

DETERMINANTS OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG SPECIALIST TEACHERS IN INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOLS, KIRINYAGA COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors present a summary of findings of a study conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's thesis in special needs education. The study sought to investigate the determinants of job satisfaction among teachers of learners with special educational needs in integrated public primary schools in Kirinyaga County, Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey design. Purposive sampling technique was used. A sample of 33 teachers; 11 male and 22 female, participated in the study. The main instrument used in the study was a questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed by the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 12.0. The data was presented in percentages, mean, standard deviation, graphs and tables. The study findings showed that the determinants of job satisfaction among teachers of learners with special educational needs were sort of work done in the integrated schools, relationship with colleague teachers, job security, pupil teacher ratio, accomplishment, support from the Education Assessment and Resource Center (EARC) and prestige within the working class in the county. The factors influencing job dissatisfaction included special allowance, the physical facilities, procurement of resources, teaching and learning materials, current salaries and slim promotion opportunities. The strategies for enhancing job satisfaction were provision of competitive salary and fringe benefits, fair opportunities for promotion and advancement, good relationship with colleagues, accessible and supportive supervisors, support services from the EARC officers, involved in decision making and teacher oriented policies. The recommendations made included the need to improve the working conditions in the integrated public primary schools, recognition and adequate promotion to the teachers as well as provision of sufficient teaching and learning materials by the government and other stakeholders.

Keywords: Job satisfaction, Specialist Teachers, Integrated Primary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Kenya is not only facing a shortage of qualified special education teachers but also teachers leaving their profession to take up non teaching employment in the Education Assessment and Resource Centers (EARC), NGOs and other public and private institutions. Those still in the profession are showing high levels of dissatisfaction. This is evident in their lack of devotion in work places, unsatisfactory performance, frequent transfers, absenteeism, endless call for strikes by their union and low morale in performing pedagogical duties (Ondieki, 2005). Although teachers' job satisfaction has been widely studied in the developed countries and thousands of articles published, there is a limited literature about job satisfaction in developing nations (Ngimbudzi, 2009). Otube (2004) asserts that even though studies of teachers' job satisfaction have been carried out in Kenya, little has been done with respect to special education teachers.

Many studies have been carried out in developed countries mainly focusing on multidisciplinary professions. In America, special education teachers occupies the 8th position among the top ten jobs in terms of job satisfaction which is lower compared to the general teachers (Smith, 2007).

In spite of this, there are a high percentage of teachers who quit working in this field (DeVito, 1998).

In Africa, job dissatisfaction among teachers has been reported in many countries. In Nigeria, teachers feel that they are cheated, underpaid and made to work in unsecure condition where the government pays less attention to their dignity and self esteem (Ololube, 2006). In Ghana, primary school teachers' motivation has declined in the recent years (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). The same is happening to teachers in Tanzania (Ngimbudzi, 2009).

In Kenya, efforts to provide quality education for learners with disabilities have proved futile as a result of stakeholders and policy makers failing to address Special education teachers' job satisfaction. The greatest impacts on job satisfaction are the intrinsic factors such as a sense of accomplishment, self-worth and personal growth (Davis & Wilson, 2000). Extrinsic factors such as salary, work condition and policies also influence job satisfaction. This implies that both the intrinsic and the extrinsic factors are essential components of teachers' job satisfaction. Other determinants of job satisfaction include: working Conditions and Environment (Ololube, (2006), Kyongo, (2006) and Shann, (2001); Professional and Academic Growth (Herzberg 1959), Oosthuizen, (2001); Robbins & Judge, (2008); Demographic Factors:- age, gender, educational level and family status (Abushaira, 2012), Kyongo, (2006) and Ondieki, (2005); Compensation, Remuneration and Fringe Benefits (Hoy & Miskey, 2008), Okumbe, (1998) and Shann, (2001).

On the other hand, job dissatisfaction has been associated with monthly salaries, incapable and unsupportive administrators and lack of collegial relationship with co-workers (Karen, 2005). Herzberg (1959) listed five factors that influence workers job dissatisfaction. These factors include: company policy, administration, supervision, salary and working condition. Teachers are consistently dissatisfied with their level of participation in decision making (Shann, 2001). This implies that denial to participate in decision making may make teachers dissatisfied. However, if unqualified employees are involved in decision making it may lead to dissatisfaction.

Teachers' job dissatisfaction has also been associated with students' misbehavior and lack of interest, a decline in teacher's respect and status, relationship with other teachers and lack of voice in education decision making processes (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2004). Lack of teaching aids, insignificant supports, ineffective assessment, lack of promotion opportunities, extra tasks, income and overtime affect job satisfaction (Abushaira, 2012). Teachers' job dissatisfaction can be associated with low wages as compared to other professionals, low status in the society, lack of career advancement opportunities, high teacher-pupil ratio, poor working environment and irregular payment of salaries (Adelabu, 2003). Special education teachers are faced with ever-increasing responsibilities, additional paperwork and more challenging students (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). Additionally, conflicting roles between general and special education teachers, role ambiguity, additional paperwork, other special education specific responsibilities and lack of administrative support dissatisfies special education teachers (Piotrowski & Plash, 2006).

According to Ting (1997), flexible work arrangement, training and professional growth opportunities are some of the ways of enhancing job satisfaction. Besides, opportunities to use

one's talents and be creative as well as to take responsibility and direct one's own work improves employees' job satisfaction.

Teachers' job satisfaction is enhanced by high level of security, good relationship with colleagues, favorable school environment, and incentives by the government and support by the community (Juma, Simatwa, & Ayodo, 2011)

PURPOSE

This study sought to investigate the determinants of job satisfaction among teachers of learners with special educational needs in the integrated public primary schools in Kirinyaga County. The Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) has in the recent past fought for salaries, promotions and other issues affecting teachers. Nevertheless, most of these strikes have been unsuccessful leaving teachers dissatisfied. This crisis of job dissatisfaction required innovative solutions, particularly the identification of strategies that could be employed to address the problem.

Three objectives were formulated to guide the study as stated below:-

To investigate determinants of job satisfaction among teachers of learners with special educational needs in integrated public primary schools in Kirinyaga County;

To find out factors influencing job dissatisfaction among teachers of learners with special educational needs in integrated public primary schools in Kirinyaga County; and

To establish strategies for enhancing job satisfaction among teachers of learners with special educational needs in integrated public primary schools in Kirinyaga County.

It was hoped that the results of this study would assist the Ministry of Education, education management personnel, planners and policy makers in making decisions aimed at improving the special education teachers' morale and working conditions. The study would also provide a better understanding of special education teachers' roles and job satisfaction and form a basis for future research in the field of special needs education in Kenya.

PROCEDURE AND METHOD

The study employed descriptive survey design. A survey approach allows and facilitates collection of a large amount of data from a sizable population in a highly economical way (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). Descriptive survey designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to enable a researcher to gather information, summarize and interpret it for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2005). The design was appropriate for the study because it enabled the researcher to collect information regarding job satisfaction and strategies for enhancing it among special education teachers in integrated public primary schools in Kirinyaga County, Kenya.

The study was carried out in integrated public primary schools in Kirinyaga County. Kirinyaga County is situated in the central region of Kenya south of Mount Kenya. It is approximately 120 kilometers from Nairobi city. The county occupies around 1480 square kilometers and is one of the five counties in the central region of Kenya. In the special needs education sector, the county is faced with numerous challenges ranging from poor performance, frequency transfers and attrition among teacher of learners with special educational needs due to job dissatisfaction.

There were a total of 51 integrated public primary schools in the county. The target population was 67 teachers of learners with special educational needs in the integrated public primary schools in the County.

The researcher used purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to use cases that possessed the required characteristics with respect to the objectives of the study. Subjects were therefore handpicked because they were informative and possessed the required characteristics (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). In this case, purposive sampling was used to select Kirinyaga County. The integrated public primary schools were clustered in the 4 sub-counties namely Mwea, Kirinyaga Central, Kirinyaga East and Kirinyaga West. Two sub-counties; Mwea and Kirinyaga central, were randomly selected. All the 22 integrated public primary schools in the 2 sampled sub-counties and all the 33 teachers of learners with special educational needs in the integrated public primary schools formed the sampled. The sample consisted of 33 special education teachers from 22 integrated public schools. The sample selected was considered representative enough to enable generalization to the actual target population.

The main instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaires were modified by the researcher from that used by Ondieki (2005) as well as Otube (2004). They were divided into three sections. Section one featured the demographic information containing 14 items. Section two evaluated the factors influencing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction containing 26 items. Section three sought to establish the strategies for enhancing job satisfaction among teachers of learners with special educational needs containing 15 items. The questionnaire was piloted in Ihwagi and Kanjuri integrated public primary schools in Nyeri County where 2 special education teachers from each school participated in the study. These schools had similar characteristics to those in the integrated public primary schools included in the study. The purpose of piloting was to ensure the clarity and suitability of the language used in the questionnaire.

Content validity was used to ensure that the instruments measured what they were intended to measure. A critical examination of the test items was done by the researcher. An expert opinion was also sought from the supervisors. Each item was examined in terms of its relevance to the variables under investigation and the research objectives. In determining the reliability of the instrument, the study used test-retest method. The questionnaire was administered to the participants two weeks after piloting. The results were analyzed descriptively and a correlation coefficient of 0.80 was used to judge the reliability of the instrument. The instrument attained correlation coefficient of 0.82.

Research permit was sought from the National Council for Science and Technology through the dean graduate school, Kenyatta University, before data collection. Subsequently, the authorization letters were sent to the District Commissioners and District Educational Officers Kirinyaga County and copies to the head teachers of the sampled integrated public primary schools. In addition, consent was sought from all the respondents. While ensuring that information gathered remained confidential and confined to the purpose of the study.

Before data collection, one research assistant was recruited. The questionnaires were then distributed to special education teachers by the researcher and his assistant and collected on the same day to safeguard against low return rate. The entire data collection in the County took three weeks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected from the research was coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics derived from statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 12.0). Descriptive statistics including percentages, mean, median, mode, standard deviation, frequency distribution tables and graphs were used to present the results. Analysis was based on three objectives formulated from the study.

Demographic information

Out of a sample of 33 teachers of learners with special education needs 11(33%) were male while 22 (67%) were female. This may be due to the fact that teaching of learners with special education needs is presumed to be a feminine career as it entails motherly care and training of daily living skills. Similarly, teachers who were posted in the special units had undertaken SNE diplomas or degrees where most of the teachers who have proceeded for further studies in the county are mostly females.

The age distribution of teachers of learners with special education needs showed that the majority of 18 (54.55%) of teachers were aged between 41 to 50 years. 9 (27.27%) was in the age bracket of 31 to 40 years while 6 (18.18 %) was in the group between 51 and 60 years. No teacher was below 30 years of age. This can be attributed to the fact that teachers are not employed as soon as they complete their college education. Additionally, teachers had to undertake a two years diploma or four year degree course in special needs education after completing their Primary teachers' education certificate. Most teachers were in the middle age between 31 and 50 years.

With regard to marital status, 24 (72.73%) teachers were married, 7 (21.21%) were single and those who were divorced or separated was 1(3.03%) each. Due to their advanced age most teachers were in stable marital life. This meant that they were mature and able to take good care of learners. It was established that 10(30.3%) of teachers had an experience of 5 years or below, 15(45.45%) had an experience of 6 -10 years, 3(9.09%) had an experience of 11-15years. Another 3(9.09%) had been in special education for 16 to 20 years while the remaining 2(6.06%) had an experience of over 20 years. The majority had an experience of 6 -10 years. This can be attributed to the commencement of distance learning programs offered in Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) from 2002 where teachers started graduating in mass after 2005 in the county.

Previously, only one or two teachers were admitted for the full time diploma course in KISE per district thus limiting the number of teachers from each district. Since all the teachers were trained in special education, a majority of 27(81.82%) of teachers had acquired diplomas, 4(12.12%) had bachelor degree while 2(6.06%) had in-service certificates. Teachers holding certificate and diploma in special needs education were trained at KISE. Those holding bachelor of education in Special Needs Education (SNE) undertook their training in Kenyatta University, Kenya Methodist University or Kampala international University. A few teachers had undertaken a bachelor degree due to the high cost and the long time taken to complete it.

Determinants of Job Satisfaction

The study findings established that determinants of job satisfaction among teachers of learners with special education needs included the following:-

The nature of work done in the integrated public primary schools where a majority of 25 teachers (75.76%) were either very satisfied or satisfied. Relationship with other teachers produced caused job satisfaction being rated at a mean of 3.78 with 25 teachers (75.76%) being satisfied. Job security was the third determinant of job satisfaction with a mean of 3.78. The study established that 24 (72.73%) respondents were satisfied with the job security they enjoyed. The pupil-teacher ratio also caused satisfaction with a mean of 3.5. There were 19 teachers (57.58%) who indicated satisfaction. Teachers had satisfaction from the accomplishment they got on work done. This had a mean of 3.42 with 18 (54.54%) teachers responding as satisfied. The support teachers got from the EARC offices led to job satisfaction with a mean of 3.42. The study indicated that 19 (57.58%) of the respondents were satisfied. Teachers valued chances of advancement in their career. On this facet,

19(57.58%) of the teachers were satisfied and had an arithmetic mean of 3.33. The recognition teachers got from their supervisors also caused job satisfaction with a mean of 3.30. 15 (45.45%) of teachers were satisfied. The workload assigned to teachers also caused job satisfaction with an arithmetic mean of 3.24. In this study, 18 (54.54%) of teachers were satisfied.

Dynamics of Job Dissatisfaction

According to the study findings there were several factors that influenced job dissatisfaction among teachers of learners with SNE. These included the special allowance the teachers earned being rated at 1.81, the physical facilities rated at 1.93 and the involvement in procurement of materials in the integrated classes at 1.96. These factors were found to be the greatest discouragements with majority of respondents being very dissatisfied with them. Other factors which brought about job dissatisfaction among teachers were the availability of teaching and learning materials. This had a mean of 2.27 with 23 (69.69%) teacher being dissatisfied.

The present salary educed job dissatisfaction with a mean of 2.27. It was established that 23 (69.69%) teachers were dissatisfied. The participation in supervisory decision making led to job dissatisfaction with a mean of 2.60. This was close to that of the chances teachers had to make decisions and act on them which were rated at 2.66. Regarding the status of the school, 15 (45.45%) teachers were dissatisfied. This had a mean of 2.69. The chance of being promoted to better position dissatisfied teachers with a mean of 2.69. This was followed by the school policies regarding the work teachers undertook rated at 2.89.

Strategies for Enhancing Job Satisfaction

According to the findings, the strategies for enhancing job satisfaction among teachers of learners with disabilities would include being offered a competitive salary and fridge benefits. This had a mean of 4.76 and 32 (96.97 %) of teachers agreed. A fair opportunity for promotion and advancement was another strategy that teachers felt would enhance job satisfaction. This had a mean of 4.76 and 32 teachers (96.97%) who agreed. Ensuring good relationship with colleagues was seen to enhance job satisfaction with a mean of 4.64 and 21(63.64%) of the teachers strongly agreeing while the remaining 12 (36.36%) agreed. Supervisors who were supportive and accessible would also enhance job satisfaction. This was supported by 31(93.03%) respondents who agreed.

A secure job environment would enhance job satisfaction with a mean of 4.45. This was followed by provision of itinerant services as well as other services offered by the EARC officers which was rated at 4.45. Teachers agreed that if they improved teamwork skill this would enhance job satisfaction. This had a mean of 4.43. Being allowed to decide and take responsibility was another strategy that would enhance job satisfaction with a mean of 4.42. Developing excellent communication skills would enhance job satisfaction with a mean of 4.42 with 30 (90.91%) respondents who agreed. Availability of training and professional growth opportunities would enhance job satisfaction with a mean of 4.39 where 29 (87.88%) respondents were agreed.

CONCLUSION

The determinants of job satisfaction among Special Needs Education (SNE) teachers include the type of work done in the integrated schools, relationship with colleagues, job security, pupil-teacher ratio and prestige among teachers in general education. Teachers also derive job satisfaction from their involvement in placement and assessment of learners with disabilities, opportunities for home visits and follow up services of SNE learners.

Some of the factors influencing job dissatisfaction among SNE teachers include special allowances received, physical facilities in their respective schools, lack of involvement in the procurement of resources in the integrated classes, inadequate teaching and learning materials and current salaries. Teachers are dissatisfied with the denial to participate in supervisory decisions affecting their work.

Strategies for enhancing job satisfaction among SNE teachers of learners with special education needs include provision of competitive salary and fringe benefits, fair opportunities for promotion and advancement, positive relationship with colleagues and a secure job environment. Since teaching learners with special education needs is challenging, teachers require support services and active involvement in decision making process.

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