ROLE BEHAVIOUR OF HEAD TEACHERS AND CAREER COMMITMENT OF PUBLIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS TEACHERS IN THE BEREKUM MUNICIPALITY OF GHANA

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Abstract

Career commitment is an essential element for quality education delivery, teacher retention and career satisfaction. The ability of heads of institutions to create a supporting work environment for all staff and students and fostering their career development is critical in promoting the career commitment of teachers. This paper investigated how teachers of Senior High Schools in Berekum Municipality perceive their head teachers' role behaviour in relation to the career commitment of the teacher. The cross-sectional survey design was used. The key instruments used for the data collection were the career commitment scale by Blau (1989) and perception of role behaviour scale developed for this study. The participants in the study were 238 senior high school teachers. The study revealed that teachers had moderate levels of career commitment and perception of their heads' role behaviour. Overall, perception of role behaviour was found to have significantly predicted career commitment of the teachers. Importantly, two dimensions of the role behaviour construct: perception of school communication and ensuring safety/ security of staff and students were the significant predictors of teachers' career commitment. The study recommends that head teachers should endeavour to promote effective communication with all relevant stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students and education authorities. Heads should also make efforts to promote a sense of safety and security among staff and students in their school. This study seems to be the first to investigate how teachers' perception of the role behaviour of their heads predicts their career commitment in Ghana. The findings from this study have several educational and policy implications that have been discussed in the paper.

Key words: *Role behaviour, career commitment, school safety and security, effective school communication*

Introduction

Commitment to teaching is an important determinant of teachers' job satisfaction, retention and effectiveness. Career commitment is crucial for quality education, teacher retention and job satisfaction (Milledzi, Amponsah & Asamani, 2018; Okocha, 2018). It is therefore important that efforts should be made to promote commitment among teachers. In line with this, the current study investigated how teachers' perception of the role behaviour of their heads could influence their career commitment.

Role behaviour, according to Khaki (2005), refers to how heads discharged their prescribed or expected roles associated with their position. Creating a supportive working environment for all staff in the school and fostering their career development could be critical in promoting the career commitment of teachers. Head teachers are tasked with the managerial and administrative responsibility to ensure that the school runs smoothly (Dawson & Guare, 2018; Paul, 2019). Effective discharge of the roles by the heads could create conducive school environment, thereby enhancing the work experiences of teachers.

Head teachers' role behaviour, as conceptualised in this study, comprise: (1) promoting effective communication between the head, staff, parents, educational authorities, and student; (2) management of physical resources in the school; (3) pedagogy management, including ensuring effective use of instructional time, adherence to approved curriculum, provision of appropriate teaching and learning resources; (4) ensuring discipline among staff and students; (5) ensuring that staff and students feel safe in the school.

Extant literature indicates that employees who are highly committed to their career are more likely to become more successful and exhibit superior performance (e.g. Blau, 1988; Noordin et al., 2008). Effects of socio-cultural and demographic antecedents on work lives bring into focus the importance of career commitment (Blau 2001), rather than organisational commitment. Every employee desires to be successful in his or her career, as work plays a crucial role and is central in the lives of every individual. In the context of the current study, we argue that when heads of schools put measures in place to ensure their teachers exhibit commitment to the teaching profession, quality education delivery and higher performance would be an inevitable outcome (Otluoğlu, 2014).

Heads of institutions are expected to ensure the utmost safety of their staff and students, including other visitors to their schools. Having a sense of personal, and psychological safety, as well as and work security plays significant roles in the work experiences and attitudes of employees. Park (2001) observed that insecurity environments create and affects job commitment and knowledge sharing of employees negatively through organisational and job characteristics. Huh and Chung (2016) also noted that insecurity increases turnover intentions among workforce, which in turn affects organisational, career commitment, and Park and Lee (2004) observed it increases work performance.

Several authors assert that attributes of leaders such as decision-making strategy, leadership style, communication skills, etc are essential for the work attitude and task performance of teachers (Fem, 2014; Sule, Ameh & Egbai, 2015). Commitment of teachers to their career is crucial for effective education delivery and improving performance of teachers. Work-oriented communication, which include task-related communication and innovation-related communication are considered critical for the success of any establishment including schools (Postmes et *al*., 2001).

Demographic characteristics of individuals have been extensively studied and reported to have influence on the attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours of individuals in extant literature. Literature suggests that older employees tend to be more committed to their organisations and career than younger (Rabindarang, Bing & Yin, 2014; Pala, Eker, & Eker, 2008). Newly hired were also less committed that those who have been in the organisation for considerable number of year, with vast years of work experience (Pala et *al.*, 2008). Konya, Matic and Pavlovic (2016) also found years of service and age to be positively related to commitment. A study in Nigeria by Amangala (2013) found age and work experience to be related to organisational commitment and other work attitudes. Literature on how the sex of employees relates to their work attitude is not conclusive (Pala et al., 2008). While some studies did not find any relationship (e.g. Konya, Matic & Pavlovic, 2016), other found men to be more committed, and yet other found women to be more committed (Ngo, Wing & Tsang, 1998).

Statement of Problem

The performance of any school has been intricately linked to the managerial behaviour of the school head. Hallinger and Heck (as cited in Ogungbemi, 2012) assert that schools that make a difference in students' learning are led by heads who make significant and measureable contributions to the effectiveness of a teacher. Despite these findings, not much research attention has been given to the variables considered in the current study in the educational sector. Previous studies regarding antecedents of career commitment in various professions, including teaching job satisfaction, job commitment and others have been highlighted in literature (e.g. Shulhan, 2018). However, most of these studies were conducted in corporate work environment, with little attention in the educational settings investigating these antecedents of teachers' career commitment and retention. Again, most of the studies cited in the literature investigated employees' commitment to their *organisation*. Given that work is central in the lives of individuals, we argue that the focus should be on an individual's commitment to his or her career, rather than to an organisation. One can change an organization and still remain in the same career, as career represents a life time decision.

Research Objective

The present study investigated the extent to which teachers' perceptions of the role behaviour of their heads predict their career commitment in junior and senior high schools in the Berekum Municipality, Ghana. The study also investigated the relationship between some demographic characteristics of the teachers and their career commitment.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How do senior high school teachers in the Berekum Municipality perceive their heads' role behaviour?
RQ 2: What is the commitment level of senior high school teachers in Berekum Municipality?
RQ. 3: What is the relationship between teachers' age, years of teaching and career commitment?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Teachers' perception of their heads' role behaviour in Berekum Municipality will significantly predict their career commitment.

Hypothesis 2: There will be significant gender difference in the level of teachers' career commitment, and overall perception of their head teachers' role behaviour.

Theoretical Framework: *Role Behaviour Theory*

Role behaviour is a set of rights, duties, expectations and norms and behaviours that a person has to face and fulfil (Day, Eliott & Kington, 2005). The role theory concerns the tendency of human behaviour to form a certain pattern that could be predicted if the social context in which those behaviours occur is known (Sandilos, Goble, Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2018). People behave in predictable way and behaviour of an individual is context specific, based on social positions and related factors (Smylie & Eckert, 2018). This theory is relevant in this study as it conceptually relates head teachers' role behaviour in the school context to the career commitment of teachers.

Methodology

Population

The population for this study comprises all teachers in active service in the public senior high schools in the Berekum municipality. There were five public senior high schools in the municipality, and all teachers in those schools form part of the study population. This consists of 372 males and 96 females (Education Management Information System: EMIS, 2018).

Sample and sampling Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed to 250 male teachers and all 96 female teachers who gave their consent to take part in the study (a total of 346). The 250 males were sampled using proportional sampling to select teachers from the five schools based on the number of teachers in the schools. Proportional sampling involves dividing the population into subpopulations and then applying random sampling procedure to select respondents from each subpopulation (Alvi, 2016).

Out of these numbers, a total of 284 teachers retuned their questionnaires (82.1% return rate). Forty-six copies of the returned questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because of significant omissions in the completion of the questionnaire. The remaining 238 questionnaires, comprising 140 (58.8%) males and 95 (39.9%) females were used for the analysis. Three (1.3%) of the respondents did not indicate their sex. The average age of the teachers in this study was 31.74 years, with a standard deviation of 7.18.

Research instrument

Demographic variables

Age and years of teaching experience were measured as continuous data, while sex and level of education were measured as categorical variables.

Career commitment scale

Career commitment in this study was measured with a ten-item scale. This consists of adapted Blau's (1989) 7-item Career Commitment Scale (CCS) and three other items obtained from literature. The scale was rated on a 6-point Likert-type of scale, 1(extremely disagree) to 6 (extremely agree) with scores ranging from 10 to 60. The original scale has a reported reliability coefficient of alpha between .76 and .84, an internal consistency, which has ranged from .87 and .85 (Bedeian, Kemery, & Pizzolatto, 1991). The scale was pilot-tested before used, and a reliability alpha of .70 was obtained.

Role behaviour scale

The role behaviour scale was developed for the current study. We reviewed literature, educational policy documents and head teachers' handbook by Ghana Education Service on the roles of head teachers. We also interacted with some head teachers to find out about their roles. Ninety items were initially generated and given to some head teachers to review, and we had 85 items remaining. These items were administered to 11 head masters and 65 teachers in senior high schools in the Dormaa and Sunyani municipalities to pilot-test the items. The two versions of the questionnaire comprise the same number of items, but worded to reflect who responds to the items. For instance, the head teachers' questionnaire has a preamble, *"I ensure..."*, while that of the teachers' preamble reads, *"My head teacher ensures...".* The items were rated on a 6-point Likert type of scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (always). Exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis were done on the 85 items. Four items were deleted due to low factor loading, leaving 81 final items, with six dimensions. The dimensions, together with their final reliability coefficients are resented in Table 1. The alpha coefficient for the entire scale of 81 items was .96.

Table 1: *Dimensions, number of items and final reliability coefficients of role behaviour scale*

Dimensions	Number of items	Final reliability
School communication	9	.79
Pedagogy management	18	.87
School discipline (Students)	9	.87
School discipline (teachers)	10	.87
Safety and security	13	.85
Management of physical resources	22	.92

Results

RQ 1: How do teachers in the Berekum Municipality perceive their heads' role behaviour?

This research question sought to find out the extent to which the teachers perceived their head teachers/masters to be performing his roles. The results (Table 2) showed that the teachers in this study generally perceived their head teachers to be engaging in their role behaviour ($M = 278.92$, $SD. = 47.34$) to a large extent (high). Considering the mean scores of the dimensions, the teachers gave their head teachers high ratings on four of the dimensions (school security, management of physical resources, school discipline of teachers and students), and moderate ratings for ensuring effective school communication, and good pedagogy management.

Table 2: *Means, score ranges and standard deviations of study variables*

VARIABLE	SCORE RANGE	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	REMARKS
Communication	0-45	29.38	6.29	Moderate
Pedagogy Management	0-90	59.12	12.09	Moderate
Teacher Discipline	0-50	35.65	8.30	High
Student Discipline	0-45	33.10	7.18	High
Resource Management	0-110	77.13	14.96	High
School Security	0-65	44.54	9.45	High
Career Commitment	7-42	34.88	8.35	High
Role Behaviour	**81-405**	**278.92**	**47.34**	**High**

RQ 2: What is the commitment level of Basic and Senior high school teachers in Berekum Municipality?

The results (see Table 2) also indicated that the teachers of Basic and senior high levels in the Berekum municipality reported high committed to their career (M = 34.88, SD. = 8.35). Thus, the senior high school teachers in the Berekum municipality exhibited a satisfactory commitment to their career.

RQ. 3: What is the relationship between teachers' age, years of teaching and career commitment?

The Pearson's product moment correlation test of relationship was used to analyse the data related to this research question because all the variables were measured on continuous level. The results showed that the age of the teachers did not relate significantly with their level of career commitment (r = -.073, p > .05). Years of teaching experience however, had a significant negative relationship with career commitment (r = -.142, p < .05, R^2 = .020). Thus, the longer the teachers stayed in the teaching professions, the lower their career commitment level.

Hypothesis 2: Teachers' perception of their heads' role behaviour in Berekum Municipality will significantly predict their career commitment.

The role behaviour construct as measured in this study consists of six dimensions. The multiple linear regression analysis, using the enter method was run to test for this hypothesis to find out which of the dimensions best predict career commitment. The result showed a significant model (R = .235, R^2 =.055, $F_{(6,231)}$ = 2.25, p < .05). Thus, the six dimensions of teachers' perception of their head teachers' role behaviour together accounted for 5.5% of the variance in their career commitment.

Table 3: *Regression Coefficients of career commitment on dimensions of role behaviour*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	31.715	3.273		9.689	.000
	Communication	-.250	.116	-.189	-2.163	.032
	Pedagogy management	.046	.069	.067	.674	.501
	Teacher discipline	.006	.100	.006	.060	.952
	Student discipline	-.020	.127	-.017	-.158	.874
	Resources Management	-.018	.067	-.032	-.267	.790
	Safety and security	.215	.095	.244	2.259	.025

   a.   *Criterion Variable: Career commitment*

The regression analysis presented in Table 3 indicated that the most significant dimension of perception of head teachers' role behaviour that predicted teachers' career commitment was school security (β =.244, p = .025). This was followed by communication (β =-.189, p = .032). However, pedagogy management (β =.067, p > .05), school discipline- teachers (β =.006, p > .05), school discipline- students (β =-.017, p > .05) and management of physical resources (β =-.032, p > .05) did not significantly predict teachers' career commitment.

Hypothesis 2: There will be no significant gender difference in the level of teachers' (a) career commitment, and (b) overall perception of their head teachers' role behaviour.
Independent samples t-test results showed that male teachers' level of career commitment (M = 36.07, SD = 8.25) was significantly higher than that of female teachers (M = 33.03, SD = 8.25), $t_{(233)}$ = 2.77, p = .006. However, female teachers perception of their head teachers' role behaviour (Mean = 281.11, SD = 45.51) did not differ significantly from that of male teachers (M = 276.88, SD = 48.93), $t_{(233)}$ = -.668, p = .505. Thus, hypothesis 2(a) was supported, but 2(b) was not.

Discussion of Findings
Communication dimensions of role behaviour and career commitment
The findings of the current study indicate that the extent to which school teachers perceive that their head teachers are communicating relevant work-related information to relevant stakeholders predicted their career commitment. Communication is said to be the life blood of any organization (McKenna, 2006), as it facilitates the accomplishment of tasks and achievement of organisational goals. Communication helps to create awareness and a sense of urgency among work staff and

encourage innovation (Bordia et al., 2006). Effective communication can help teachers to clarify issues and make them feel that they are part of the school system. Acas (2005) notes that effective communication between leaders and their subordinates, and among work colleagues could boost the commitment of employees to their career, job and organisation. Goetsch and Davis (2010) argue that effective communication enables employees to understand and act on issues, and these require motivation, monitoring and leadership from management. Ineffective communication on the other hand may engender personal and professional dissatisfaction among workforce (Rollinson, 2008), and these can affect their morale, motivation and the psychological contract can be disastrous (Guest & Conway, 2002).

Safety/security and career commitment
Teachers' perception of their head teachers' desire and ability to ensure school safety and security also significantly predicted their career commitment in the present study. The finding in the current study supports that of Park (2001) who argues that feeling of insecurity in the work environments creates adverse job commitment and knowledge sharing. Huh and Chung (2016) also observed that insecurity affects organisational and career commitment adversely.

Perception by teachers that the head teacher is putting measures in place to ensure the safety and security of members of the school would communicate the feeling that the head teacher has the well-being of the school community at heart. This sense of safety would trigger a positive feeling and reduced stress ((Park & Park, 2008) in the teachers and make them feel that they are in the right profession and have the desire to remain committed to their career.

Relationships between other dimensions and career commitment
Dimensions of role behaviour, such as pedagogy management, management of physical resources and school discipline, did not significantly predict career commitment among the teachers. The two significant predictors, safety and security, and school communication, touch on the social (relationship/people-oriented) aspect of the school system, while the remaining are task-oriented role behaviours. Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the relationship-oriented role behaviours of head teachers matter more to teachers career commitment than the task-oriented role behaviours. This is very crucial in the Ghanaian context where social networking and communal living are cherished values.

Number of years of teaching and career commitment
This study found significant negative correlation between years of teaching experience (tenure) and career commitment. Other studies found positive relationship between tenure and job/work attitudes. Tahere, Zahra, Fateme and Asme (2012) for instance found significant positive relationship between years of work experience and job satisfaction. Pala et *al.*, (2008), and Konya, Matic and Pavlovic (2016) also found positive relationship between years of work experience and commitment to organisation. Even though the current paper is on career commitment, organisational commitment is seen as a broader concept, with career commitment being specific. The teaching profession is not

considered as a life time profession for most people in Ghana. People therefore take teaching as a spring board or stepping stone, while they take steps to obtain other careers they consider more prestigious.

Teachers' age and career commitment

There is no explicit theory of aging and career commitment (i.e. one which would directly explain the relationship between age and career commitment). However, in Super's (1990) life span, life space theory indicates that people's commitment to career differs at each stage but mostly increases at early stage and decreases when approaching retirement. The results of the current study showed no significant relationship between the age of the teacher and their career commitment. This finding is contrary to that of Amangala (2013), and Konya, Matic and Pavlovic (2016) who found positive relationships between age and commitment. Here again, the commitment measured by Amangala, and Konya et al., was organisational, not career.

Conclusions and recommendations

We conclude from the findings of this study that the teachers' perception of the role behaviour of their head teachers is very essential for their work attitudes and commitment to their career. More importantly, the way the head teachers handle communication issues as well as creating a feeling of safety and security in their schools are very crucial for the commitment of their staff.

The findings of the current study have a number of practical implications. First of all, head teachers and school management need to put measures in place to ensure that work related information are effectively communicated to staff. This reduces work stress and creates a sense of psychological safety among staff, leading to favourable attitudes toward their career. Secondly, communication between the school and other stakeholders, such as parents, community and district or municipal assemblies, must be facilitated by school management. Also, adequate security measures must be put in place to ensure that students, staff and other visitors to the school feel safe and secured in the schools. The heads and school management must invest adequately in the provision of adequate security in the schools.

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