The Effect of Motivation on Teacher Retention in Public Senior High Schools: The Case of Bekwai Municipality of Ghana

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Attrition of teachers from public schools in Ghana is on the ascendency. The study aimed at examining the effect motivation has on teacher retention in public Senior High Schools (SHS) in the Bekwai Municipality of Ghana. The study adopted the explanatory research design using a quantitative approach. The quota and simple random sampling procedures were employed to select 370 respondents. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. The results revealed that prompt payment of monthly salary (mean=4.61) was the most motivating package with a positive effect on teacher retention, whereas training opportunities (mean=2.38) and allowance for car maintenance (mean=2.31) had the least effect. The study recommends among others that governments consider paying teachers monthly salaries promptly and design a more comprehensive and competitive motivation package for them.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human resources are the most vital and dynamic manpower of every institution. However, institutions face the challenge of securing and retaining these skilled human resources largely because of the challenge of satisfying the continuous changes in human needs. Human

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resources are the asset that can make an institution; also, the collapse of these institutions can be caused by the same. One of the most important functions of human resource management is motivating staff to give out their best. This is because motivation can make employees put in their best effort at the workplace. The concept of motivation comprises of the characteristics of the individual, the situation and also the perception of the situation by that individual [1]. Motivation is encouraging employees to perform efficiently in order to achieve corporate goals and this encouragement as opined by Olajide [2] must be goal-directed always. To Vinodkumar and Bhasi, [3], motivation is very essential for explaining and understanding individual behaviour in the workplace. Work motivation is the will and the ability that employees have to perform an activity or a task in the institution for the attainment and achievement of the corporate goals and objectives of the institution [4].

The importance of motivating people at work is noticeable at all levels of organizations. Starting from managers who need to be aware of factors that motivate their subordinates to make them perform well, through human resource professionals who have to understand the motivation to effectively design and implement reward structure and systems, ending up with employees who need to think through what expectations they have of work. It is obvious that institutions need motivated staff and without any doubt, motivation is an important aspect of human resource management. Despite numerous studies on motivation, today's global leaders of institutions are no closer to understanding their employees' drive than their predecessors were more than a half-century ago [5]. Although some researches [6,7] have suggested that money is not as influential as it seemed to be, many institutions tried to implement monetary incentives as their main tool to motivate their staff. Performance related pay also became the new mantra that was used unquestionably by many institutions [6].

As a result of changes in global trends, institutions have a responsibility to adopt motivational strategies that will help them ensure they get the best from their employees [8]. Spence [9] state that, if institutions need to survive then the adoption and integration with global changing patterns that is accelerating at a very enormous speed becomes inevitable. Again, since management is getting things done through

people, it is imperative that institutions adopt the right techniques that motivate employees to work harder [10]. Also, if managers do not give recognition to the human factor of the organization, the survival of their businesses will be at stake. Hence, managers must give identification and relate well with employees and their job and also anticipate the effect of that on future attitudes and performance [11].

Employees leaving organizations and their jobs have become a very critical issue. Employees may leave their organizations or jobs for many reasons which include the reputation of the company, hours of work, the working conditions, the monotony of work, lack of appropriate fringe benefits, bad recruitment and placement practices, lack of advancement and proper training facilities [12]. The intention of employees to leave is very common at places where many industries offer alternative employment to those who are looking for jobs. When workers receive the amount of motivation they desire, Oshagbemi, [13] contends that they extend it to the quality of services they render and do not leave for other opportunities elsewhere.

Over the years many studies [14,15,16,17] have been done to investigate the effects of motivation on teachers' performance and their retention. Though this has somehow aided in the improvement of performances in some schools, however, the level of attrition is still high. For instance, it is estimated that over 7,000 teachers leave the Ghana Education Service (GES) yearly for other jobs [18]. This report from the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) also stated that their encounters with a large number of these teachers who left the teaching profession all pointed to a lack of motivation as a result of insufficient reward systems. In the light of this development, Sam, Effah & Osei-Owusu [19] laments the negative impact of the high attrition of teachers from public schools in Ghana, as it leads to disrupting the stability and continuity of teaching and learning activities. The role that teachers play is key to any educational institution. Therefore, their attitude, commitment and retention are very important issues that are not only of interest to educational authorities but also other stakeholders [20]. Ghana as a developing country needs teachers, however, due to a lack of motivation, some qualified professional teachers quit the classroom in search of greener pastures, either in Ghana or abroad. As a result, the government through the Ghana Education Service has put some

motivational packages in place for teachers in public schools, which includes Senior High Schools. In Ghana, Senior High Schools (SHS) are the intermediate educational institutions that operate between the basic and the tertiary level of education. The packages which are incentives for teachers at SHS include, housing schemes, car loans, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) allowance, car maintenance allowance, study leave with pay, responsibility allowance (additional duty as form master/mistress, chaplain, imam, guidance and counselling coordinator or head of department) and single spine salary structure [21]. Other measures that have been put in place by the SHS headmasters and headmistresses to help motivate teachers include free meals for teachers, motivation allowance and free accommodation for teachers on campus [21]. These incentives aim at ensuring that teachers commit to their jobs and perform very effectively and efficiently to produce good results. In spite of these motivational packages, teachers appear ill-motivated.

There seems to be growing dissatisfaction among SHS teachers in Ghana. Simon and Johnson [22] are of the view that this dissatisfaction which has led to a high turnover among teachers is a result of lack of human resource development, poor remuneration, poor human relations in various schools and poor working conditions. The evidence of low and sometimes delayed salaries tends to affect teacher morale and commitment [23]. Some teachers have to struggle to secure accommodation on campus or close to the schools where they teach and therefore have to travel over long distances to work. There is also a shortage of basic teaching and learning resources (TLR) available to enable the teachers to work. In addition, there have been industrial strike actions by teacher unions in recent times and these have been necessitated by poor remuneration, delays in payment of salary arrears and other motivational issues such as annual salary incremental jumps and car maintenance allowance [24].

Frequent strikes by teachers tend to affect the performance of students negatively. This is because students take the opportunity of teachers' absence from school not to study but also engage in all forms of deviant behaviours such as alcoholism, smoking, stealing, petting and vandalism. All these by extension result in poor performance among the students. Also, studies by Benabou and Musa [25] and Sekyere,

[23] have shown that demotivated teachers tend to absent themselves from school and eventually leave the profession. This again supports a common logic that a worker who is not motivated loses commitment for his/her work. According to Bennell [26], it is very unfortunate that, though there is a very serious problem surrounding retention and motivation of teachers in the various Senior High Schools in Ghana, there has not been much research on the issue and just a few works have been published on this issue. The study, therefore, sought answers to the following research questions:

i. What are the motivation packages of teachers in public Senior High Schools in Bekwai Municipality of Ghana?
ii. What are the retention intentions of teachers in public Senior High Schools in Bekwai Municipality of Ghana?
iii. What measures that can be used to retain public Senior High School teachers in the Bekwai Municipality of Ghana?

1.1 Literature/Theoretical Underpinning

1.1.1 Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study, Maslow's Hierarchy of Need theory was adopted to explain the results. Abraham Maslow hierarchically arranged human needs from lowest to highest need. He then grouped them according to physiological needs which include; food and shelter. The next need above the bottom is safety and security which is made up of the need for love, affection and also belongingness. The next level is social needs and this consists of ego and esteem needs. Finally, the last need at the top is self-actualization which when an individual gets, is considered as him or her being complete [27, 28].

Giannoni, & Tesone [29] contends that the self-actualization need is one of the needs that can never be fully satisfied. However, to Schrage [27], self-actualization can be achieved in a healthy work environment. It should be noted that the worker and also the organization can make the needs of the individual vary [28]. It is therefore the responsibility of managers to ensure that they create a good climate for employees so that they will be able to develop to their full potential as stated by Ramlall, [28]. Therefore, with all the opportunities that may be found in Senior High Schools, it should be noted, however, that not all of the teachers can achieve the self-actualization need [27].
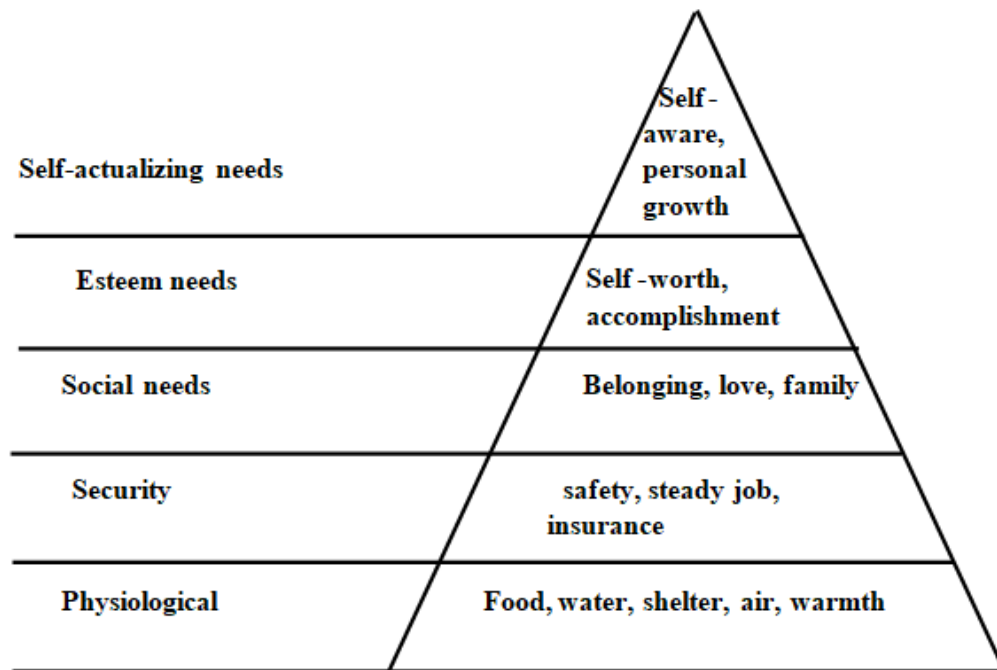
Fig. 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory
Source: Maslow (1943) as cited in Aacha [14]

1.2 Empirical Framework

1.2.1 Teacher motivation

Research on teachers have conceptualised why individuals decide to be teachers and they identified intrinsic and extrinsic factors [30], and also altruistic factors [31]. What makes up the intrinsic factor is the desire for personal growth and the extrinsic factors are made up of material benefits and job security. The altruistic factors are the willingness or desire to work with children and young adults and also contribute to society [32].

According to Erten, [33] intrinsic and altruistic factors are the most frequently reported reasons why people choose teaching as a career. Moreover, the family-friendly nature of the profession as stated by Williams & Forgas [34], attract career changers. It has been stated that, teacher motivation is related to professional commitment, efficacy, organizational citizenship and also participation in professional development [35]. Also, individuals may choose teaching as a profession as a result of student-teacher relationships and attachments that they engage in. They are partly motivated by an unconscious desire for corrective emotional experiences, through the formation of new attachments to their students [36]. These unconscious motivations to teach can be a very important factor in teacher motivation though it is very challenging in investigating.

Again, intrinsic career values such as; the interest in teaching, self-perceptions of ability, personal utility values including job security, family concerns are things that push one to join the teaching profession. Social utility values which include; contribution to society, enhanced social equity and desire to work with children are also not far-fetched. Prior experiences, perceptions of task demand and the return, fallback career and social influences are what Richardson and Watt [37] also indicated to be the reasons why individuals chose to be teachers. Though these research findings have given reasons why people choose teaching as a career, there is the need to unearth how these factors influence motivation from the beginning and during their careers as teachers.

1.2.2 Staff retention

According to Zineldin [38], the obligation an individual has to either continue to do business or exchange with a particular organization or

institution is what retention is about and this process should be on an ongoing basis. Chaminade [39], defines retention as the voluntary creation of an environment by an organization that engages employees for the long term. The main reason for retention is to avoid the loss of competent employees from leaving an organisation since it can impact the productivity and profitability of an organisation [40]. According to the Harvard Business Essentials [41], retention is the converse of turnover which is voluntary and also involuntary. In sum, the total activities which target the commitment of employees in an organization and give them ambitious and myriad opportunities to help them to outperform them are what retention is all about [42].

A lot of literature has indicated the importance of retaining valuable employees in organizations to ensure their survival [42,43]. Senior High Schools have the advantage of maintaining their corporate strategies and remaining strategic when they retain their committed and productive teachers [44]. This calls for school managers to ensure they put measures and strategies in place to ensure the retention of its hardworking teachers. Empirical studies conducted by Sageer, Rafat, & Agarwal, [45]; Kinnear and Sutherland, [46]; Maertz and Griffeth [47] claimed that factors such as competitive salary, friendly working environment, healthy interpersonal relationships and job security are what employees just like teachers stated as the key motivational variables which have an impact on their retention in institutions.

2. METHODS

2.1 Design

The study employed the explanatory research design using the quantitative method. According to Zikmund [48], the explanatory research design is used to give explanations to the cause of action. This design was preferred because as Sarantakos [49] indicated, it gives a more accurate picture of a phenomenon that has already happened and becomes easy to know the perceptions and behaviour of people.

2.2 Study Area

Ghana, a West African country, is divided into sixteen (16) administrative regions. This took place in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The regions are further divided into 260 metropolises, municipalities and districts depending on their population and geographical sizes. Bekwai is one of the municipalities in the Ashanti Region. The municipality, which occupies an area of 535.2 square kilometres, is made up of 136 settlements or communities. The total population of the municipality as contained in the 2010 population and housing census was 118,024 comprising 82,810 males (47.1%) and 87,084 females (52.9%) with a growth rate of 1.4 per cent (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

2.3 Sampling Technique

According to Chikutuma [50] sampling refers to the process by which the research attempts to select a representative group from the population under study. The study employed the quota sampling technique and simple random sampling to select the schools and respondents respectively. The quota sampling technique was used to group the population into their respective schools, before selecting the individual respondents from each group through simple random sampling. These techniques ensured that all participants had equal chances of being selected without any biases. A total of 370 teachers from the five Senior High Schools in Bekwai municipality were selected for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to obtain the actual respondents of each SHS through a computerized table of random method. Specifically; 70 respondents from Bekwai Seventh Day Adventist Senior High School, 68 from Wesley Senior High School, 67 from Oppong Memorial Senior High School, 65 from St. Joseph Senior High/Technical School and 50 from Ofoase Kokobin Senior High School were chosen. To be eligible for selection, a staff should have taught in their respective schools for at least one academic year. As a result, the sample size for the study was 204 (55%) males and 166 (45%) females. The age ranges for the respondents were 20-39 years (53%), 40 years and above (47%).

2.4 Materials

The data were collected using a 26-item self-designed questionnaire, made up of both open and closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions gave respondents the opportunity to state their opinions freely. The closed-ended questions enabled the researchers to obtain data which enabled the hypothesis to be tested in order to address employee motivation and retention with statistical analysis. The

questionnaire consisted of four sections; Section A consisted of personal demographic data while Sections B, C and D catered for existing employee motivational packages for public SHS in Ghana, teachers' retention intentions and measures to ensure teachers' retention. The respondents' views were sought to identify their extent of agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale; namely, strongly disagree, disagree, don't know, agree and strongly agree. The questionnaire was given to an expert in Educational Psychology for content validity. The reliability measure was established for the instrument by conducting a pre-test. The Cronbach Alpha calculated was 0.79, after pre-testing at Jacobu Senior High School in the Amansie Central district which is outside the district where this study took place among 20 teachers. These teachers possessed similar characteristics with teachers at Bekwai Municipality who were used for the study. Hence, the instrument was deemed reliable. Pre-testing of the instruments also enabled the researcher to ascertain possible errors, ambiguities and inadequacies in the instruments so that the necessary corrections could be made before the actual data collection.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

The questionnaires were coded and processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Percentages, means, standard deviation and chi-square were used in the analysis in examining the motivational and retention packages.

3. FINDINGS

This section dealt with the results of the data collected from the field. It focused on the main data that responded to the research questions that guided the study.

3.1 Existing Employee Motivational Packages for public SHS in Ghana

Research question one elicited the views of respondents with regards to available motivational packages for public SHS teachers in Ghana. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the individual elements of the motivational packages which were analysed into percentages, means and standard deviations.

According to Table 1, almost all respondents (98.7%) were in agreement that monthly salaries paid promptly forms a great part of their motivation and retention package (Mean=4.61). Statements such as promotion or upgrading; annual best teacher award scheme; payment of responsibility allowance for form masters and mistresses; superior praise staff for students' good grades; opportunities for career advancement; involvement of staff in decision making by management, all received a mean score between 2.5-3.86, indicating an agreement in the responses from teachers on these motivational and retention packages.

However, 37.6% of respondents expressed their agreement to the statement that they receive a bonus for improved performances which indicates that the majority of the respondents did not agree to that statement (Mean=2.48). Again, from the findings, 32.4% expressed their agreement to the statement that they get training opportunities (Mean=2.38) indicating that the majority of the response fell in the zone of disagreement making it the second least ranked package after payment of car maintenance allowance which had 24.9% agreement (mean=2.31).

Table 1. Employment motivation package for teachers in public SHS in Ghana (N=370)

Practices	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Salaries paid on time monthly	98.7	4.61	0.58
Annual best teacher award scheme	76.5	3.37	1.26
Superior praise teacher for students' good grades	78.1	3.41	1.22
Granting of leaves (maternity/casual/study leave)	80.4	3.40	1.14
Promotion/ Upgrading	82.3	3.46	1.35
Payment of responsibility allowance as form master/mistress	89.1	3.86	1.34
Opportunities for career advancement	62.5	3.10	1.28
Staff involvement in decision making	60.3	3.13	1.31
Payment of bonus for improved performance	37.6	2.48	1.47
Training opportunities	32.4	2.38	1.47
Payment of car maintenance allowance	24.9	2.31	1.38
Overall		3.19	1.07

3.1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics and teachers' retention intentions

Question two sought to examine the retention intentions of teachers in public Senior High Schools. A chi-square test analysis was carried out to determine the relationship between respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and teachers retention intentions. The results are displayed in Table 2.

From Table 2, in relation to sex, there was no statistically significant difference (P=0.162) between male and female respondents with regards to their intentions to leave the teaching service. Among the age groups more of, those aged 40 years and above (70.9%) were more likely to leave GES as compared to the other age groups. The p-value (0.000) indicates that there is a significant relationship between age and the likelihood of leaving GES for greener pastures. Also, on the relationship between marital status and intention to leave, the p-value (0.000) was less than 0.05 and therefore it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between marital status and intention to leave GES. Those who were not married were more likely to leave than those who were married

(58.7% and 22.0% respectively). In sum, it is realized that age and marital status had statistically significant relationships with the intention to leave GES while sex had no statistically significant relationship with teachers' intention to leave GES.

3.2 Measures to Ensure Teachers' Retention in SHS

Question three elicited Respondents views concerning measures that could be adopted by GES to retain teachers in SHS. The responses from the questionnaire which were analysed into frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 3.

From Table 3, pay increment and incentives (teacher motivation allowance) emerged as the most popular (21.2% and 20.8% respectively) measures to ensure teacher retention. These were followed by career development/ advancement (15.7%). Provision of teaching resources was perceived as the least important measure to retain teachers at the SHS level (1.8%).

Table 2. Socio-demographic characteristics by respondents' intention to leave the teaching service

Socio-demographic characteristics	N	Intention to leave Yes (%)	No (%)	X^2 (p-value)
Sex				
Male	204	34.9	65.1	0.162
Female	116	37.8	62.2	(0.687)
Age				
20-39	196	29.1	70.9	20.727
40 and above	174	70.0	30.0	(0.000*)
Marital status				
Married	241	22.0	78.0	17.616
Not married	129	58.7	41.3	(0.000*)

Significance level P≤0.05

Table 3. Measures to ensure teachers' retention (N=370)

Measure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pay increment	78	21.2
Incentives (motivation allowance)	77	20.8
Career development/advancement	58	15.7
Teachers' Accommodation	53	14.3
Improved conditions of service	31	8.3
Respect from superiors	26	6.9
Avoiding salary delays	15	4.1
Proper appraisal system	14	3.7
Involvement in decision making	12	3.2
Provision of teaching resources	7	1.8

4. DISCUSSION

The current study discovered that payment of monthly salaries on time was the most motivational package for teachers at SHS in the Bekwai Municipality of Ghana which had a positive effect on teacher retention. This was followed by payment of allowance as form master/mistress and then promotions/upgrading. This finding confirms the assertion of Milkovich & Newman [51], who examined cases of compensation and found that among all types of rewards, monetary pay is considered ever-present and significantly an important factor with positive effect. Also, these results from the study are consistent with earlier findings by Kinnear & Sutherland [46]; and Maertz & Griffeth [47], which noted that competitive salary is what employees such as teachers at SHSs consider as key motivational variables which have an impact on retention.

This finding from this current study is not surprising because this would make teachers financially empowered to take care of their families and personal needs when monthly salaries are paid on time. It is also refreshing for teachers to be promoted having served satisfactorily after some years or upgraded themselves after attaining higher academic qualifications. Again, payment of allowance as form master/mistress and best teachers' award also made them feel recognized, happy and motivated, thereby becoming encouraged to continue their hard work. The current result implies that most teachers are very critical about monetary rewards and the ladder of progression attached to the teaching service and that creating good reward systems and recognizing the efforts of hardworking teachers is the right way to motivate teachers in Senior High Schools.

Again, in relation to the sex of the respondents, the study revealed that although both males and females showed the intention of leaving the teaching service, more males had the intention of quitting compared to their female counterparts. This result agrees with the finding of Sam & Osei-Owusu [19] who found that males who were married had more intentions of leaving the teaching service compared to their female married counterparts. The possible reason for the current finding may be due to the fact that in the Ghanaian family system males are the main breadwinners and therefore the burden of providing money for the upkeep of their household is on them. It is therefore not surprising to find more males moving from teaching to find more lucrative jobs with the aim of meeting their family demands. The current study also found that respondents (40 years and above) demonstrated more intention to leave teaching than those who were younger (below 40 years). This finding is in line with that of Faremi [52] who found that teachers who were older in the service had more intentions of leaving as compared to the younger ones. Reasons that could be attributed to this is that as the person ages, his/her responsibilities widen, in terms of caring for kids and aged parents and also other social responsibilities (such as funerals and marriage ceremonies).

The study revealed that pay increase and incentives such as motivational allowance were the measures expressed by the respondents as the most dominant factor that could ensure teachers' retention. This finding is in line with the findings of Beesley, Atwill, Blair and Barley [53], who discovered that a better pay structure that resulted in a raise in salary was necessary to keep teachers at the SHS. Again, the current finding is in line with the findings of other studies [19] 54] which found that, among other things, improved remuneration was a crucial factor in enhancing teacher retention.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The study has established that motivational packages such as prompt payment of teachers' salary, payment of allowance as form master/mistress and promotions/upgrading have the highest effect on teacher retention at public Senior High Schools in Bekwai Municipality of Ghana. The study further revealed that gender and age were predictors of teachers' intention to leave the teaching profession. In view of these findings, it is concluded that the retention of key employees is essential for organizational success. The literature has indicated the importance of retaining valuable employees to ensure high productivity and also the survival of organisations [42]. Senior High Schools have the advantage of maintaining their corporate strategies and remaining strategic when they retain their committed and productive employees [44]. This calls for educational managers to ensure they put measures and strategies in place to ensure the retention of productive employees. For this reason, it is important for the management of the Ghana Education Service, government and all other stakeholders to

consider prompt payment of teachers' monthly salary, pay increase, motivation allowance and promotion/upgrading when designing motivational packages for teachers in public SHS. The study also recommends the need to drastically review the existing packages for SHS teachers upwards periodically as well as instituting measures aimed at offering career advancement opportunities to teachers both locally and internationally.

CONSENT

Informed consent was also sought from the respondents. Magwa and Magwa [55] argues that informed consent is an ethical requirement, which demands that the participants should be allowed to choose to participate in the research after receiving full information about the possible risks or benefits of participating. This was achieved by explaining the purpose of the study and by giving them an informed consent form to fill. The purpose was to guarantee that respondents were willing to participate in the study. Respondents were made aware that the information they provided will be kept confidentially and not exposed to individuals or groups who are not expected to have access to it.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Permission was obtained from the Bekwai Municipal Director of Education and the various heads of the schools involved in the study.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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