

## The Effects of Lack of Career Path on Job Satisfaction among South African Teachers

Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour<sup>1</sup> and Akwasi Arko-Achemfuor<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Education, Department of Adult Education, University of South Africa,  
P.O. Box 392, Pretoria

Telephone: +27124296870; Fax: +27124298812; E-mail: [quanbkp@unisa.ac.za](mailto:quanbkp@unisa.ac.za)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Adult Education, University of South Africa, P.O. Box 392, Pretoria  
Telephone: +27124298623; Fax: +27124298812; E-mail: [aachea@unisa.ac.za](mailto:aachea@unisa.ac.za)

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**ABSTRACT** In all professions employees who work hard get promoted but this does not apply to all teachers in South Africa. The Employment of Educators Act recognizes the promotion of teachers but in practice promotion does not exist for every teacher. A teacher remains on the post level of his/her first appointment for entire teaching life. It is assumed that this might lead to frustration and disillusionment among teachers and many might leave the profession or underperform. This paper is the result of an empirical investigation on the job satisfaction among South African teachers. The assumption of the research was validated by an empirical study of the problem in the Ruth Mompati Education District. The findings of the study include: lack of equal opportunities for teachers, poor conditions of service, increased workload, lack of discipline among learners, increasing violence against teachers and the apparent eroding of the teacher's authority.

### INTRODUCTION

Education is a social phenomenon and an important vehicle for advancement in the contemporary world. It is through education that knowledge, skills and values are transmitted from generation to generation to ensure social, economic and political cohesion, stability, continuity and advancement of every country. Education has therefore become an important ingredient for advancement in the knowledge-based economy of the modern world. In affirming this Matos (2000) asserts that an educated population is the primary resource that every nation must strive to build. Unlike the situation in the past when natural resources counted most, today only an educated population can contribute meaningfully to development and participate significantly in national and international distribution of labour and wealth (Matos 2000).

In every community and country teachers form the vehicle for the provision and dissemination of relevant knowledge, skills and values for socio-economic development. In most careers professionals are assured of moving through the ranks so long as they do their work well and meet certain laid down criteria but this is not the case with school teachers in South Africa. Although the employment of educators Act (1998) 4 (2) recognizes the existence of conditions of

service in respect of different ranks and grades for teachers in practice this occupational mobility is almost non-existence. Teachers, in general, are inclined to argue that in practice there is no laid down career path for them because the Employment of Educators Act (1998) does not address the promotion needs of majority of teachers. Once in a while a teacher is promoted, usually above his/her seniors, to Principal, Deputy Principal or Head of Department in a school while the rest cannot take it for granted that with dedication to the work they can be promoted to another rank.

A teacher may teach and remain on the initial post level (one) to which s/he was appointed for the entire teaching life and this might lead to frustration and disillusionment. This makes most teachers feel that they cannot achieve self-fulfillment under a situation where the opportunity for promotion is skewed. Teachers who feel this way might leave the career in their numbers or underperform due to lack of job satisfaction. On this sensitive issue of promotion of school teachers the Employment of Educators Act (1998) 6 (2) states that it is (promotion of teachers) subject to collective agreement concluded by the Education Labour Relations Council determined by the Minister which in practice does not adequately address the frustration of teachers as individual employees. This paper expands the knowl-

edge on the ingredients of job satisfaction among South African school teachers.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the empirical study was to make the employer aware of the frustrations of teachers and suggest ways of improving job satisfaction among teachers to enable them remain in the profession and to put in their best for the realization of quality education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The interest in job satisfaction among teachers has become the dominant concern of stakeholders in education. Job satisfaction among teachers relates to the extent to which they are motivated to stay in their posts and work. Two important theories that underpin this investigation are Abraham Maslow's Theory of Motivation and the Two-Factor Theory of Herzberg.

Maslow saw motivation in terms of individual's strive for growth which he explained by a hierarchy of needs (Curzon 1990). The theory expounds that at any given moment in life an individual's behavior is influenced or dominated by his/her needs which have the greatest potency. As lower physiological needs are adequately satisfied, motives for a higher level in the hierarchy come into play (Curzon 1990). Teachers, like other workers, can only satisfy their physiological needs such as hunger, thirst, shelter and clothing when they are adequately and promptly remunerated. Thus conditions of service for teachers may be a strong factor in determining the extent to which teachers are satisfied with their job.

Safety and security issues may also influence teachers' satisfaction. Teachers may not be motivated to work in an environment that does not protect them physically and psychologically. People want to be assured that their survival is not in jeopardy and their work should give them this kind of security (Steyn 2001).

Teachers also need recognition from their employers and clients. That is, students, parents and community members. The show of appreciation for the good work they do rather than focusing too much attention on the weaknesses of a few of them can undermine the status and self-esteem and may impact negatively on teachers' motivation. Steyn (2001) affirms that teachers who

do not feel that their status and self-esteem needs are being met through the job can be discouraged. It is natural for humans to have the desire for self-fulfillment. Teachers would like to grow within their chosen career and not to stagnate. In situations where their aspirations cannot be met or there are no opportunities for growth the morale of teachers can be very low. Holmes (2005) intimates that teacher professional development should be viewed from a holistic perspective which takes a person's personal well-being as well as his or her career development into account simultaneously as one cannot be separated from the other.

Herzberg's theory established two sets of work factors namely motivators and maintenance for workers' motivation. Through a series of empirical investigation Herzberg et al. (1959) came to the conclusion that the actual execution of work is influenced by the existence of recognition, achievement, the work content and the possibility of advancement. These are referred to as 'motivators'. The second set dubbed 'maintenance factors' relate to the work environment. Thus the type of remuneration, job security, physical work conditions and policies regarding a particular work determine the extent to which workers are motivated or satisfied with the work.

Carrell et al. (1998) express diverse views on motivation when they acknowledge that people have varying expectations about the rewards and satisfaction they seek from their jobs. To some people work is purely a necessary evil, a painful mechanism for earning money to support one's self and family. Such people do not expect to be fulfilled in their work. They in fact, feel that work and enjoyment are totally incompatible. There is a second group of people who do not only seek good salaries and benefits but also desire to satisfy certain human needs through work. The workers who fall within this category of people do their work with agreeable and friendly co-workers and receive ego satisfaction from the work they do. Such people may not however aspire to middle or upper levels of management positions because they feel that management positions involve stress, too much responsibility, pressure of work, long working hours and weekends at the office. For this category of workers, a good family life with time to pursue hobbies and other interests may be perceived as being as important – as or more important than high-paying, high-stress related jobs (Carrell et al. 1998).

A third category of workers comprises people who regard work as the most significant part of their lives. These people are totally committed to their jobs and receive a great deal of personal pride and satisfaction from it. These people referred to as over achievers are more than willing to invest long hours, weekends, and holidays in pursuit of their dreams. Thus in a continuum of career interest, work may be viewed as just "a job" on one hand and as a career on the other (Carrell et al. 1998).

Teachers as employees fall under all three categories described above. While some of them may perceive teaching as a pain or necessary evil and only do it for survival there are others who see it as a career and may seek recognition for what they do, failing which might lead to dissatisfaction. The point here is that where teachers' expectations are not met, they may not be able to give off their best and in the long run learners, parents, communities, tax payers and the country at large suffer the consequences of teachers' lack of job satisfaction. Human beings generally expect some sort of developments in their personal as well as their career development. Holmes (2005) makes it clear that teachers expect not only improvement in their teaching and the progress of their learners but also establishing one's foothold in the chosen profession to the height one aspires to be as well as the experience he/she craves for.

The diverse views expressed here indicate that it is imperative for employers and organizations to take career planning and management into account as employees have various expectations from the organization they work for. In the context of this study the two theories above imply that employees, in this case teachers, would work hard when there is assurance of promotion, good working conditions and recognition of the value of their work to the advancement of society. On the contrary where such possibilities do not seem to exist teachers could become disillusioned and de-motivated.

### Literature Study

Teachers' employment conditions are generally poor in most African countries but in South Africa teachers face a unique situation due to an apparent lack of career path and clear criteria for promotion. The qualifications and experiences of teachers are not considered for promotion and

there are no equal opportunities for all teachers. This situation can discourage teachers from being productive in the teaching-learning situation (Lumadi 2008) and some could jump ship when they realize that their aims cannot be achieved. A recent study by Davidson et al. (2005) found out that teachers have different motivations for entering teaching and irrespective of their personal motives they wanted to 'make a difference'. Some of the participants in the study indicated that they have planned their career progression and expected their job to be interesting, demanding, creative and rewarding (Davidson et al. 2005).

The observation by many teachers and the general public is that promotion of teachers in South Africa is tied to political affiliations and not teaching qualifications and experience. Ramphela (2009) for example reports of how in one of the provinces a particular teacher union threatened to bring education to a halt if education officials refused to promote some of its members to be principals. In a situation where a union literally 'hi-jacks' promotion and dictates to the employer who is to be promoted, one may wonder what happens to qualifications, experience and competence which some teachers have spent money and time to acquire. Where a less qualified teacher is promoted above more qualified and experienced ones, management of schools could become difficult if not problematic and this might result in dysfunctional and poor performance among schools. The number of dysfunctional schools in the country is on the increase and this could be attributed to the lack of experience in management and leadership skills of the new 'cadre' of principals. The qualified and dedicated teachers in such schools become disillusioned, frustrated and may either leave or remain without performing to their maximum.

Career satisfaction for teachers might serve as good motivation for improvements in teaching performance. According to Holmes (2005) career satisfaction can be enhanced by the:

- ♦ extent to which one feels rewarded appropriately for the work one does
- ♦ extent to which one feels adequately trained to perform one's role, and
- ♦ opportunity to develop at both the personal and professional level.

The Parliamentary Monitoring Committee (2007) acknowledged the fact that one of the reasons why teachers leave teaching was because of the limited career prospects and perhaps its

recommendation has led to the implementation of occupation specific dispensation (OSD) for Senior and Master Teachers to address some of the concerns of teachers. The Education Labour Relations Council (2008) also proposed to the employer that from 2009 experience should be recognized for teachers' remuneration.

Despite proposals to motivate teachers the authors are of the view that there is a need for a clear career path and practical promotion criteria if teaching in South Africa is to be seen as a profession. That is, there should be clear ranks and positions with their predetermined notches and progression on satisfactory performance for all teachers irrespective of their union affiliations. Owusu-Boateng et al. (2008) report a promotion criteria for teachers in Ghana where one enters teaching as a Teacher, and based on dedication and good work rises through the ranks -Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent, Senior Superintendent, Principal Superintendent (that is, Assistant Headmaster) to Assistant Director (that is, Headmaster). There is thus a clear career path and criteria for promoting teachers and in such a working environment teachers are assured of promotion based on performance, qualifications and experience.

### METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the context of lack of career path and promotion on job satisfaction among South African teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the investigation in order to achieve triangulation. In the quantitative phase a survey design was adopted using a questionnaire with a Likert-scale. The Likert- scale comprising 14 items which included teaching experience, number of times promoted, awareness of career path, hindrances to promotion and job satisfaction was administered on selected teachers. On the 5 point Likert-scale respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement. One (1) indicated strong agreement and five (5) strong disagreements. The draft questionnaire was pilot tested on 10 teachers from two neutral schools in Taung. This was done to ensure that all important factors were captured on the Likert-scale and thus content validity was achieved.

The sample for the quantitative phase was conveniently drawn from teachers from the Ruth Mompati education district (Vryburg) . A total of 520 teachers were selected to participate in the investigation. In selecting the sample the list of teachers from the education district was requested from the District Office. From that list the researchers picked every other name and sent questionnaire to each of the 520 selected teachers with a covering letter. Although 520 questionnaires were sent out to the participants with self-addressed and stamped envelopes 500 were returned with a loss of 20 questionnaires.

In the qualitative phase a phenomenological method was employed to solicit teachers' views on career path. Brink (2006) affirms that phenomenological methods or studies examine human experience through the descriptions that are provided by the people involved. The purpose of adopting the phenomenological method was to describe and interpret the lived experiences of the participants (that is, teachers). Following the same sampling approach as described in the previous section a total of 100 teachers were deliberately and randomly selected from the Frances Baard education district in the neighbouring Northern Cape Province. The semi-structured interview which comprised 10 items and lasted for about 20 minutes in each case focused on job satisfaction, security and promotion issues. With the permission of the teachers the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The interviews from a different province were deliberately done to use the responses to triangulate those obtained from the questionnaire. The researchers used this strategy as a mechanism to ensure reliability and validity of data collected through the use of questionnaire.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis consisted of frequency analysis of demographic information as well as responses from the Likert-scale. Percentages were computed and the statistical values were used to interpret the results. The analysis is in two parts viz; demographic characteristics of respondents and respondents' perceptions on career path and promotion. Tables 1-5 depict the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The information from Table 1 indicates that there are more female teachers than males in South African schools.

**Table 1: Gender distribution of respondents**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Male	174	34.8
Female	326	65.2
Total	500	100.0

Table 2 shows the age distribution of the respondents. The information from the Table indicates that a clear majority of the respondents (76.6%) are 31 years and above. Some of these teachers might have taught for many years on the same post level without promotion. Only 23.4% of the respondents fall within 21-30 years age bracket and could be new entrants to the profession. The irony is that in absence of clear and practical ways of promoting teachers some of these new teachers might find themselves in senior positions over their experienced and probably more qualified colleagues.

**Table 2: Age distribution of respondents**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
21-30	117	23.4
31-40	174	34.8
41-50	103	20.6
51-60	76	15.2
60+	30	6.0
Total	500	100.0

Table 3 shows that 73.8% of the respondents have taught for over 7 years and might have expected to be promoted if there were clearly laid down promotion criteria for teachers. It is possible that those who have taught for over 15 years are not included in the category of the senior teachers as this might not have been explained to teachers as to how one gets promoted to a senior teacher status. This might explain why the percentage of the respondents who might be senior teachers (teaching for over 21 years) in Table 3 (6.6%) differs from those with 16-20 years teaching experience.

**Table 3: Teaching experience of respondents**

<i>Teaching experience</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Below 3 yrs	37	7.4
4-7 yrs	94	18.8
8-11 yrs	116	23.2
12-15 yrs	126	25.2
16-20 yrs	94	18.8
21 yrs +	33	6.6
Total	500	100.0

The positions occupied by teachers as shown on Table 4 indicate that more than half of the participants (72.2%) are junior teachers with 6.6% senior teachers. These 'junior' teachers might have taught for about 15 years without any promotion. Ten percent (10%) of the respondents are heads of department, 6.6% deputy principals and 4.6% principals. Taking into account the large number of the junior teachers and their teaching experiences, one might wonder why they are still at the lower rank of the profession if there was a career path. The information from the tables imply that the mode of selection and promotion of teachers might not be clear to all teachers or lacks credibility as relatively new teachers of less than 7 years in the profession can be promoted over those who might have taught for over 15 years.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents by position**

<i>Position</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Principal	23	4.6
Deputy principal	33	6.6
Head of department	50	10.0
Senior teacher	33	6.6
Teacher	361	72.2
Total	500	100.0

The information on qualifications of teachers as shown on Table 5 indicate that over 32.8% of the respondents have university degrees and post graduate qualifications with about 48% holding teachers' diploma. With these qualifications and years of teaching experience the expectation of teachers is that they would have been promoted from at least the lowest to the next rank if in practice there were clear career path for teachers in the country.

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents by qualification**

<i>Qualification</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Teachers' certificate	40	8.0
Teachers' Diploma	240	48.0
BA/BCom/BEd/BSc	104	20.8
Honours	40	8.0
Masters	20	4.0
Other	56	11.2
Total	500	100.0

Table 6 clearly shows that majority of the respondents (70%) disagreed with the statement that the career paths and promotion of teachers are clear. This response affirms the discouragement

**Table 6: Respondents' perception about career paths and promotions**

<i>Question</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>SA</i> <i>(%)</i>	<i>A</i> <i>(%)</i>	<i>U</i> <i>(%)</i>	<i>D</i> <i>(%)</i>	<i>SD</i> <i>(%)</i>	<i>General</i> <i>remarks</i>
My career path is very clear to me	500	3.3	8.0	18.7	48.0	22.0	Disagree
I have been promoted within the last 3 years.	500	5.3	6.7	2.7	53.3	32	Disagree
I have been promoted within the last 5 years.	500	8.0	10.0	2.7	53.3	26.0	Disagree
I have never been promoted since I joined the Department.	500	73.3	6.7	2.7	9.3	8.0	Agree
I do not think I will ever be promoted.	500	34.7	25.3	14.7	13.3	12.0	Agree
I am frustrated for the lack of promotion and clear career pathing.	500	30.0	26.7	8.0	20.0	15.3	Vary
The criteria for promotion in the Department are clear and fair.	500	11.3	14.0	20.7	28.7	25.3	Disagree
Qualifications and experience should be should be the key criteria.	500	34.7	26.0	16.7	12.0	10.6	Agree
The proposed occupation specific dispensation (OSD) will address the issues of promotion and career paths.	500	38.7	23.3	12.7	13.3	12.0	Agree

Key to the headings to Table 6; SA= Strongly agree; A=Agree; U =Uncertain; D=Disagree; SD =Strongly disagree

ment among teachers and could have adverse effect on their performance (Lumadi 2008).

Over eighteen percent (18.7%) of the respondents were uncertain about promotion and this could be respondents who were not sure whether senior teacher positions are promotional posts. Only 11.3% of the respondents indicated that the career paths are clear to them and these might be relatively new teachers who through some unconventional means got promoted above colleagues with higher qualifications and experience. This situation makes it imperative for the employer to practically clarify the issues regarding career pathing and promotions of teachers.

A very high majority of the respondents, 80% and above indicated that they have not had any promotion within the last 5 years. Only 18% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they have been promoted within the last 5 years. Again the procedure for such promotions where less experienced or qualified teachers rise above colleagues with much more experience and qualifications raises many questions regarding transparency and credibility.

On the prospect of getting promotion, at least 60% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they did not think they would ever be promoted. Over 14.7% of the respondents were uncertain and only 25.3% were optimistic of getting promoted. These responses affirm the fact that the actual execution of work is influenced by the existence of recognition, achievement and possibility of advancement (Herzberg et al. 1959).

Where these ingredients are missing teachers might not do their best.

On whether respondents have ever been promoted, over 73.3% indicated that they have never been promoted and added that they did not expect to be promoted by the employer.

The respondents gave varied responses to the statement that they were frustrated for the lack of clear career paths and promotion criteria. Nearly 57% (i.e. 56.7%) of the respondents indicated that they are frustrated, 8% were uncertain, whereas 35.3% disagreed with the statement. The above responses corroborate Maslow's theory which stresses the fact that humans have needs to fulfill (Curzon 1990) and when teachers' needs such as shelter, clothing, shelter and self-fulfillment are not achieved through promotion they could lose the motivation to teach better.

Majority of the respondents, 54%, disagreed with the statement that the promotion criteria are clear and fair; 20.7% were uncertain and only 25.3% indicated that the criteria are clear and fair to them. Most respondents, 60.7%, agreed with the statement that the qualification and experience of teachers should be the key criteria for promoting teachers. Only 22.6% disagreed with the statement and these might be the teachers who think they might not get promotion on merit (that is, where qualifications and experience are the main criteria). On the proposed Occupational Specific Dispensation, 62% the respondents agree that it might address some of the problems related to the conditions of service of teachers.

It is interesting to note that 23.3% of respondents were still uncertain as to whether the proposed OSD would address the problem of teachers' conditions of service. Over 25.3% of the respondents disagreed as to whether the OSD would solve the contentious issues regarding career pathing and promotions for school teachers in the new South Africa.

### Findings from the Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interviews of 100 provided participants with the opportunity to describe their experiences as teachers in their natural setting and these views were used to triangulate the data from the quantitative part of the study. Burns and Grove (2005); Polit and Beck (2008) agree that a phenomenological design allows participants to describe and interpret experiences of the phenomena as it is being lived in the natural setting. On the question of knowledge of career paths 80% of the respondents said they were unaware of career paths for teachers, 5% said there are career paths while 15% agreed in the responses that it only exists on paper. To indicate the feeling of frustration one lady teacher remarked;

*"I have taught in this school since 1998, both the current principal and his deputy were my learners. I will soon retire but still on the same level I was first appointed on (P L 1) in January 1998".*

Another interviewee, a male teacher, had this to say:

*"Promotion of teachers is a myth, maybe not in my life time. I am left with five years to retire otherwise I would look for another job. I have told my children not to become teachers because they can never achieve job satisfaction. Most of the employees in other government departments who I taught are far better than me"*

The above statements which were quoted verbatim from some of the interviewees are not different from the responses obtained from the quantitative part of the study. They all point to one thing –frustration of teachers due to the apparent lack of career path and equal opportunity. In sum the main findings from the qualitative interviews are listed here below. The majority of the school teachers in South Africa do not enjoy job satisfaction because:

- ♦ they do not get improvement of life from teaching to enable them establish foothold in the chosen profession to the height they aspire to as well as the experience they crave for (Holmes 2005).
- ♦ the apparent absence of career paths for teachers makes it possible for some less qualified and less experienced teachers get promoted above their colleagues who have been teaching for many years.
- ♦ poor conditions of service, increased workload of teachers, lack of discipline among learners and increasing violence against teachers make good teachers either leave teaching or under perform.

### CONCLUSION

This research set out to investigate the lack of career path on the job satisfaction among South African teachers. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in the data collection which involved 600 participants from the North West and the Northern Cape Provinces. The findings from the empirical investigation which were supported by the qualitative interviews validated the assumption that the lack of opportunities for promotion frustrate school teachers and greatly contribute to lack of job satisfaction among them.

The conclusion drawn from the findings is that unless the government provides a career path with clearly laid down criteria for promotion teachers may never get job satisfaction and without job satisfaction the best teachers might continue to leave teaching in their droves and thus compromising quality education.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study the authors offer the following recommendations to the employer and education stakeholders:

- ♦ to retain teachers and motivate them to teach better the employer must establish a transparent career path for teachers.
- ♦ teaching should be depoliticized and recognized as a profession with its own conditions of service different from that of general public service
- ♦ there must be equal opportunity for all teachers no matter union affiliation of individual teachers

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