana vary from 7% to 15%, including that of the Nkoranza North District in the Bono East Region. The implementation of educational programs, such as Universal Basic Education, has led to a significant increase in school enrolments (GES, 2022). However, teachers continue to leave the profession for various reasons, including perceived financial and non-financial rewards compared to other careers.

According to Miller (2018), since Ghana gained independence, its education sector has been grappling with numerous challenges. These difficulties encompass inadequate funding, insufficient facilities, limited enrolment opportunities, and scarcity of trained teachers, particularly in remote regions (Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015; Opoku et al., 2020; Whalen et al., 2019). Among these issues, teacher shortage stands out as a persistent and intractable problem, partly driven by low rates of teacher training, poor teacher retention, and high attrition rates (Opoku et al., 2021). Despite implementing measures such as the Single Spine Pay Policy and the Best Teacher Award Program, the state has struggled to prevent a significant number of teachers from leaving the profession annually (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019). Even with the assignment of over 20,000 teachers to various schools each year, the average teacher-to-student ratio remains around 1:75 in most schools, far exceeding the recommended ratios of 1:45 for elementary schools and 1:35 for senior high schools. This indicates a pressing need for teachers in both elementary and senior high schools (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019; Opoku et al., 2020).

Regrettably, the rate at which teachers abandon their profession for alternative careers is alarming. In 2021 alone, almost 44,000 basic school teachers reportedly left the teaching profession (G.E.S., 2022). Despite discussions in academic and workplace settings about factors affecting teachers, instructional quality, and student performance, little attention has been given to the escalating rate of teacher attrition or turnover within Ghana's education system, along with potential strategies to address this problem.



In the Nkoranza North District, Table 1 indicates the incrementally high rate of teacher attrition in the District. From September, 2019 to March, 2023, two hundred and twenty-eight (228) teachers had left the service. This means that averagely, 45.6 teachers leave the service every year and this is set to be higher because the range of teachers leaving from 2019 to 2023 is 145. This means that in the next 5 years, 725 teachers would have left the service. This is a worrying situation and poses a great risk to the future of education in the Nkoranza North District.

**Table 1.1: Employees' Turnover Data from 2019-2023**

Year	Number of Teachers who left the teaching profession in Nkoranza North District.
2019	20
2020	10
2021	21
2022	165
2023	11 ( January –March)

**Table 1: Teacher Attrition Rate in Nkoranza North**

*Data Source: Nkoranza North District Education Directorate (2023)*

Many researchers have investigated the prevalence and cause of teacher attrition in Ghana. Acheampong and Gyasi (2019) identified several factors contributing to instructors leaving the teaching profession in the Bono East Region, which includes low pay, stringent autocratic leadership, and lack of recognition. Opoku et al. (2020), using a qualitative approach, found a high prevalence of teacher attrition rate in the Northern Region of Ghana and attributed this to the presence of job alternatives, low salaries and general job dissatisfaction. In a comprehensive study of teacher job satisfaction among teachers, Turner (2021) identified poor salaries, absence of professional development opportunities and lack of career prospects as some of the disincentives of the teaching profession in Kumasi and the push for high attrition rates among teachers.

While these studies made significant findings as regards teacher attrition, they did not consider smart strategies that could be used to address teacher attrition in the specific region of the Nkoranza North District. This study nuances this debate in critical literature on education by investigating the engendering factors of teacher attrition as well as the strategies that can be used to address this within the specific context of the Nkoranza North District, using a narrative design of the qualitative approach. This can inform evidence-based policy formulation to address the rate of teacher attrition in the Ghana Education Service. The main objective of the study was therefore to understand why teachers are exiting the teaching profession in the Nkoranza District and the strategies that could be used to address this massive exodus. To achieve this objective, the study raised a number of questions: (1) What are the engendering factors of teacher attrition in Senior High Schools in the Nkoranza North District? (2) What are the strategies that can be used to check the level of teacher attrition in Senior High Schools in the Nkoranza North District? Answers to these questions will add



depth and context to the current understanding of the influencing factors of teacher attrition in Ghana. They will also provide a nuanced perspective that can help researchers and scholars in the education community to develop a more comprehensive and targeted approach to addressing teacher turnover not only in Ghana but also in other similar contexts.

This article is divided into six sections. Section 1 provides a background and justification for the study. Section 2 reviews relevant studies and theories on teacher attrition to provide a foundation for the study. Section 3 details the methodology that was developed to conduct the study, Section 4 contains the findings of the study, Section 5 discusses these findings and Section 6 provides a conclusion and recommendations.

## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Teacher attrition is a critical and complex concept that refers to the phenomenon of teachers leaving the teaching profession or the education system. It involves teachers voluntarily resigning, retiring, or transitioning to other occupations outside of education. Teacher attrition has become a pressing concern in many educational systems worldwide as it directly impacts the quality and stability of the teaching workforce (Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015).

Teacher attrition is a pressing issue in the field of education, and contemporary discourse emphasizes multiple factors contributing to this phenomenon. Research and critical literature highlight challenges such as workload stress, inadequate professional development, low salaries, limited opportunities for career advancement, and lack of administrative support (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019; Craig, 2017; Elyashiv, 2019; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Opoku et al., 2020). Additionally, the impact of socio-political factors, teaching conditions, burnout, and the changing landscape of education, including the shift to online teaching, are crucial aspects discussed in recent literature (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019; Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015; Opoku et al., 2020; Whalen et al., 2019). Some scholars emphasize systemic issues within education systems, discussing policy failures, inadequate funding, and insufficient professional development opportunities as root causes (Farmer, 2020; Gallant & Riley, 2017; Kukano, 2020; Madigan & Kim, 2021). Others focus on the role of leadership and administrative support, the impact of teacher preparation programs, and the influence of external factors like socio-economic conditions (Afful-Broni, 2012; Dampson et al., 2018; Freeman, 2020). Discussions also encompass proposed solutions, including improving teacher training, enhancing working conditions, and reforming policies to provide better incentives and support. While some scholars advocate for higher salaries and improved benefits (Craig, 2017; Elyashiv, 2019; Kukano, 2020), others argue for a re-evaluation of the teaching profession's societal perception to attract and retain talent effectively (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019; Opoku et al., 2020; Turner, 2021). The debates underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of teacher attrition. All these debates fit into a single analytical lens: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory.

This theory was developed by Frederick Herzberg in the 1950s. The theory seeks to explain the factors that influence job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace. According to Herzberg, there are two sets of factors that affect employee motivation and well-being: motivators and hygiene factors (Herzberg, 1968). Motivators are intrinsic to the job itself and contribute to job satisfaction and motivation. These factors are related to the content of the



work and the sense of achievement experienced by employees. When present, motivators lead to positive feelings and a sense of fulfilment (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Examples of motivators include challenging and interesting work, opportunities for personal growth and advancement, recognition for accomplishments, a sense of responsibility, and the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to the organization. Motivators are critical for fostering employee engagement and enhancing job satisfaction.

On the other hand, hygiene factors are extrinsic to the job and are related to the work environment and conditions (Behling et al., 1968; Herzberg, 1968). These factors, when not adequately fulfilled, can lead to job dissatisfaction and a lack of motivation (Alrawahi et al., 2020). Hygiene factors are necessary to prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily lead to job satisfaction. Examples of hygiene factors include salary, benefits, job security, work conditions, company policies, supervision, and interpersonal relationships. If hygiene factors are lacking or unsatisfactory, employees may feel dissatisfied and may be more prone to job dissatisfaction and even turnover (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Herzberg emphasized that motivators and hygiene factors are independent dimensions. Increasing the presence of motivators does not necessarily reduce job dissatisfaction caused by hygiene factors, and vice versa (Mehrad, 2020). For example, increasing salary (a hygiene factor) might prevent job dissatisfaction caused by low pay, but it may not necessarily lead to increased job satisfaction unless motivating factors like challenging work and recognition are also present.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory has been extensively utilized by researchers in the fields of organizational behaviour, human resource management, and employee motivation (Chiat & Panatik, 2019). Researchers have employed this theory to gain insights into employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance within the workplace. One of the primary applications of the theory is in the design of employee satisfaction surveys. Researchers use Herzberg's theory as a foundation for developing surveys that assess employees' perceptions of both motivators and hygiene factors in their work environment (Behling et al., 1968). By understanding the factors that contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, organizations can identify areas for improvement and implement strategies to enhance employee motivation and overall job satisfaction. Moreover, the theory has significant implications for job design and enrichment. Researchers apply Herzberg's model to inform the design of job roles that incorporate motivators, such as challenging tasks, opportunities for growth, and recognition. By structuring jobs in a way that includes these motivators, organizations aim to create more fulfilling and satisfying work experiences for employees, which can lead to higher levels of engagement and productivity (Alrawahi et al., 2020; Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Mehrad, 2020).

In addition, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory is instrumental in employee retention strategies. Researchers recognize the importance of addressing both motivators and hygiene factors to reduce employee turnover and retain valuable talent. Organizations can use the insights provided by the theory to develop retention initiatives that focus on improving job satisfaction and creating a positive work environment. The theory's influence extends to performance management practices as well. Researchers emphasize the significance of recognizing and rewarding employee achievements and contributions to foster a sense of fulfilment and motivation. By incorporating motivators into performance management systems, organizations aim to enhance employee engagement and overall performance. Furthermore, the theory has been applied in leadership development programs. Researchers highlight the importance of effective leadership that not only addresses hygiene factors but also promotes a work environment that fosters the presence of motivators (Alrawahi et al.,



2020; Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Mehrad, 2020). Strong leadership can have a significant impact on employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Additionally, researchers have examined the implications of Herzberg's theory on work-life balance. Understanding how motivators and hygiene factors influence employees' well-being allows organizations to implement policies that support a healthy balance between work and personal life, contributing to overall job satisfaction. Moreover, the theory has been subjected to cross-cultural studies to assess its universality across different cultures and countries. Researchers explore whether the factors identified by Herzberg hold consistent across diverse cultural contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of employee motivation globally (Alrawahi et al., 2020; Chiat & Panatik, 2019).

By understanding Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, employers and managers can design work environments that foster employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Recognizing the distinction between motivators and hygiene factors allows organizations to take a comprehensive approach to employee motivation and create a workplace that supports both the fulfilment of employees' professional needs and the prevention of potential sources of dissatisfaction.

In the context of this study, the researcher found this theory to be very relevant. The theory helped the researcher to identify the factors that contribute to job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among teachers. Consequences of teacher attrition, such as a loss of experienced teachers, disruptions in student learning, and diminished academic performance, can be better understood through this theory. To prevent teacher attrition, strategies must address both motivators and hygiene factors. Providing competitive salaries, supportive work environments, and manageable workloads are essential hygiene factors, while offering professional development opportunities, recognition, and meaningful work are crucial motivators and have been extensively elaborated by this theory. These insights guided the researcher through the formulation of the research questions, the development of methodology, data collection, analysis and interpretation of the results. While the theory was very relevant and was adopted as the main theory guiding the work, Abraham Maslow's Theory of Needs was also adopted as a supporting theory.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a purely qualitative approach with a narrative design to comprehensively explore the nuanced dynamics of teacher attrition. A qualitative approach was chosen to delve deeply into the experiences, perceptions, and narratives of teachers and educationists, allowing for a richer understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to teacher attrition. Expert purposive sampling was utilised to select participants for the study. Twenty-four teachers were chosen for focus group discussions due to their direct experience with the education system, providing valuable insights into attrition. Six other experienced educationists who were in various management positions were selected for personal interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the broader educational context and policy perspectives. The expertise and knowledge of these participants ensured the study's depth and relevance to the field of education.



In all groups, women were adequately represented to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives. Women educators may experience unique challenges and have distinct insights, adding depth to the findings. It also aligns with principles of inclusivity and gender representation in research, ensuring a holistic understanding of teacher attrition. A summary of selected participants is provided in Table 1. Both Focus Group Discussions and personal interviews were employed to triangulate data and provide a comprehensive view. Focus Group Discussions encouraged interactive discussions, allowing participants to build on each other's insights. Personal interviews, on the other hand, provided a more detailed and focused exploration of individual experiences and perspectives. This dual approach ensured a thorough examination of the research questions.

For data analysis, an inductive thematic analysis was chosen. This analytical technique allowed for the emergence of themes directly from the data, enabling a deep exploration of participants' narratives (Creswell, 2019). It is a flexible and systematic method, aligning with the study's qualitative nature and providing a rigorous process to derive meaningful themes and patterns from the collected data. Transcribed interviews were carefully reviewed, coded, and categorised, leading to the identification of salient themes, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the underlying factors contributing to teacher attrition.

**Table 1: Summary of Participants**

Category	Actual Sample Size		Total
Category	Male	Female	
District education officers	3	3	6
Head Teachers	2	2	4
Teachers	11	9	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>

**Source:** *Authors' Composition*

## RESULTS

### Engendering Factors of Teacher Attrition

The analysis of the primary data collected to examine the situation revealed that several factors contribute to teacher attrition in Nkoranza North District. These factors include job dissatisfaction, low salaries, lack of prestige in the teaching profession, indiscipline among students, insufficient infrastructure, and an unfavourable social environment.

### Job Dissatisfaction

Participants explained that many teachers generally feel dissatisfied with their jobs due to the inadequate remuneration they receive. One of them explained the situation to us as this:

Teachers commonly experience dissatisfaction in their jobs due to the treatment they receive. Our well-being is disregarded; there are no incentives provided for accepting postings in remote areas, and no consideration is given to a teacher's health issues. Additionally, we lack



the allowances granted to other professions. These factors intersect and contribute to our desire to leave the teaching profession (Contribution in a FGD by a 35-year-old female teacher at Busunya Senior High school in Nkoranza North District 2023).

This response depicts the overall context of the engendering factors of teacher attrition in Nkoranza North District. It highlights the dissatisfaction among teachers, emphasising how they feel undervalued and neglected in terms of their well-being. The lack of incentives for accepting postings in remote areas and the absence of allowances that are provided to other professions further contribute to their discontent. The response highlights the importance of addressing these issues as significant factors leading to teacher attrition. This means that teachers are of the perception that they are often poorly treated by the government, with their well-being being given the least priority when compared to other professionals. This treatment frequently leads to a sense of dissatisfaction among teachers and prompts them to seek better job opportunities elsewhere.

### **Authoritarianism**

Participants also highlighted the authoritarian approach taken by the management of the Ghana Education Service as a significant disincentive. The lack of consideration for teachers' perspectives in decision-making processes is viewed as a major hindrance. Educational policies often fail to address the specific challenges faced by teachers in their unique contexts. Consequently, teachers feel compelled to seek employment in other sectors where their voices are better heard and incorporated. One of them explained the situation to us as this:

The Ghana Education Service (GES) is perceived to treat its employees poorly, resembling a system of servitude. Communication within the organisation follows a top-down approach, with decisions being made in the offices without considering the practical realities on the ground. The views and insights of classroom teachers are largely disregarded in the formulation of educational policies. As a result, our working conditions become even more precarious, as essential facilities and infrastructure required for effective teaching are often absent (Interview with a 45-year-old male teacher at Busunya Senior High School in the Nkoranza North District, 2023).

This response implies that there is a significant disconnect between the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the teachers it employs. The use of the term "treats its employees like slaves" suggests a perception of mistreatment, exploitation, and a lack of respect for the teachers' profession and contributions.

The mention of top-down communication indicates a lack of meaningful dialogue and consultation with teachers, resulting in policies that may not effectively address the challenges faced in classrooms. By disregarding the perspectives and experiences of classroom teachers, the GES fails to consider the practical implications of its decisions, which in turn negatively impact the working conditions of the teachers. Again, the indication of the absence of necessary facilities and infrastructure highlights a broader issue of resource inadequacy within the education system. This further compounds the challenges faced by teachers, making their work more difficult and less effective.

Participants also indicated that the lack of respect and low social status associated with teachers further contribute to the problem of teacher attrition. This disrespect experienced by





teachers serves as one of the primary factors that lead to their decision to leave the profession. One of the participants explained the situation to us as this:

"In our society, teachers are not afforded the respect they deserve. In Ghana, the teaching profession is often linked with poverty and a modest lifestyle. Merely mentioning that one is a teacher often leads to the perception of belonging to a lower social class. As a result, many individuals are inclined to seek alternative professions that are socially recognized and esteemed as prestigious" (Interview with a 35-year-old male teacher at Osei Bonsu Senior School in the Nkoranza North, 2023).

This response implies that there is a prevalent lack of societal respect and recognition for teachers in Ghana. The statement suggests that teaching is associated with low social status and is perceived as a profession that is not esteemed or valued highly. This societal perception of teachers being of a lower social class contributes to feelings of dissatisfaction and a desire to pursue other professions that offer greater social recognition and prestige.

### **Students' Indiscipline**

Participants also indicated that the high rate of indiscipline in pre-tertiary schools is another great push factor of teacher attrition. They intimated that the new education policy has given so much liberty to students and so the rate of students' indiscipline is very high and this is making people leave the teaching profession. One of them explained the situation to us as this:

The alarming prevalence of indiscipline among students is a significant concern. Individuals who cannot tolerate this situation are seeking a way out (Contribution by a 37-year-old female teacher at Osei Bonsu Senior High School in Nkoranza North District, 2023).

Another individual explained,

The implementation of the new policy has resulted in teachers being unable to discipline students. Additionally, the policy does not allow students to repeat a class due to poor performance, and various other disciplinary measures that were previously in place to maintain discipline in schools have been withdrawn. With the fear of punishment removed, students are now behaving according to their own desire, which is undoubtedly pushing teachers away (Contribution at FGD by a 41-year-old female teacher at Osei Bonsu Senior High School in Nkoranza North District, 2023).

These responses imply that the high rate of indiscipline among students is a significant contributing factor to teacher attrition. The first response suggests that individuals who cannot tolerate the alarming level of indiscipline among students are choosing to leave the teaching profession as a result. The second response highlights how changes in education policies have impacted the ability of teachers to enforce discipline in the classroom. The removal of disciplinary measures, such as punishment and grade repetition, has created an environment where students feel they can behave as they please without consequences. This lack of discipline negatively affects the teaching and learning environment, leading to dissatisfaction among teachers and potentially pushing them to leave the profession.



## **Inadequate School Infrastructure**

Inadequate school infrastructure also came up strongly during the interviews and FGDs as one of the reasons for teacher attrition. Participants indicated that the inadequacy or complete unavailability of some key school infrastructure such as classrooms for students, dormitories and staff accommodation are great disincentives to teachers and sometimes push some of them to find an exit route to other professions. One of the participants explained the situation to us as this:

Ghanaian schools are severely lacking in basic infrastructure, and this situation is highly problematic for those of us who prioritize the well-being of students and ourselves. It is disheartening to witness a significant number of students lacking decent accommodation and being crammed into overcrowded, incomplete classrooms. Moreover, teachers face the challenge of not having suitable living arrangements, often forced to reside in dilapidated structures that are decades old. These dire circumstances are significant factors that drive teachers away from the teaching profession (Interview with a 55-year-old male Circuit Supervisor at Nkoranza North District Education Directorate, 2023).

This response indicates that the lack of basic infrastructure in Ghanaian schools is a significant factor contributing to teacher attrition. The statement emphasizes the concerns of teachers regarding the well-being of both students and themselves. The inadequate infrastructure, such as the absence of decent student accommodation and overcrowded, incomplete classrooms, creates unfavourable learning conditions. Teachers who are passionate about providing quality education may feel frustrated and demotivated by these circumstances. The lack of suitable living arrangements for teachers further compounds the challenges they face, adding to their dissatisfaction and desire to leave the profession. This means that the poor state of infrastructure in Ghanaian schools, affecting both students and teachers, plays a pivotal role in driving teachers away. Addressing these infrastructure deficiencies becomes crucial in improving the teaching and learning environment, enhancing job satisfaction, and reducing teacher attrition rates.

## **Unfavourable Social Environment**

A final factor that came up strongly as an enabling condition of teacher attrition was what participants described as an unfavourable social environment. Participants indicated that teachers, especially those in leadership positions, were many times unreasonably cold towards newly posted teachers or people who are in the early stages of their careers. This makes the teaching environment too hostile and unaccommodating and people tend to give commands rather than engage in constructive discussions that would yield better outcomes while upholding the dignity of every individual. One of the participants explained the situation to us as this:

In the Ghana Education Service (GES), the hierarchy based on seniority is excessive. It is imperative that we undertake efforts to decolonise the teaching profession. We must move away from perpetuating the mistreatment and discrimination that were prevalent during the colonial era, where white individuals positioned themselves superior to black teachers and treated them as lesser beings. Such practices reflect a sense of invincibility and serve to discourage many young individuals from considering teaching as a profession (Contribution



in FGD by a 34-year-old male teacher at Kranka Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

This statement depicts an unfriendly social environment in the teaching sector by highlighting the presence of excessive seniority and the need for decolonization. The reference to the colonial era suggests a historical legacy of mistreatment and discrimination, where white individuals held positions of superiority over black teachers, treating them as inferior. This portrayal of unequal power dynamics and maltreatment implies a hostile and oppressive social environment within the teaching sector. The mention of mistreatment and the perception of being treated as "semi-humans" signifies a lack of respect, dignity, and fair treatment for teachers. Such an environment can foster feelings of frustration, demoralization, and discouragement among young individuals considering teaching as a profession.

### **Participants' Perception of Best Strategies to Address Teacher Attrition**

Participants mentioned various strategies which they perceived as the best alternatives for addressing the high rate of teacher attrition in the Nkoranza North District. These include salary increment, opportunities for professional development, recognition of teaching as the foundation of all professions, involvement of classroom teachers in educational policy formulation and provision addressing issues of teacher wellbeing.

#### **Salary Increment**

Participants indicated that as compared to the other professions, teachers are paid far less and this contributes to the financial difficulties experienced by most teachers, which often result in disrespect to the teaching profession. They expressed the view that salary increment would alleviate financial stress among teachers, making it easier for them to meet their personal and professional needs. Financial stability can reduce distractions and allow teachers to focus more on their teaching responsibilities and professional growth. They further argued that when teachers feel adequately compensated for their efforts, they are more motivated, engaged, and invested in their roles as educators. Higher job satisfaction levels can lead to a more positive work environment and better overall job performance. One of them explained the situation to us as this:

I must admit that while salaries are not the sole motivators of employee commitment and performance, they constitute a large percentage, particularly in this part of the world where poverty stares us directly in the face. When we are well compensated, I believe most of us will love to stay (Contribution at FGD by a 38-year-old male teacher at Busunya Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

Another participant also explained,

When you compare our salaries to other professionals like nursing and pharmacy, we are paid far less than they are. My wife holds a diploma certificate in nursing; I have a Master's Degree, but our salaries are the same. I believe a first-degree holder in nursing may take twice what I take (Contribution at FGD by a 36-year-old male teacher at Busunya Senior High School, Nkoranza North, 2023).



A third participant also nuanced the argument as this:

We teach these people, they go to nursing training, spend two to three years, and the next thing is that they are paid better than you. So, why should I stay? (Contribution by a 29-year-old male teacher at Busunya Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

These statements indicate that salary increment is a crucial and viable strategy for addressing teacher attrition. By offering competitive and equitable salaries that reflect teachers' qualifications, experience, and dedication, educational institutions can demonstrate their commitment to valuing and retaining their teaching workforce. Adequate compensation can serve as a catalyst for improving teacher morale, job satisfaction, and overall retention rates, leading to enhanced educational outcomes and a more stable and motivated teaching workforce.

### **Opportunities for Professional Development**

Participants indicated that in Ghana, professional development opportunities for teachers are well-defined by the Ghana Education Service (GES). However, access to these opportunities is largely restricted and often depends on social and relational connections rather than merit-based selection. This means that teachers who genuinely aspire to enhance their skills and knowledge face hurdles due to the GES's failure to approve their study leave applications or provide them with opportunities to participate in conferences, workshops, and in-service training. The lack of these opportunities serves as a demotivating factor for many teachers and prompts them to consider leaving the teaching profession in pursuit of sectors where they can find better chances to develop their potential. Some of the participants explained to us as these:

Professional development not only helps teachers acquire new teaching methods, but it also enhances their subject expertise, classroom management skills, and overall teaching efficacy. When teachers are equipped with the latest knowledge and best practices, they are more likely to feel competent, confident, and valued in their roles (Interview with a 55-year-old male teacher at Osei Bonsu Senior School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

Access to professional development opportunities signals an investment in teachers' growth and career progression, demonstrating that the education system values their contributions. Teachers who feel supported in their professional development are more likely to remain committed to the teaching profession, knowing that their efforts are recognized and rewarded (Interview with a 48-year-old female teacher at Osei Bonsu Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

These statements highlight the critical role that teacher professional development plays in influencing teacher attrition. By offering meaningful and accessible professional development opportunities, educational institutions can enhance teacher skills, confidence, and job satisfaction. Additionally, the recognition and investment in teachers' growth signal the value placed on their contributions, fostering a positive work environment that encourages teacher commitment and retention. Ultimately, a focus on continuous learning and professional growth can lead to a more dedicated and skilled teaching workforce, contributing to the overall improvement of the education system.



## More Recognition for Teachers

Participants expressed that teachers are the least recognised professionals in Ghana, and this lack of recognition serves as a significant demotivating factor, particularly for younger teachers entering the profession. They described instances where introducing themselves as teachers becomes challenging due to the low esteem associated with the teaching profession. While teachers play a crucial role in shaping future generations and educating individuals who go on to pursue various professions, they often face scorn and disregard in society. Participants indicated that the absence of recognition and appreciation for their hard work and dedication creates a sense of undervaluation among teachers. When individuals invest their time, effort, and expertise into their profession, they naturally desire recognition for their contributions. However, the prevailing negative perception of the teaching profession in Ghana denies teachers the acknowledgment they deserve for their vital role in society. This lack of recognition, they iterated, usually has severe consequences on teachers' morale, job satisfaction, and overall job commitment. When teachers feel undervalued and disrespected, their motivation to continue in the profession diminishes. Many younger teachers, full of enthusiasm and passion for teaching, often consider alternative career paths where they believe their efforts will be more appreciated. One of them explained the situation as this:

We have reached a point where being a teacher is perceived as shameful. Even in church, when we introduce ourselves as teachers, we observe disapproval on people's faces. Such lack of respect towards our profession is disheartening, and it raises the question of why we should choose to remain in a field that faces so much disrespect (Contribution in FGD by a 29-year-old female teacher at Kranka Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

My brother, these days, I prefer to introduce myself as an educationist just to avoid the shame associated with the term 'teacher.' Most of my friends have pursued careers in nursing, law, or engineering. Whenever we are introduced together, I can't help but notice the disapproval of my profession on people's faces. It becomes challenging to endure this constant torment and negative judgment. (Contribution in FGD by a 32-year-old male teacher at Kranka Senior High School, Nkoranza North, 2023).

These statements provide valuable insights into the crucial link between teacher recognition and teacher attrition. They shed light on the significant impact that the lack of respect and recognition for teachers can have on their job satisfaction, morale, and ultimately, their decision to stay or leave the profession. The participants express deep concerns about the societal perception of teachers, highlighting that being a teacher is often associated with shame and disapproval. The negative attitudes towards the teaching profession can lead to feelings of undervaluation and disrespect among teachers, which can be demotivating and disheartening. When teachers constantly face stigmatization and judgment for their career choice, it creates an emotionally taxing environment that can erode their passion for teaching and commitment to their roles.

The participants' experiences of introducing themselves as "educationists" instead of teachers to avoid the associated shame reveal the extent to which teacher recognition impacts their sense of self-worth. The need to conceal their true profession signifies a loss of pride and dignity in being identified as educators. This concealment may also contribute to a sense of isolation and detachment from their true professional identity. In the context of teacher attrition, these statements underline the critical importance of teacher recognition and



appreciation as essential factors in retaining teachers within the education system. When teachers feel valued and respected for their contributions, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction and a sense of purpose in their careers. On the other hand, the lack of recognition and respect can be a significant driver of teacher attrition.

### **Involving Teachers in Policy Formulation**

Participants expressed their concern that teachers are frequently excluded from the educational policy formulation process, which leaves them feeling marginalized, less integrated, and undervalued. Despite being the ones directly involved in the classroom, teachers often find themselves excluded from discussions and decisions that directly impact their work. This lack of involvement in policy formulation creates a disconnection between the policymakers and the educators on the ground.

The participants emphasized that teachers possess valuable insights and practical knowledge about the challenges and needs within the education system. They understand the context-specific issues faced by Ghanaian students and are well-positioned to offer meaningful contributions to policy development. However, the exclusionary nature of policymaking processes denies teachers the opportunity to voice their concerns and perspectives, leading to missed opportunities for meaningful improvement in education. This exclusion also has broader implications for the education system. Some of the participants explained the situation to us as this:

We live in a world where teachers are merely instructed on what to do. Decision-makers sit in their offices in Accra, presuming to know the educational needs of schools situated in diverse contexts. We, as teachers, feel excluded and reduced to mere messengers. Why should we be compelled to stay in a profession where we cannot actively contribute to the decision-making processes that directly impact us?" (Interview with a 51-year-old male teacher at Osei Bonsu Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

"The top-down approach to policy making is exclusionary and alienating, leaving us feeling like we have no agency in our own profession. We refuse to be part of a dictatorial and coercive system. Instead, we aspire to have a voice and be actively involved in making decisions that affect our lives as educators (Interview with a 47-year-old female teacher at Osei Bonsu Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

These statements express teachers' frustration with the prevailing top-down approach to policy making in the education system. The participants point out that policymakers often dictate decisions without seeking input from teachers who work on the frontlines of education. This lack of involvement in decision-making processes makes teachers feel marginalized and undervalued in their profession. By voicing their desire for agency and inclusion, the teachers emphasize the importance of valuing educators' expertise and experiences. They seek a more collaborative and participatory approach to policy making, where teachers are actively engaged and their insights are considered. In doing so, policymakers can ensure that education policies are contextually relevant, effective, and supported by those who are directly responsible for implementing them.



## Ensuring Teacher Wellbeing

Participants indicated that ensuring employee wellbeing by the Ghana Education Service is one of the best strategies to address high teacher attrition rate in the Nkoranza North District. They indicated that apart from issues of salary increment, recognition and professional development, there is a big need to establish policies and practices that promote manageable workloads, reasonable expectations, and adequate time for personal and family commitments. Providing flexibility and opportunities for self-care can help prevent burnout and enhance overall wellbeing. They further indicate that teachers' wellbeing can be enhanced by fostering a positive and supportive leadership culture within educational institutions. Administrators and school leaders could prioritize open communication, collaboration, and the well-being of teachers. Providing mentorship, coaching, and regular feedback can create a nurturing environment that promotes professional growth and personal fulfilment. Participants also indicated the need to promote mental health and wellness initiatives that provide resources and support for teachers. One of them explained to us as this:

“The new education policy, which requires senior high school teachers to remain in school for an entire year, is considered detrimental to their overall well-being and work-life balance.’ (Contribution at FGD by a 38-year-old male teacher at Osei Bonsu Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

Another participant emphasized the need for the state to establish confidential counselling services, workshops on stress management and resilience, and promote self-care practices for teachers. She expressed:

Prioritizing mental health support creates a safe and nurturing environment that enables teachers to flourish both personally and professionally (Contribution by a 35-year-old female teacher at Dromankese Senior High School, Nkoranza North District, 2023).

These statements highlight important strategies for improving teacher wellbeing as a means of addressing teacher attrition in Nkoranza North District. By recognizing and addressing the challenges that teachers face, educational authorities can create a supportive environment that fosters teacher satisfaction and retention. The first statement emphasizes the significance of work-life balance for teachers. Allowing teachers sufficient time to spend with their families and neighbours is essential for their overall wellbeing. The new education policy requiring senior high school teachers to remain in school for an entire year can lead to burnout and decreased job satisfaction. By revisiting this policy and providing teachers with appropriate time off, the education system can show its commitment to valuing teachers' personal lives and mental health, encouraging them to stay in the profession.

## DISCUSSION

The study underscores that teacher job dissatisfaction is a primary contributor to the high rate of teacher attrition in the Nkoranza North District, largely stemming from inadequate compensation and a lack of recognition. This deficiency in support and acknowledgment impacts their overall job satisfaction and motivation to remain in the teaching profession, particularly in remote or underserved areas where incentives for postings are lacking. The absence of allowances exacerbates the sense of disparity and neglect experienced by teachers,



leading to a massive exodus of qualified teachers in these areas. Empirical studies globally confirm that teacher job satisfaction and retention are strongly tied to compensation and recognition (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019; Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015; Semarco & Cho, 2018; Whalen et al., 2019). Adequate compensation and recognition for their contributions significantly influence teachers to stay in the profession (Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015; Opoku et al., 2020).

Again, authoritative leadership styles within the Ghana Education Service were found to contribute to high attrition rates. The authoritative approach disempowers and undervalues teachers, limiting their involvement in decision-making processes and restricting opportunities for professional growth. This leadership style negatively impacts job satisfaction, employee engagement, and ultimately contributes to attrition. In contrast, participative and inclusive leadership styles that involve employees in decision-making processes are linked to higher job satisfaction and employee retention. This aligns with other works of literature that emphasise the role of leadership in employees' job satisfaction levels and employee turnover (Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015; Turner, 2021; Whalen et al., 2019).

Additionally, the study identifies student indiscipline as a significant factor in teacher attrition. The removal of corporal punishments without adequate alternative disciplinary measures results in disruptive classroom environments and increased stress for teachers. The inability to manage student misbehaviour affects job satisfaction and contributes to higher attrition rates. Similar findings are observed in various countries, highlighting the universal impact of student indiscipline on teacher job satisfaction and retention (Effah & Osei-Owusu, 2014; Monk, 2007; Ngwokabuenui, 2015). While this aligns with the traditional view of discipline, it contradicts many scholarly arguments on the effectiveness of corporal punishment in behavioural management (Cherualath & Tripathi, 2015; Dubanoski et al., 1983; Obadire & Sinthumule, 2021).

Inadequate school infrastructure was also found to be a disincentive for teachers, impacting their well-being, job satisfaction, and overall work environment. Insufficient infrastructure affects the teaching-learning process, making it challenging for teachers to provide quality education and maintain a conducive learning environment. This finding aligns with existing literature on school resources which emphasize the role of school physical resources in ensuring positive educational outcomes (Effah & Osei-Owusu, 2014; Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015; Opoku et al., 2020; Semarco & Cho, 2018).

Lastly, an unfriendly social environment, particularly the cold attitudes of experienced teachers towards younger colleagues, was identified as a deterrent for young teachers to remain in the teaching profession. The lack of support and collegiality, especially from teachers in leadership positions, creates a hostile teaching environment, affecting morale and confidence. Existing research consistently emphasizes the crucial role of teacher support, mentorship, and positive relationships among colleagues in enhancing teacher job satisfaction and retention (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019; Effah & Osei-Owusu, 2014; Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015; Whalen et al., 2019).

The study also made significant findings regarding strategies to address teacher attrition in the Nkoranza North District of Ghana. Firstly, participants strongly believed that increasing teachers' salaries would significantly reduce attrition rates by enhancing job satisfaction and commitment. Existing empirical studies from various countries support this belief, indicating





that competitive salaries serve as a powerful incentive for attracting and retaining skilled teachers (Acheampong & Gyasi, 2019; Effah & Osei-Owusu, 2014; Opoku et al., 2020; Turner, 2021; Whalen et al., 2019). Providing avenues for teacher professional development was also identified as a key strategy to reduce attrition. Participants emphasized that access to these avenues based on merit would greatly contribute to teacher retention. This finding aligns with Herzberg's two-factor theory suggesting that professional development opportunities act as motivators and encourage commitment to the teaching profession (Effah & Osei-Owusu, 2014; Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015; Semarco & Cho, 2018).

Furthermore, participants highlighted the importance of recognizing and respecting the teaching profession to prevent attrition. Acknowledging teachers' contributions fosters a positive work environment, enhancing job satisfaction and motivation. The emphasis on recognizing and respecting the teaching profession aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Recognition and respect serve as motivators that enhance job satisfaction and motivation among teachers, contributing to their commitment and reduced attrition. Involving teachers in policy-making was identified as another effective strategy to reduce attrition (Behling et al., 1968; Herzberg, 1968; Mehrad, 2020). When teachers have a voice in decisions affecting their profession, they feel empowered and more committed to their roles. Empirical studies consistently support this, demonstrating that teachers' involvement in policy discussions leads to higher job satisfaction and reduced attrition rates (Alrawahi et al., 2020; Chiat & Panatik, 2019; Mehrad, 2020). Prioritising teachers' well-being also emerged as a crucial strategy to reduce attrition. Adequate attention to workload management, stress reduction, and mental health support creates a supportive work environment, enhancing overall job satisfaction and reducing the desire to leave the teaching profession. This finding aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, highlighting the importance of addressing factors that enhance job satisfaction to retain teachers effectively (Behling et al., 1968; Herzberg, 1968; Mehrad, 2020).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the intricate factors contributing to the high attrition rates among educators in the Nkoranza North District. The findings underscore the critical role of financial incentives, professional development opportunities, recognition of the teaching profession, involvement in policy-making, and prioritizing teacher well-being in mitigating attrition. Participants emphasized the significance of competitive salaries as a tangible recognition of teachers' expertise, aligning with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, where adequate salaries act as motivators to enhance job satisfaction and retention. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing the teaching profession, aligning with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs by addressing the esteem needs of teachers. Involving teachers in policymaking and prioritizing their well-being are additional strategies aligned with Herzberg's theory, fostering a positive work environment and reducing attrition. The multifaceted approach advocated by participants resonates with the understanding that addressing teacher attrition necessitates a comprehensive strategy encompassing various aspects of job satisfaction and well-being. Ultimately, this study advocates for a holistic approach, combining competitive compensation, professional growth opportunities, esteem recognition, policy involvement, and well-being prioritization to



promote a stable and motivated teaching workforce, ultimately enhancing the quality of education in the Nkoranza North District.

Based on the findings the study, the following recommendations are made:

- I. The study revealed that inadequate salaries contribute to teacher attrition; it is therefore recommended that the Ministry of Education should implement regular salary reviews and adjustments to ensure competitive compensation, aligning with market standards and recognising teachers' expertise.
- II. It was revealed that recognition and respect for the teaching profession enhance job satisfaction. It is therefore recommended that the Ghana Education Service develops public awareness campaigns highlighting the vital role of teachers so as to foster a culture of respect for the profession in order to boost morale and reduce attrition.
- III. The findings revealed that teacher professional development opportunities positively impact teacher retention. It is therefore recommended that the Ghana Education Service should establish a structured and merit-based professional development program, offering continuous growth avenues, furthering subject knowledge, and enhancing teaching practices to motivate and retain teachers.

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