

Full Length Research Paper

The perception of junior secondary school teacher to their level of motivation in Bo District, Southern Region of Sierra Leone

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The study assessed the perception of junior secondary school teacher to their level of motivation in Bo district, Southern Region of Sierra Leone. It adopted a descriptive research design to collect data on a sample size of 298 teachers. Self-administered perception questionnaire on teacher motivation (SAPQTM) was developed on the basis of the objectives of the study. Data was collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, %) and inferential statistics (regression). Results revealed that majority of the respondents were male (73.5) and only few (26.5) were females and very young. According to the results, majority of the respondents, 59.10%, rated their level of motivation as low; this implies that there is a motivation problem of teachers in Bo district that includes pay, material possession, prestige, and positive evaluation from others. The study therefore recommends that government has to be serious about implementing motivating programmes to encourage and improve the level of teachers' motivation. Development partners and government should devise ways of motivating schools administrators and teachers, so as to compensate them for the extra workloads they are undertaking to manage their schools. Awards could be instituted for better performance. Areas such as school and pupil discipline, teacher performance, pupil attendance and achievement and community and parent participation in school activities should be rewarded to serve as motivation. The Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU) must be seen advocating for medical, housing, and transportation allowances for teachers and finally, teacher education institutions must do more research on factors influencing teachers' motivation in secondary schools.

Key words: Perception, junior secondary school, teachers, motivation, Sierra Leone.

INTRODUCTION

According to Balunywa (2003), motivation is the inducement of a desired behavior within subordinates. Hornby (2000) on the other hand defines motivation as

an incentive to act or move. Webster's Dictionary (2002) defines the concept motivation as the act or process of moving or drive, or an incentive. In this study, the variable

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motivation involved both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

There is a wide range of views about teacher motivation in Africa and South Asia, most of which are country specific. However, there appear to be mounting concerns that unacceptably high proportions of teachers working in public school systems in many developing countries are poorly motivated due to a combination of low morale and job satisfaction, poor incentives, and inadequate controls and other behavioral sanctions. For example, Bennell (2004) report the 2000 Education for All (EFA) Country Assessment for Pakistan which noted that poor teacher motivation is a colossal problem, which is seriously compounded by political interference.

Several studies have shown that teachers' working conditions greatly influence their job satisfaction, retention, and school outcomes (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Johnson and the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989). Researchers have examined fairly concrete aspects of working conditions, such as material resources and facilities (Johnson et al., 2012; Ladd, 2011; Boyd et al., 2005), as well as the amount of professional development offered and time for planning and collaboration (Johnson et al., 2012; Ladd, 2011).

Previous studies have examined the qualifications and effectiveness of one's colleagues as workplace factors that could potentially influence teacher effectiveness through peer learning (Croninger et al., 2007; Jackson and Bruegmann, 2009). Many of the relevant aspects of the school environment might be construed as types of social capital or informational resources within the school. Fukuyama (2001) described social capital as an "informal norm that promotes cooperation between individuals. According to Coleman (1988), forms of social capital include the obligations, expectations, and trustworthiness of social structures; information channels; and sanctions. Examples of social capital salient to teachers' satisfaction and professional growth include teacher perceptions of school leadership (c.f. Boyd et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2005; Ladd, 2011), teacher collaboration and shared goals (Rosenholtz, 1989), relational trust (Bryk and Schneider, 2002), and school personnel's shared meanings and patterns of behavior (Rinke and Valli, 2010).

Informational resources, such as expert knowledge and the effectiveness of communication channels through which information travels, can also enhance an organization's capacity to improve. Such resources are required if schools are to discontinue ineffective practices and achieve meaningful reforms. The review of the literature explores the existing research on various aspects of teachers' working conditions at the basic education level, all of which might be construed as forms of social capital and/or informational resources that could influence teachers' effectiveness. In the area of leadership, some research indicates that the quality of relationships between teachers and school leaders can

influence school outcomes. Principals have considerable control over many aspects of teachers' working conditions, including assignment of students to teachers and the availability of instructional materials. In a mixed-method study that followed three schools in Chicago from 1994 to 1997 as staff undertook reform efforts, Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that teachers depend on principals for "procedural fairness in adjudicating competing interests among the faculty, a predictable environment governing basic school operations, adequate resources to conduct instruction, and professional support. When principals convey a sense of procedural fairness through their actions, by providing what teachers perceive as adequate resources and professional support, they earn the trust of their teachers. This relational trust is a form of social capital that enables school leaders to motivate individual teachers to engage in collective actions (Rice and Croninger, 2005). From a social capital theory perspective, these trust relations result in significant organizational-level outcomes, such as more effective decision-making, increased social support for innovation, more efficient social control of adults' work, and an extended moral authority to 'go the extra mile' for the children (Bryk and Schneider, 2002). Thus, teachers' perceptions of school leadership may influence their willingness to put forth effort toward school-wide goals. Rosenholtz (1989) also used a social organization framework and mixed-methods approach in her study of teachers in mostly rural elementary schools and how these teachers were influenced by school leadership. Specifically, her work illustrated that the extent to which principals establish collaborative norms and mobilize faculty resources can impact teachers' learning opportunities, defined as the "extent to which the social organization of schools poses restraints or opportunities for professional development (Rosenholtz, 1989). Teachers' learning opportunities, in turn, had a strong positive relationship with student achievement. Ladd (2009) examined a 2006 survey of teachers in North Carolina and found that school leadership (a factor made up of items regarding overall quality of school leadership and efforts of leadership to address teacher concerns about facilities, resources, professional development and time) was the most salient factor in terms whether teachers departed from their school. Furthermore, it was found that school leadership exhibited a significant and positive relationship with student achievement in Mathematics, as indicated by a 2008 survey of teachers in Massachusetts (Johnson et al., 2012).

Kraft et al. (2015) demonstrated a significant relationship between teachers' ratings of school leadership (a factor incorporating ratings of whether school leadership shields teachers from disruptions, enforces rules for student conduct, gives teachers feedback and addresses teacher concerns) and school average growth in both Mathematics and English

language arts. Qualitative research reinforces these quantitative findings. In a study that followed 50 novice teachers in Massachusetts over a span of 4 years, many of them expressed a strong desire for support and feedback from their supervisors (Johnson and the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004). To encapsulate these sentiments, one teacher remarked, 'Principals have to know what you are doing and see you in action, give you feedback, and support you'. When searching for improved work environments, teachers sought administrators who established support structures and encouraged interaction among the school's teaching staff."

In a qualitative study based on interviews of 13 participants in the Massachusetts Signing Bonus program, Liu et al. (2004) found evidence that teachers' perceptions of their own success depended on whether they received adequate support and guidance from their principal and colleagues. Blase and Blase (1999) analyzed responses to an open-ended questionnaire (completed by over 800 teachers) in which teachers were to describe the effect of principals' behaviors on classroom instruction. They found that teachers view instructional leaders who talk with teachers to promote reflection and promote professional growth as having a positive impact on classroom teaching. Principals who were seen as effective, encouraged teachers to reflect on their practice by making suggestions, providing feedback, modeling strategies, using inquiry, and giving praise that reinforced effective teaching strategies. Teachers reported that such dialogue with their principal led them to reflect more and plan more carefully.

In addition, effective principals promoted professional growth by emphasizing the study of teaching and learning, supporting collaboration, developing coaching relationship, and applying principles of action research to inform instructional decision-making (Blase and Blase, 1999). Leithwood et al. (1999) utilized the same data to outline specific strategies employed by principals to influence teachers. Their findings indicated that principal support and modeling of instructional strategies had a positive impact on teachers' motivation, awareness (that is, recognizing the academic and social needs of students), and professional growth. Additionally, principal visibility, which refers to the willingness of principals to spend substantial amounts of time in various school locations and be available to teachers, was associated with increased instructional time on task in the classroom. Furthermore, principal suggestions were linked to teacher reflection, classroom innovation, and creativity (Blase and Roberts, 1994).

Based on a qualitative study of nine urban elementary schools serving low-income students, Youngs and King (2002) found that effective principals develop and sustain high levels of capacity among school staff. In one school, teachers credited the principal with creating an atmosphere in which the teachers constantly scrutinized

their expectations and instructional practices a practice similar to the reflection of teachers in the Blase and Blase (1999) study. In 2 of the 4 schools highlighted in the study, school leadership maintained a focus on learning goals, instituted a culture of trust and collaboration, and established time for teachers to reflect, thus, the body of work reviewed here suggests that school leadership plays a critical role in shaping teacher effectiveness in multiple ways. School leaders can foster effective teaching by establishing a clear focal point for teachers' work and developing relational trust, which enables school leaders to motivate individual teachers to engage in collective actions (Rice and Croninger, 2005). School leaders may also provide feedback and allocate time to allow for reflection and collaboration, which may enhance teachers' instructional practice and ultimately, their ability to achieve school goals.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the survey design with cross-sectional approach as it entailed the collection of qualitative and quantitative data from the various respondents at the same time. This study employed a descriptive research design. The study's target population includes both male and female teachers in all 91 junior secondary schools located in Bo district. According to the 2012 MEST school census report, the population of teachers in these schools was 1490. The sample size for this study was determined based on the recommendations provided by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003).

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), sample size for descriptive studies should be between 10 and 20% of the population. Based on this recommendation therefore, 20% of the population of 1490 was selected giving a total of 298 teachers as sample for the study. This was considered sufficient for this study. Data for this study was derived from two sources, namely: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data consisted of empirical data collected from respondents by the use of questionnaires. The secondary data for this study was derived from MEST which provided data on population for the purpose of sample selection. The major instrument used in this study was a research questionnaire. In addition to this interview, key format interview guide and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were employed. The items on the Self-Administered Perception Questionnaire on Teachers Motivation (SAPQTM) was developed on the basis of the objectives of the study. The data from the questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies (%), etc.) and inferential statistics (regression). Tables and figures were used for the systematic presentation of results to aid readers grasp the analyses easily.

RESULTS

The study aimed to collect demographic data from the respondents, which included information on gender, age, household size, number of children, marital status, academic qualifications, length of service, salary grade, job status, type of school, and teaching subjects of the participants. Most of the participants responded to these items appropriately, and the following demographic data were obtained. Figure 1 illustrates data regarding the age

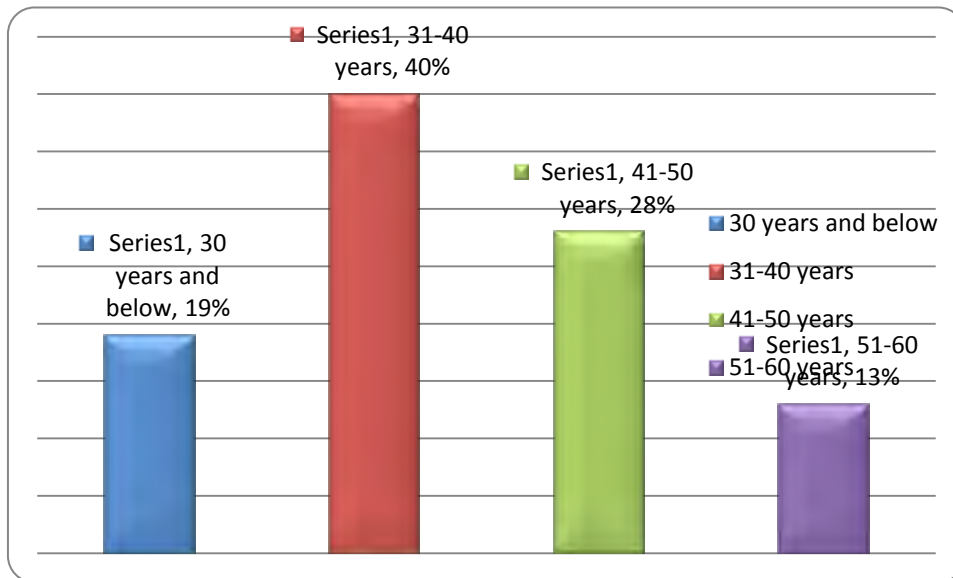


Figure 1. Age category of respondents.
Source: Field Data (2017).

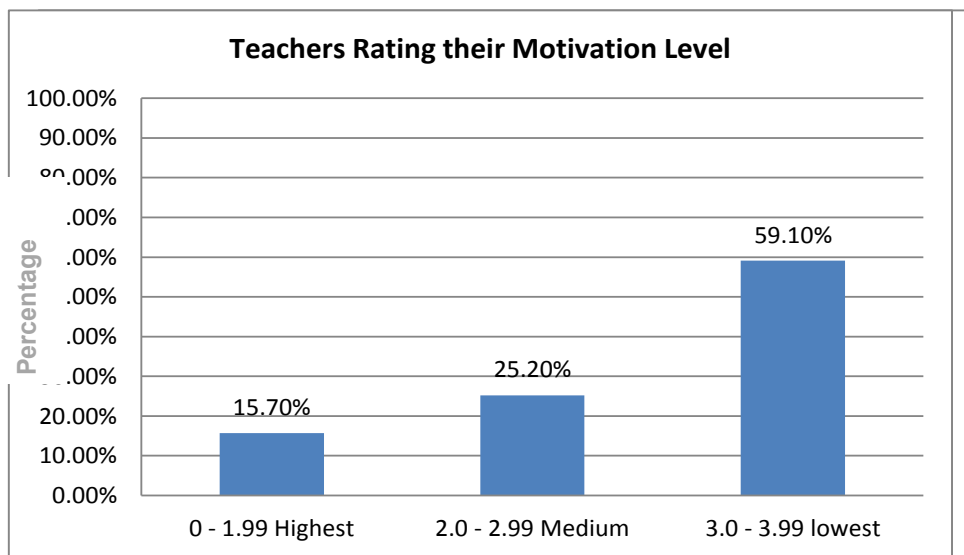


Figure 2. Level of motivation of respondents.
Source: Computed from Field Data (2017).

of respondents included in this study. The majority of respondents, constituting 40%, fall within the age range of 31 to 40 years. Additionally, 28% of the respondents are between 41 and 50 years old, 19% are 30 years old and below, and the remaining 13% are in the 51 to 60 age range. Figure 1 indicates that a significant proportion of teachers are relatively young, suggesting they have the energy for their work.

Perception of teachers about their level of motivation

Figure 2 reveals that a significant majority of the

respondents, accounting for 59.10%, rated their level of motivation as low. This suggests the presence of a motivation issue among teachers in Bo district, which may be influenced by factors such as pay, material possessions, prestige, and positive feedback from others. Additionally, 25.20% of the respondents rated their motivation as medium, while 15.70% rated it as the highest. The findings of this study align with Bratton (2003) and support Wayne's assertion that pay is one of the most influential motivational factors.

The respondents were asked to rate their motivational level based on the 10 items shown in Table 1, using a grading system ranging from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest),

Table 1. Teachers work environment and motivation.

Correlations		Teachers work environment	Teachers motivation
Teachers rating their work environment	Pearson correlation	1	-0.117*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.044*
	N	298	298
Motivation of teachers	Pearson correlation	-0.117*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.044*	
	N	298	298

Source: Computed from Field Data (2017).

with 8 indicating 'Not Sure.' The data indicates that the majority of the respondents, specifically 59.10%, rated their level of motivation as low. This suggests that there is a motivation issue among teachers in Bo district, potentially influenced by factors such as pay, material possessions, prestige, and positive evaluations from others. Furthermore, 25.20% of the respondents rated their motivation as medium, while 15.70% rated it as the highest. These findings align with Bratton (2003) and support Wayne's assertion that pay is one of the most powerful motivating tools.

Hypothesis (H₀₁): There is no significant relationship between work environment and motivation of teachers

Table 2 shows that there was a negative relationship between work environment and motivation of teacher. The data revealed that there is a strong negative correlation between work environment and motivation of teachers. This means as work environment increase, motivation decreases, and as motivation increases, work environment decreases. The null hypothesis was consequently rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. In this part of the survey instrument, respondents were instructed to rate their motivational levels in accordance with the 10 items presented in Table 2, utilizing a grading system that ranged from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), with 8 indicating 'Not sure.'

The first statement presented in Table 2 required respondents to rate their agreement with the statement 'opportunity for professional advancement.' The data indicates that 15% rated it as 5, 11% rated it as 4, 19% rated it as 3, 15% rated it as 2, and 20% rated it as 1, while an additional 20% rated it as 8. The data shows that the majority of respondents (20%) indicated that the opportunity for professional advancement in schools in the district is not up to their expectations. Table 2 further delves into the analysis of respondents' ratings on motivation. When respondents were asked to rate the fairness of salary status, the data revealed that 6% rated it as 5, 11% as 4, 18% as 3, 20% as 2, and 32% as 1. An

additional 13% rated it as 8. These findings indicate that the majority of respondents (40%) expressed that there was no fairness in the salary status.

In response to the fourth item, which pertained to allowances for teachers' medical, housing, and transportation, the data revealed that 4% of the respondents rated it as 5, 5% as 4, another 5% as 3, 9% as 2, and 20% as 1, while a substantial 58% rated it as 8. This indicates that the majority of respondents (58%) were uncertain about the allowances for teachers' medical, housing, and transportation in the district.

The reactions to the fifth item, which focused on the workload of teachers, were also rated by the respondents in Table 2. The analysis shows that 23% rated it as 5, 26% as 4, 24% as 3, 10% as 2, another 10% as 1, while 8% rated it as 8. This suggests that a significant portion of respondents (26%) expressed dissatisfaction with their workload.

The rating on the sixth item, job security was another statement in Table 2; the analyses illustrated that 21% rated it as 5; 20% rated it as 4; 18% rated it as 3; 15% rated it as 2; 16% rated it as 1; and 10% rated it as 8. This shows that majority of respondents, 21%, revealed that they have job security.

Table 2 continues to rate the availability of teaching and learning materials in schools. 16% rated it as 5; 19% rated it as 4; 24% rated it as 3; 17% rated it as 2; and another 17% rated it 1; whilst 7% rated it as 8. Majority of the respondents (24%) revealed the availability of teaching and learning materials in schools in the district.

To ascertain whether teachers are receiving prompt payment of salary, 17% rated it as 5; 15% rated it as 4; 18% rated it as 3; 13% rated it as 2; 18% rated it as 1; and 19% rated it as 8. This shows that majority of the respondents 19% revealed that they were not sure of prompt payment of salary.

The data in Table 2 continued to be rated, including the ninth statement, which focused on financial assistance to teachers. The table reveals that 7% of respondents rated it as 5, 9% as 4, 12% as 3, 13% as 2, and 22% as 1, with a significant 37% rating it as 8. This indicates that the majority of respondents (37%) expressed uncertainty about the availability of financial assistance to teachers in

Table 2. Rating of motivational level.

Item	Rating											
	1 (Lowest)		2 (Medium)		3 (Average)		4 (Very Good)		5 (Highest)		8 (Not Sure)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Opportunity for professional advancement	59	19.8	46	15.4	57	19.1	32	10.7	44	14.8	60	20.1
Promotion of teachers	58	19.5	35	11.7	34	11.4	21	7.0	18	6.0	132	44.3
Fairness on salary status	92	30.9	60	20.1	54	18.1	34	11.4	18	6.0	40	13.4
Allowance for teachers medical, housing and transport	60	20.1	27	9.1	14	4.7	14	4.7	11	3.7	172	57.7
Work load of teachers	30	10.1	29	9.7	71	23.8	76	25.5	69	23.2	23	7.7
Job security	48	16.1	42	15.2	54	18.2	60	20.2	63	21.2	30	10.1
Availability of teaching and learning materials	51	17.5	51	17.5	72	24.2	57	19.1	47	15.8	20	6.7
Prompt payment of salary	54	18.1	39	13.1	54	18.1	46	15.4	50	16.8	55	18.5
Financial assistance to teachers	65	21.8	38	12.8	35	11.7	28	9.4	22	7.4	110	36.9
Attitude of principal towards teachers	53	17.8	50	16.8	60	20.1	64	21.5	53	17.8	18	6.0

times of need. The last item in Table 2 aimed to determine how respondents rated the attitude of principals towards teachers. Data from the table reveals that 18% rated it as 5, 22% as 4, 20% as 3, 17% as 2, and 18% as 1, with an additional 6% rating it as 8. These responses indicate that the majority of respondents (22%) indicated that the attitude of principals towards teachers has not been good.

DISCUSSION

The research objective further sought to examine the level of motivation of teachers. The result of the study revealed that 59.10% indicated that their level of motivation is low. This means that teachers need to be motivated in order to meaningfully contribute to the human resource development of the nation. The results further clearly show that majority of the teachers were not motivated due to poor work environment and job satisfaction. Focus group discussions with

Community Teachers Association representatives revealed that opportunity for professional advancement, promotion of teachers, allowance for teachers medical, housing, and transportation, prompt payment of salary, and financial assistance to teachers were major factors that negatively influence the motivation of teachers (JSS teachers).

Interviews with school authorities revealed that many opportunities for professional advancement are not provided to teachers. Teachers are not frequently recruited and promoted, and allowances are not regularly granted to them. There is also a problem of delayed payment, especially for teachers residing in remote areas, and a lack of financial assistance for teachers.

These officials cited several instances where teachers' names were removed from the payroll, causing them to go without a salary for several months. It was to note that not all those on the payroll received their funds promptly in their accounts at the end of the month. They argue that if there is to be an improvement in the quality of

education in the district and the country as a whole, there should be more opportunities for professional advancement for teachers, which would add value to their careers. They also suggested that measures should be put in place to ensure that teachers are regularly promoted.

Sierra Leone teachers union officials interviewed revealed that improvement in the conditions of service for teachers has always been at the center of the strategies that government of Sierra Leone has promised but find it very difficult to deliver, and the responses as analyzed revealed that these strategies if implemented will be welcomed by teachers. The officials also expressed their frustration over the non-approval of teachers who have taught for five years and more without being approved, they suggested that approval of teachers will make their work load light hence contributing to their level of motivation. Discussion with MEST representative clearly revealed that motivation of teachers helps to retain teachers at their work places. These officials were convinced that school administrators and government

personnel have not put in much effort to ensure that teaching and learning materials are available in schools. The officials were also of the opinion that good attitude of principals towards teachers will go a long way to positively contribute to teachers' motivation. Furthermore, discussions with CTA representatives revealed that motivation of teachers through performance-based pay will increase teacher motivation by adequately rewarding productivity gains. This perspective links the attitude of teachers to student outcomes; they argue that once teachers are motivated through increments in salaries, teaching quality will be improved.

The research findings align with Tomlinson (2000), who argues that performance-based pay is a means of motivating individuals and cultivating performance-oriented cultures. For teachers who may not be primarily motivated by financial incentives, non-financial rewards can serve as effective motivators. These non-financial rewards may include opportunities for promotion, professional advancement, and personal growth. The research findings corroborate the views of Tomlinson (2000) and Odden (2000), who emphasize that learning is a dynamic process of interaction between teachers and students, with teachers playing a significant role in guiding the way. Classroom learning achievements are greatly influenced by motivated teachers who carefully plan their teaching and effectively implement what they have learned.

Davidson (2007), who focused on the role of teachers in enhancing the quality of education in public secondary schools through motivation, suggested several initiatives to increase teachers' motivation levels and ultimately improve the education system.

The study's findings indicate that teachers' motivation significantly impacts the quality of education. These results align with Kadzamira's (2006) findings, which suggest that poor working and living conditions can have a detrimental effect on teachers' performance. It is essential to carefully consider the terms and conditions of service as a means of motivating and retaining teachers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that improving the motivational level of teachers is a worthy initiative as it enhances quality of education despite the many challenges. This research has presented data and information that bring out a clear picture of the motivation of teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Bo district, Southern Region of Sierra Leone. The study has relied on the teachers themselves giving their perception on the important issues that affect their motivation at the basic education, especially at the Junior Secondary School level.

Stakeholders' views and perceptions on teacher's motivation have also been used to give a comprehensive picture of teacher's motivation. Qualitative and quantitative

analyses helped to portray the factors in schools that affect teacher's motivation. Secondary data revealed that there has been a significant increase in the number of unpaid and unapproved teachers in junior secondary schools in the district. However, the old problems of promotion and reassessment continue to de-motivate teachers. In a country where the majority of its citizenry are poor, teachers continue to work under very difficult circumstances. There is a wide divergence between policy promulgation and its implementation. The research reveals unfulfilled promises and incomplete strategies by the government that could have enhanced the motivation of teachers. Salary is a major debilitating factor that affects the motivation of teachers at the junior secondary school level in Bo district and the government has to be serious about implementing motivating programs to encourage and improve on teachers' condition of services.

Recommendations

Complex as the problem of achieving Junior Secondary School teachers' motivation appears to be, it is evident that the research undertaken can be of outstanding help not only to educational planners and policy makers but to all stakeholders engaged in teachers education. With the findings from the research, stakeholders can profit from the resulting better knowledge of issues entailed in teacher motivation and steps can then be defined for the improvement of teachers.

Result indicated that salary is the main determinant that influences teacher's motivation; teachers with moderate salary were more motivated than their colleagues with less salary. The Sierra Leone government and the Teaching Service Commission have to engage in fruitful discussions with the Ministry of Finance to make the teaching profession lucrative and enviable; this will encourage more teachers to embrace the profession and not to think of moving to 'greener pastures.'

The result also indicated that teachers are more satisfied based on their sex, location, and type of school. The government has to be more proactive to solve this problem. Incentives should be given to female teachers, science teachers, and government secondary school teachers. There should be allowances for female teachers and teachers in remote areas.

A conscious effort must be made to recruit more female teachers if they are to serve as role models to emulate. The government has to institute positive discriminatory policies to get more trained and qualified female teachers in secondary schools, especially in rural areas. Strategies may include some of the following: giving grants in aid and full scholarships to women who sign bonds with the government that they will teach in rural areas for a specified number of years. Also, the universities and polytechnics have to put in place positive discriminatory policies to enroll more females in the various teaching

programmes.

The ministry should ensure that the school enrollment should not be overcrowded and that there should be a conducive child friendly learning environment. They should ensure that school buildings are of quality and located in a free noisy and crowded environment. A research finding is that opportunities for professional development were either lacking or not applicable to them. The government, both national and at the local level, have to be more proactive to solve this problem. The Local Government Councils have to come up with ways to ensure that teachers are not denied opportunities for further studies.

Demotivation is a major debilitating factor on teachers work environment and government has to be serious about implementing motivating programmes to encourage and improve on job satisfaction of teachers. Ways of motivating schools' administrators and teachers should be devised so as to compensate them for the extra workloads they are undertaking to manage their schools. Awards could be instituted for better performance. Areas such as school and pupil discipline, teacher performance, pupil attendance and achievement and community and parent participation in school activities should be rewarded to serve as motivation. The Sierra Leone Teachers Union (SLTU) must be seen advocating for medical, housing, and transportation allowances for teachers.

School authorities should ensure the cleanliness of all Junior Secondary Schools in Bo district and the country as a whole. Government should allocate enough funds in time and resources to JSS schools to ensure that the work environment is improved and schools run smoothly without compromising quality of education and hence ensure job satisfaction. The work of teachers is the business of all stakeholders in education and it is important that national seminars be held regularly to brainstorm on the way forward to ensure that teachers are motivated and satisfied and that their work environment is stimulating not only for the pupils but also for the workers, that is, the teachers.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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