RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK ENVIRONMENT AND CAREER MOTIVATION AMONG TEACHERS IN SPECIAL PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NAIROBI COUNTY

Rose Wambui Njihia
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa
P.O Box 62157-00200 Nairobi, Kenya

Referee: Dr. John Martin Owor
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa
P.O Box 62157-00200 Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract
This study sought to investigate the relationship between work environment and career motivation among teachers in special public primary schools in Nairobi County. The study employed concurrent mixed method design and targeted head teachers, teachers and coordinators. In total, 88 participants were used. Data were collected through questionnaires, in-depth interview guides, observation guide and document analysis. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to analyze data. Chi-square test results show that there is no significant relationship between work environment and career motivation among special education teachers, \( \chi^2 (1, N = 70) =0.088, p = 0.766. \) Limited funds, poor planning, and inadequate training were the most challenges likely to negatively affect career motivation among teachers. Conclusions were made that the ministry of education and the school administration to improve the prevailing work environment and enhance teachers’ career motivation by offering specialized training, seminars and workshops, provision of appropriate resources and promotion opportunities.

Key words: Work environment, career motivation, special education teachers, public primary schools, Nairobi County
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

Special education teachers are a category in the teaching profession who specialize in teaching individuals with special needs. Their career by its very nature is of a special sensitivity given the fact that they have to educate while addressing the needs of children with various forms of challenges. Special education teachers’ career needs to be professionally prepared, demands profound sense of self-giving and dedication. Special education teachers should be motivated by improving their working environment in which all teachers work together as a team and as individuals. It is therefore important to recognize and understand work environment and its relationship with career motivation among special education teachers in Nairobi County.

According to Akinyele (2010), work environment is the totality of conditions under which a person or a group of persons work or perform his or her duties. At the school’s setting, work environment consists of two major components, that is, the physical environment and the behavioral component of work environment. Physical environment includes the availability of instructional and non-instructional time, availability of physical and financial resources as well as the availability of facilities. The behavioral component of work environment includes good collaboration (with colleagues, school administration and the students), good governance, professional expertise, community support and school culture.

In the views of Nakpodia (2011), in most special education, there is a lot of work given under stressful working environment. In the United State of America for example, studies show that, in high poverty areas, special education teachers work under unfavorable working environment (Buckley, Schneider & Shang, 2010). According to Boe, Cook & Sunderland (2011), 20% of special education teachers in United States of America who work in high poverty areas quit teaching career permanently every year while others transfer to other schools. In China, special education teachers are faced by the problem of large class sizes. According to Kritzer (2012), special public primary schools in China have between 50-70 students thus making it very difficult to individualize instructions. Worrell & Taber further say that many teachers teaching special children are not trained in special education leading to poor quality of special education provided to children with special needs.

In South Africa, Billingsley (2014) argues that poor remuneration is one of the main reasons why special education teachers quit teaching profession. This according to Billingsley (2014) has resulted into inadequate educational experiences for children with special needs thus lowering their achievement levels. In the views of Nakpodia (2011), in Nigeria, special education teachers are always dissatisfied with the irregularities in the payments of their salaries and other allowances, infrastructural facilities and equipment in school. This state has demotivated teachers in their career leading to deterioration of special education.

In the Kenyan context, the situation of special education teacher poor working environment is not any different from the global and regional trends. In Kenya, there have been a lot of complaints about poor compensation from both general and special education teachers. From time to time teachers also walk to the streets to demonstrate against poor compensation. The matter of teachers’ salaries and remuneration has been outstanding for nearly twenty years, resulting in teachers’ strike almost every year. This matter has continued to disrupt the education of the children leading to poor performance of students (Daily Nation, September 18, 2015). This raises concerns on the effectiveness of compensation as a way of motivating special education teachers in Kenya. Teacher absenteeism, lateness, low productivity, turnover, demonstrations and rampant
strikes witnessed in special public primary schools are a serious indication that teachers from these schools are not motivated with their job.

The current government of Kenya is committed to creating a conducive work environment for special education teachers by increasing teachers’ salaries and other allowances (Ngigi & Orodho, 2014). The government is also committed to strengthening special education training institutions like Kenya Institute for Special Education (KISE) to be able to offer pre-service training at a diploma level as well as Kenyatta and Maseno Universities to be able to offer special education programs up to PhD level. According to Ngigi & Orodho (2014), despite all these efforts by the government, very few people want to join special education profession and the rate of turnover among special education teachers is still raising an alarm.

In Kenya, the problem of special education teacher career motivation has been addressed by many researchers like Otube (2004) and Njiru (2014). On the other hand the Government of Kenya in collaboration with UNESCO has outlined work environment factors for motivating special education teachers but over the years special education teachers quit teaching profession due to lack of motivation. The researcher wonders if it is the work environment for career motivation that is not favorable or whether there are other work environment related challenges that make career motivation among special education teachers difficult. The researcher therefore sought to find out the existing relationship between work environment and career motivation among teachers in special public primary schools in Nairobi County.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
The phenomenon of teacher motivation is a problem facing educational leaders at all levels in Kenya. The government of Kenya is committed to this course by ensuring that special education teachers are motivated in their career by improving the working environment in public special schools. Yet, despite the government's effort for enhancing motivational measures, such as hiring more special education teachers on permanent and contract basis, offering a special package of extra Ksh. 10,000 to special education teachers and providing other allowances, studies show that the problem of low motivation among special education teachers in Kenya still exists as witnessed by high rate turnover, demonstrations and rampant strikes (UNESCO, 2012; World Bank, 2012; Ngigi & Orodho, 2014). Low motivation has led to special education teachers’ shortage thus affecting the quality of education for children with special needs (Otube, 2004; Ngigi & Orodho, 2014; Njiru, 2014).

Literature reviewed (UNESCO, 2012; World Bank, 2012; Ngigi & Orodho 2014; and Njiru, 2014) addressing special education teacher, shows that scholars have not adequately addressed the question of the relationship between work environment and career motivation among special education teachers. Thus, the phenomenon remains not well understood. It is essential that the interplay between work environment and teacher career motivation is fully understood. Therefore, through the current study, the researcher endeavored to assess the relationship between work environment and career motivation among special education teachers in special public primary special schools in Nairobi County.
1.3 Research Questions
This study was guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the status of work environment in special public primary schools in Nairobi County?

ii. What is the level of career motivation among special education teachers in special public primary schools in Nairobi County?

iii. What is the nature of relationship between work environment and career motivation among special education teachers in special public primary schools in Nairobi County?

iv. What work environment related challenges are likely to negatively affect career motivation among special education teachers?

v. What strategies should be employed to effectively motivate special education teachers in special public primary schools in Nairobi County?

1.4 Research Hypothesis
This study was guided by the following research hypothesis:

Ha: There is a significant relationship between work environment and career motivation among special education teachers in Nairobi County.

1.5 Theoretical Framework
The study is grounded on Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977) Social-Ecological Theory (SET). The theory explains the relationship that exist between individuals (in this case, special education teachers), the environment and the various factors that influence their career motivation.

Bronfenbrenner describes the environment through four unique subsystems. The first subsystem is the micro-system which represent the classroom where actual teaching and learning take place. At the classroom level special education teachers’ career motivation can be influenced by factors such as the teacher-student ration, students’ discipline, workload, etc. The second subsystem is the meso-system which represents the school. At the school level, the relationship between teachers and the school administration can either lower or enhance teachers’ career motivation. The third subsystem is the exo-system which is the community where the school is located. A school located in a community where there is friendliness and cooperation, special education teachers will feel motivated in their career. The final subsystem is the macro-system which includes the various law, regulation and educational policies which govern teaching and learning. According to Bronfenbrenner, each subsystem contributes to the overall work environment where teachers’ level of career motivation is either enhanced or lowered. The model of Socio-Ecological Theory is illustrated in Figure 1.
1.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (figure 2) depicts the interaction between work environment and career motivation among special education teachers in special public primary schools in Nairobi County. The conceptual framework assumes that work environment consists of two major components. These components include the physical environment (availability of physical and financial resources, presence of facilities and sufficient instructional and non-instructional time) and behavior components of environment (collaboration with colleagues, good governance, professional expertise, community support and school culture). The presence or absence of physical and behavior component of environment leads to special education teacher career motivation or demotivation. In this study, special education teacher career motivation was measured in terms of teacher efficacy, school leadership, negative influences and intrinsic compensation. (See illustration on Figure 2).
Independent

Variable Dependent

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework showing Relationship between Variables.
2. METHODOLOGY
This study adopted a mixed research approach. Specifically, the researcher adopted concurrent mixed method design. According to Creswell & Clark (2007), concurrent mixed method design is a one phase design in which researchers implement the quantitative and qualitative methods during the same timeframe and with equal weight. The study targeted special education coordinators, head teachers and teachers in all seven special public primary schools in Nairobi County. Due to small number of the target population “N”, all the 7 special public primary schools were used in the study. Six special schools were used in the main study while one was used during pilot testing. The researcher purposively selected fourteen (14) special education coordinators to participate in the study. All head teachers of the six participating schools were included in the study. Teachers who participated in the study were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling procedure since their population was heterogeneous with reference to gender (male and female). The sample size of teachers selected in six special schools was 27 males and 43 females giving a sample size of 70 teachers.

Four research instruments were used in the study. They are; questionnaire for special education teachers, in-depth interview guide for coordinators and head teachers, observation and document analysis guide were used to gather information on physical facilities in special schools. Content validity which is a more systematic approach to obtaining an idea of how valid the instrument is, was used in the study. The researcher gave the instruments to a special education lecturer, a special education officer and a special education coordinator at the county level who are experts in the area of special education. They examined the items in the questionnaires and interview guides and related them to the objectives of the study to ascertain whether the questions represented the concept of the study.

To determine the reliability of the questionnaires, the researcher used internal consistency as this reliability type can be estimated from giving one form of a test once. The researcher administered questionnaires to ten special education teachers during pilot testing. The received responses of items in the Likert scale were subjected to the Cronbach’s alpha formula that was applied to a specific sections of the questionnaire. This yielded a reliability index of 0.83. This as well qualified the questionnaire instrument for use.

The researcher adopted both qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the data. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were coded and keyed in the computer via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 data analysis software. Descriptive statistics were presented by way of frequencies and percentages. On the other hand inferential statistics carried out were specific to stated hypothesis. Chi square test for independence statistical test was used to test hypothesis. Data from open –ended questions and interview guides were transcribed, reconstructed and analyzed using narratives and direct quotes.

3. PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS
3.1 The Status of Work Environment in Special Public Primary Schools
Research question one sought to establish the prevailing status of work environment in special public primary schools in Nairobi County. Special education teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements related to work environment. The mean score obtained was 112.11 with a standard deviation of 10.633 signifying that the status of work environment in special public primary schools in Nairobi County was unfavorable.
As shown in Table 1, 64 (91.4%) of the special education teachers indicated the status of work environment to be unfavorable while 6 (8.6%) of the teachers’ opinion towards the status of work environment was favorable. It therefore emerges that the status of work environment in public special schools in Nairobi County was unfavorable as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Status of Special Education Teachers’ Work Environment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of work environment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfavorable</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>91.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorable</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3.2 The Level of Career Motivation among Special Education Teachers**

The second research question of this study sought to establish the level of career motivation among special education teachers in special public primary schools in Nairobi County. Special education teachers were presented with statements related to teacher career motivation and they were to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The mean score obtained was 85.17 with a standard deviation of 7.253 signifying that special education teachers’ level of career motivation was low.

As shown in Table 2, 55 (78.6%) of the teachers indicated that their level of career motivation was low while 15 (21.4%) of the teachers felt that their level of career motivation was high. It therefore emerges that most of teachers’ level of career motivation in public special schools in Nairobi County was low. These findings are in line with previous research findings by Ngigi and Orodho (2014) which indicated that the motivation of teachers and head-teachers in Kenyan schools is usually low.

**Table 2**

**Level of Special Education Teachers’ Career Motivation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of career motivation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Relationship between Work Environment and Career Motivation among Special Education Teachers

To establish the relationship between work environment and career motivation, a Chi-square test was run for a null hypothesis that read there is no significant relationship between work environment and career motivation. The results obtained are as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Chi-square Test for Relationship between Work Environment and Career Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>.088a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 3, the p value is .766 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance, $\chi^2 (1, N = 70) = 0.088, p = 0.766$. Chi-square test results show that there is no significant relationship between work environment and career motivation. Therefore, the researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. These findings are in line with Frase (2000) who found no relationship between work environment and motivation of teachers. Frase (2000) states that teachers cannot be motivated by work environment alone. Frase therefore, identified two sets of factors that motivate teachers’ motivational level, that is, the work environment and the teaching itself (work content factors). Work environment include factors such as resources, supervision, salary, security, status, and workload. Work content factors according to Frase are intrinsic in nature and include opportunity for professional development, empowerment, authority, achievement, responsibility, recognition and challenging and varied work. For special education teachers to feel motivated, therefore, the work environment and work content factors or intrinsic rewards should be enhanced.
3.4 Work Environment Related Challenges Likely to Negatively Affect Career Motivation among Special Education Teachers

A number of work environment related challenges likely to negatively affect career motivation were suggested by the respondents and their responses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Environment Related Challenges Likely to Negatively Affect Career Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy work load</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural beliefs/attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption/misuse of funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority (25%) of special education teachers believed that shortage of funds constitutes an immense problem in special public primary schools thus negatively affecting their career motivation. This finding concurs with Kiyuba & Sani (2014) who also identified inadequate funds as one of the major challenges affecting special schools in Uganda. Poor planning on the other hand is detrimental for career motivation of special education teachers as indicated by 21% of teachers. Even if all resources were put in place in special schools but the concerned persons do not plan strategically on how to utilize fruitfully what is available, it all ends up in stagnant growth. Proper planning is crucial in hitting fixed targets and accomplishing any kind of objective, including career motivation for special school teachers.

Sixteen (16%) of teachers believed that inadequate training is another factor that complicates any idea of career motivation. This finding is in agreement with studies carried out by Ayieko, Chisikwa, Odwar & Were (2010) who found out that there is lack of adequate training of special education teachers in special education in Kenya. Inadequate time is also another challenge as indicated by 11% of special education teachers. Time is a question to reckon with if at all aspects work environment should holistically motivate the career of teachers. Heavy work load was also indicated by 9% of special education teachers as a challenge.
negatively affecting their career motivation. Work load was retained by head teachers and coordinators as being also a major issues raising concern on their motivation.

A small proportion of 4% of teachers indicated cultural beliefs as a work environment related challenge likely to negatively affect career motivation among special education teachers. Corruption and misuse of funds was also indicated by 7% of special education teachers as a hurdle to career motivation among special education teachers. The finding of this study is in agreement with Kiyuba & Sani (2014) who found out that corruption among officials within the system is a huge challenge affecting special education provision for children with special needs in Uganda. Many institutions in the country have been polluted by the menace of corruption. Corruption and misuse of funds afflict even special schools as mentioned by head teachers. Funds which are dedicated to promote teachers motivation are sometimes lost mysteriously; procurement of equipment for special schools are sometimes not done transparently, thus, obsolete and inappropriate equipment are those acquired; initiatives for training are undermined due to corruption and some head teachers retained that at times significant amounts of special school funds are allocated inappropriately to areas of little importance as per the organization of special schools with the idea swindling resources.

The most highlighted work environment related challenge by the head teachers during the interviews was poor remuneration. From their common sentiments, the remuneration teachers are accorded is not in proportion to the nature of work they undertake in special education. They felt that the Ksh 10,000 increment on teachers’ basic salary in comparison to the flat rate that the teachers in ordinary public primary schools receive is far too inadequate to remunerate sufficiently teachers who are employed in special education. One of the head teachers said “there is no way such a minimal increment can boost teachers’ morale.” The head teacher continued “the basic salary is already too little to an extent that an additional Ksh 10,000 does not practically make any difference in form of motivation.”

It was also pointed out that the syllabus and the curriculum used by public special schools poses a lot of challenges to teacher career motivation. Practically there is no special syllabus or curriculum for special public schools according to one of the interviewed head teacher. The head teacher further said that the curriculum used in special schools is actually adapted from that of the ordinary schools. To adapt or translate the ordinary curriculum for special education poses a lot of challenges in various ways; firstly, adaptation of a curriculum from ordinary education to special education demands a special degree of skills. This is not only time consuming but also requires a lot of preparations and intuition from the part of special education teachers. Secondly, children with special needs need a curriculum that is specially prepared to suit their challenges. Besides, most of public special schools in Nairobi County host children with various and complex types of challenges for which every category would require a specialized curriculum. All these concerns outlined in relation to the adaptation of the curriculum most often leave teachers perplexed as they do not see signs of growth and improvements in the educational dimensions of students as explained by head teachers during the interviews.
3.5 Strategies to be Employed to Effectively Motivate Special Education Teachers

A number of recommendations were suggested on the possible strategies, which could go a long way in motivating special education teachers in their career. The suggestions are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies for Motivating Special Education Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monetary incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study leave with pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nineteen (27.1%) of special education teachers felt that by engaging special education teachers to the relevant training and professional development can motivate, provide innovative ideas and gives a fresh perspective. Whether in the form of wages, salaries or any other incentive pay, paid insurance, or any of the other things that may be given to special education teachers for performance, money seems to play an important role in career motivation as indicated by (21.4%) of special education teachers. Special education teachers therefore, must be given salaries and allowances that reflect their individual performances. Enhanced communication between special education teachers and the school administration was also mentioned by 15.7% of special education teachers as one of the best strategies for their career motivation. There should be an open door policy between the school administration and the teachers.

The respondents (11.4%) also noted that seminars and workshops are some of the avenues for career motivation to be employed to enhance special education teachers’ knowledge and career skills. This concurs with Ige (2014) who said that sponsoring teachers to conferences, seminars, and workshops should be adopted and implemented as one of the strategies which ensures motivation of teachers which leads to effective teaching in special education. The respondents (8.6%) recognize study leave with pay for special education teachers as an educational structural program which is the most reliable opportunity for their career motivation. This finding coincides with Salifu & Agbenyega (2013) who found study leave with pay as one of
the best motivational strategies for motivating teachers in Ghana. In Kenya, this is an open program for any teacher who may be interested in further education.

The respondents further felt that for special education teachers to feel motivated in their career, they need appropriate resources to do their jobs effectively. To enhance career motivation, the head teacher must be able to give teachers the resources they need. Other respondents (7.2%) felt that special education teachers need promotion opportunities in order to feel motivated in their career. The government, therefore, should reconsider its position, specifically with regards to promotion period for special education teachers by considering special education teachers for promotion soon after their return from the in-service training as this could act as a motivating factor.

The current study clearly shows that monetary incentives alone (the main motivational strategy used to motivate teachers in Kenya) cannot motivate teachers sustainably to continue performing at their best. Special education teacher motivational strategies should include other components such as opportunities for professional growth and accomplishment, enhanced communication, adequate resources and promotion opportunities.

4. CONCLUSIONS
From the findings of the study, the researcher arrived at the following conclusions:

The study found no significant relationship between work environment and career motivation among special education teachers in special public primary schools in Nairobi County, the status of work environment factors for career motivation was found to be unfavorable and the level of career motivation was found to be low. Limited funds, inadequate time, heavy work load, poor planning, and in adequate training were the most cited work environment related challenges likely to negatively affect career motivation among special education teachers in public primary schools in Nairobi County. In order to enhance career motivation among special education teachers, specialized training, good remuneration, enhanced communication, seminars and workshops, study leave with pay, provision of appropriate resources are some of the strategies which need to be improved in special public primary schools in Nairobi County.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings of the study and with the objective of enhancing career motivation of teachers in special schools, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- Special educational authorities (Teachers Service Commission, Ministry of Education and the school administration) should improve the prevailing work environment for special education teachers by providing them with an adequate working environment necessary to facilitate good teaching and to boost their morale.

- Special educational authorities should provide both psychological and physiological incentives to special education teachers, which are conducive in terms of facilities, resources, better interaction opportunities and good governance, recognition, promotion, achievement to ensure that they work in an enabling environment.

- Government should allocate adequate funds to public special schools through its annual budgets to strengthen special education teachers’ motivational needs.
• Teachers Service Commission and Ministry of Education should always take into consideration special education teachers’ motivational needs especially in such areas like in-service training and promotion opportunities.

References


