The Emotional Plight of Teachers: Ghanaian Perspective

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Abstract.
Teachers are faced with diverse and challenging problems continuously in the course of delivering their duties. Most of these teachers face endless accusations from the various stake holders in education. Emotions of the teacher are important for the standard of teaching, and they are critical elements for the psychological well-being of teachers and their learners. The author during her years in the Mamexi D/A Junior High School (J.H.S) as a student observed teachers who taught two subjects. She observed that there were two teachers who had displayed varied emotions while teaching different subjects (each teacher teaches two subjects). Findings from multi-level analysis confirmed the person specificity of enjoyment, anger, and, in particular, anxiety when it comes to lessons delivering. In her carrier as a teacher, she experienced similar problem and also observed many teachers with similar problems. So, she set out to find the reason(s) for the emotional flinch in teachers. Using narrative research, she interviewed five participants, four teachers and the headteacher in Mamexi D/A JHS to find the possible factors of the emotional variation by same teachers. Teachers and the head teacher expressed their plight and disappointment in the administrators of Ghana Education Service claiming they were the cause of their emotional flinch in classes because of inappropriate subject allocation.

Keywords: Emotion; Administration; Job-satisfaction.

1.0 Introduction

Ghana Education Service (GES)
Many researchers for several years have shown growing interest in the emotions of teachers with most of them focusing on “between teacher” variation and within teacher variation (Betty et al., 2015) with little emphasis on the factors that trigger these variations. This research intends to explore two questions. A) are the emotions of teachers the same across all grades (emotion-grade specific)? B) what is the relationship between educational administration and the emotional flinch of teachers (emotion-administration specific)?

It is an undeniable fact that relations in school are complex and are influenced by the emotions involved among different actors in school (Cowie, 2011; Uitto et al.,2015). The teacher being a captain of the classroom faces emotional challenges which cannot be ignored. It is time to take another step on the road towards a less polarized, and more complex and situated understanding of teacher emotions. If teachers’ emotions are principally shaped by the person, and the administration with which they work, then generic approaches to their assessment could be redirected, and intervention programs could focus on restructuring of administrative techniques.

Methodology
This research is empirically rooted in interviews about life history of four teachers and a headteacher during their period of teaching. The interview was conducted individually by the researcher to ensure open and free flow of information. The teachers had been working together in Mamexi Junior High. One of them was posted to the school three years before the interview, three of them were posted to the school for more than ten years as at the time of the interview, and the headteacher had been working in the school for more than fifteen years and will be going on compulsory retirement in two years’ time after the interview. All interviews were audio documented and transcribed in detail. For example, the length of pauses, voice levels, citations of characters in the stories and the use of different voices (Bauman, 1986). The transcripts were coded regarding specific teachers’ work. The stories were carefully analyzed identifying the possible causes.
of emotional flinch that teachers experience in delivering their daily duties in the classroom. Prior to the
interview, the researcher obtained permission from the administration (Ghana Education Service Central
Tongu District) and worked in the school as a teaching assistant for three months in order to get insight into
the actual situations. During this period, she observed all the teachers as they all teach in the three classes
(JHS 1-3). The researcher then took note as she was observing the teachers. She also assisted all the teachers
at different times in teaching when approached. It was during this time that she identified that the emotions
of teachers varied with respect to the classes and subjects they handled.

A Narrative Approach To Understanding The Factors Responsible For Emotional Flinch In Teachers.
This narrative approach presents an understanding of emotional aspects of teachers through a focus on how
teachers, in interview conversations, make narrative sense of the past/present work life experiences. Looking
at stories of personal experiences as a social practice means that a story told in an interview is seen as
co-constructed by interviewee and interviewer (Hakan and Marie, 2016). It makes the narrative as
fascinating as its material to examine. An analytical focus on both the story content and on how the story is
told (Mishler, 1995), can teach us about teachers’ emotional dimensions as their stories come about through
the tactile process of co-telling the past experiences of teachers. The inclusion of the interview nature of the
narrative (Bamberg, 1997) can make visible emotional aspects of teacher students’ relations. For most
people, storytelling is a natural way of recounting experience, a practical solution to a fundamental problem
in life, creating reasonable order out of experience. Not only are we continually producing narratives to
order and structure our life experiences, we are also constantly being bombarded with narratives from the
social world we live in. We create narrative descriptions about our experiences for ourselves and others, and
we also develop narratives to make sense of the behavior of others (Zellermayer, 1997). For the purpose of
getting detailed understanding of the emotions of teachers, the narrative approach is used.

Factors Responsible for Emotional Flinch in Teachers
Subject-emotion generalisation
It is assumed that teacher emotion should be systematically the same or similar when teaching certain
subjects. It has been assumed that if teachers hold a bachelor's degree in a particular course, they would
know enough about the subjects related to that particular course and they would teach them effectively.
Some people argue that teachers who had more credit in a particular subject would do better teaching them,
others argue that increasing the number of credits in a subject will not assure that teachers will be able to
 teach that subject effectively. For instance, in Ghana, if a teacher majors in Mathematics in school, that
teacher is said to be able to teach Science related subjects too. However, according to Stodolsky (1988), the
intellectual tasks given to students vary by subject. That is, a single teacher may concentrate on simpler,
more routine tasks when teaching one subject, but introduce more complex problems when teaching another
subject. For some scholars, subject matter means a particular set of skills in a particular subject; for others it
means a set of ideas or concepts; for some others it may mean a way of reasoning about certain kinds of
problems. In reality, teachers differ in the subjects they teach no matter how related the subjects are. Most
teachers with mathematics background in the basic schools in Ghana are given Integrated science to teach.
The integrated science includes several fields such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Agriculture. Such
teachers may have several concepts about chemistry, biology and agriculture but not with the requisite skills
to teach them.

Emotion-grade specificity.
Direct empirical evidence of the group specificity of teacher emotions is lacking in many researches. There
are, however, some findings suggesting that teachers’ affection and emotions may be group specific. For
example, in several studies, class-average student motivation was found to correlate positively with
teachers’ positive experiences during teaching in the particular grade. It could be seen sometimes that teachers’ enjoyment and enthusiasm were group specific. A teacher who majored in early childhood development, may be more committed to teaching at the lower level than the higher level but unfortunately some of those teachers are placed at the JHS sometimes against their desire.

**Emotion -administration specific**

Inconsistencies within and between administrative skills create their own pressures on teachers and their students. The worry is that the cumulative demands and resulting fragmentation and incoherence could undermine the capacity of teachers thereby leading to emotional flinch within the teacher. The key relationships in the ways school leaders strengthen teacher recruitment, development and retention include factors such as teacher satisfaction, school effectiveness, improvement, capacity, teacher leadership, distributive leadership, organisational learning, and development. School leaders can be a major influence on these school-level factors as well as help buffer against the excesses of the mounting and sometimes contradictory external pressures (Bill Mulford, 2003). Teaching in Ghana has become result oriented than the skills it instills in learners. Teachers do not enjoy the work but simply do it to comply with administrative principles.

**Ethical considerations.**

In this study, the teachers interviewed had been informed that at any stage of the process, they could finish their participation and the researcher would only use the data for research and that they would be given the opportunity to read the transcripts. Names of people and places have been altered in order to meet research ethical requirements of confidentiality.

**Data analysis**

To tackle the first of the two questions; ‘are the emotions of teachers the same across every subject’ (subject-emotion generalization)? And are the emotions of teachers the same across all grades (emotion-grade specific), the three-level model for positioning analysis developed by Bamberg (1997, 2004) has been applied. That is, what is the story about, and how are the story characters positioned in relation to each other? At this first point, the study focused on the role of the characters in the world of the story; The goal is to discover what linguistic means characterizes people, for example as agents inside or outside of influence. The second level of the analysis asks: 2. How do the interlocutors position themselves and each other in the interactive situation; The research interests in the interview sense depend on the social role of the story. Stories, for example, can be said as a way to instruct and advise the audience, or to make excuses and blame others for the incident. 3. How do the interlocutors position themselves vis-à-vis cultural discourses and normative positions (Håkan Löfgren and Marie Karlsson, 2016). The analysis thus targeted the following questions.

a) What are teacher emotions’ personal stories and how are the characters (teachers and management) put in relation to each other?

b) What are the emotional positions of the interviewer and the interviewees in the stories told?

c) What cultural tales of the work of teachers arise from the placement of story characters and storytellers?

These three stages of analysis of the positioning separate the stories of emotional ties among teachers and management from the act of telling by separating the characters of the tale positioned in the past story world from the positions that emerge in the immediate interview discussions.

**Results and discussion**

After a careful analysis of the results of the past students of Mamexi JHS from 2003 to the time of the
research, the researcher selected three stories and presented a positioning analysis on them.

**The Mamexi JHS and academic performance**
The Mamexi JHS (formerly middle school) was established in the year 1963. The school was noted for its disciplinary actions and high academic performance. It was even referred to by the town folks as the correctional center of the deviants. This drew the attentions of many to the school and its progress stories. In the year 2000, the school won an excellence award when the students wrote the BECE (Basic Education Certificate Examination). In 2001, the staff strength of the school reduced from seven teachers to five teachers because the Ghana Education Service’s (GES) policy says that the ratio of teacher to students is 1:30 (one teacher teaches thirty learners at a time). Since the number of students in the school was not up to 150, the GES had to transfer two of the teachers to other schools where there were staff deficits. This posed a problem to the headteacher who was also a subject teacher. The number of subjects taught in the school were 9 and this automatically suggested that, one teacher would handle more than one subject in three grades. This started the plight of some teachers in the school. It was then arranged that the Mathematics teacher teaches Science as well, the Social Studies teacher teaches Agriculture Studies also. The pairing continued for other subjects too. Subjects that are slightly related are handled by one teacher. Only the headteacher teaches one subject which he found difficult considering blend of administrative work with classroom work. Actually, one teacher was almost all-round and was feeling overused or mishandled.
The researcher selected three stories (from the headteacher and two teachers).

**The Actual Me and the Forcing Me**
The first narrative was by Mr. Joe who taught in Mamexi JHS for 14 years and was in his final year to pension. The title of his story caught my attention. His narrations about his work as a teacher can be seen as telling the interviewer the kind of teacher he has been throughout his long career. He began his story with his first moments of teaching and the nature of his work at the beginning and then continued with his subsequent experiences.

Interviewer: Hi Sir, what prompted your choice of title (the actual me and the forcing me)?

Mr. Joe: My first three years as a teacher was okay though the salary was nothing to talk about but I would rather not go to that angle. I saw myself teaching very well and was mostly eager to take classes in the absence of other teachers. I was teaching Agriculture Studies as that is my area of specialization. My students were getting good results in my subject. In 2002, Social studies was added to my subject because some teachers were transferred from the school. That begun my plight as a teacher. Not my area at all. I had no choice than to start reading materials. In fact, at that time my confidence level in the subject was low. Unlike Agric, I was always reluctant to go to the class when the students had lessons. To further complicate the situation, there were no text books for learners to use. You should understand what I am saying. You were my student at that time.

Interviewer: Yes Sir.

Mr. Joe: Then when they wrote the national examination, the results were very good in Agric but in social studies, though the students passed most of them had weak passes. As usual the education office was on my neck as though I was not the same person who taught Agric. I then decided to redeem my name. I spent nights reading social studies like a BECE candidate to ensure that the next batch doesn’t experience same situation. That started the second me as a forcing teacher. Do you remember sometimes I dosed off whiles teaching?
Interviewer: Hmmmm.

Mr. Joe: That was because I had little sleep at night. The fact that I am an Agric teacher does not mean I could teach Social studies effectively. The students suffer the most under these circumstances. I am always enthused to and ready to go to class when I have agriculture. My students feel my teaching skills and I see myself delivering in a lively class. Unfortunately, it is not same in the Social class. Given the opportunity, I would change this kind of administration. The children are not many but the classes are still different. Three grades.

Deducing from his story, it is obvious he had little knowledge as far as Social studies was concerned. He positioned himself at a receiving corner as a teacher who has no choice than to just obey administrative authorities. This stance is further strengthened by explaining how things went "slacker" when he had to “burn” the night preparing for the lesson delivering. His story showcased him as a persistent teacher who was interested in the academic performance of his pupils. From his narrative, his emotion differs depending on the subject he teaches and he seemed to hold the administration responsible for it. The emotional aspects of teachers that are preformed through the telling of this story are visible through the way that Mr. Joe positions himself in relation to the interviewer as she being his student and how they experienced his class as a result of order and discipline imposed on schools by higher authorities undermining teacher’s competence.

The next story is by another teacher who like many other teachers expressed her worry about being overused or her role being abused.

**The Mobile Teacher.**

This story was told by Miss Cate, a female teacher who has been posted to the Mamexi JHS three years at the time of the research. The author was curious about this story because of the title. Her story deals with experiences of some teachers who are regarded being a “junk of all trees” and has knowledge about almost all subjects.

Miss. Cate: The GES has now decided to send teachers per their subject areas but has forgotten that there were teachers on the staff already and the number of subjects is also more than the number of teachers. They send teachers and allocate subjects to them in the office without consulting if someone was already handling such subject. I went to a college that offers general course to trainees so it presupposes that, coming from such college I could teach any subject. In one academic year, I had changed subject three times. I even changed subjects two times a term. Why? Because new teachers come with their letters and particular subject area is given to them. My headteacher would say, “Madam, please consider the children and handle this other subject. The next moment, a teacher would be transferred and when they want to send a replacement, they would not send someone who could handle the subject the previous teacher taught. They would bring another person who would come and say, “I cannot teach this subject. I can only teach this other one”. Then Miss Cate is the next resort. When you check my lesson note, I have different subjects in it. In fact, I even taught in the primary school for two weeks. It got to a point that the work I loved and enjoyed so much became scarecrow for me that when I thought of going to school, then I began to fear that I may go to school and a new teacher would come.

Interviewer: have you expressed your displeasure to the office?

Miss Cate: Office, the next option they would give you is transfer. I just forced myself to cope because of my students and my headteacher who has no choice.
Interviewer: you might have been stressed.

Miss Cate: Stressed? I have been depressed and I am already thinking that this profession is a curse to me and a hindrance to my job satisfaction. I am committed to my work and I hate to see my students suffer because of me. It got to a point I was teaching math and science in JHS one and two, math and Ghanaian language in JHS 3. Imagine the frustration!

Interviewer: I see.
Miss Cate: I feel excited and ready to deliver when I get to some of the classes but in some, I just have to manage.

From Miss Cate’s narrative, it could be seen that she laid emphasis on the GES being the cause of her job dissatisfaction. She portrayed herself as a mobile teacher who was being moved from one class to another and from subject to subject. This is obviously the plight she has as a young and devoted teacher. Sitting at her angle, it could be seen that the GES do little or no check on whether teachers who teach in the school have their subject specifications.

The last story was narrated by the headteacher. Mr. Andrew has been heading the school for six years at the time of the interview. He explained his own plight and the encounters he had with teachers and officers at the education office. He entitled his story ‘The catapult’.

Interviewer: why catapult Sir?
Mr. Andrew: it is simple, you have been with us for some time now and you have listened to teachers complain always. I go to the office and bring back the information to them and if they are not pleased with the information, the pressure is on me. So, tell me, am I not a catapult that the education office is using at the teachers. I am not a happy headteacher because of the way the administration is. I don’t have control over anything at all. I only relay the decision to my colleagues.

Interviewer: okay
Mr. Andrew: this one school is being managed by three partners (GES, IN Ghana and Global Evangelical church). I am answering to all these three bodies and I am still a subject teacher so I mostly fall on Miss Cate to teach my lesson for me since she is the only one who can teach my subject which is Ghanaian language. I am stressed and sometimes I wish I could resign as the head and concentrate on subject teaching.

Interviewer: is it that bad?
Mr. Andrew: it is more than that bad. I am still considering that decision. I am just an executor of the policies made. The GES makes the policies in Accra and send down to us to implement without coming to the grassroot to observe actually what is on ground.

Judging from his story, it could be realized that, he is trying to deliver his duty but certain factors hinder his progress. Though he is the headteacher, he still does not have the authority to allocate classes or subject without recommendation from the GES office. He was a ‘catapult’ being used to hit the colleagues and they also get dissatisfied with him. He was not only struggling with administrative burden but also as a subject teacher. His story has in some ways confirmed Miss Cate’s story when she said she was a mobile teacher.

DISCUSSION
From the three stories, it could be seen that the major problem they have is with job satisfaction. Some learners go to school with heavy emotional loads and there is the need for teachers’ emotional stability to help such students. Hoppock defined job satisfaction as any combination of psychological, physiological and environmental circumstances that cause a person truthfully to say I am satisfied with my job (Hoppock,
1935). The two teachers and the headteacher complained about similar things all pointing to administration. It is true that commonly in human society, there is always a blame game but when the fingers are pointing to one direction then it means there might be a hitch. Job satisfaction is a key to success of work including teaching. People assign significance to their work in a variety of ways, as Pratt and doctoral students Douglas Lepisto and Camille Pradies describe in a chapter in the 2013 book "Purpose and Meaning in the Workplace." Some may derive meaning not from the job itself, but from the fact that it allows them to provide for their families and pursue non-work activities that they enjoy. Others may find meaning in being able to advance themselves and be the best they can be. People with a craftsmanship orientation take pride in performing the job well (Kirsten Weir, 2013). For teachers to advance themselves in what they teach, they need to assess themselves every academic year after students write the external examination. The job satisfaction comes if students pass the examination. One thing teachers must be bear in mind is that avoidance (e.g., suppression, disengagement) is the worst way to cope with the troubled person environment problem.

Most organizations strive for employee satisfaction, but not all attain this goal. That’s why it’s important for human resources professionals to know more about the factors that can increase employee satisfaction, and how it fits into a company’s overall success. Teachers in this school do not have stable and uniform emotions during lesson delivering and this affects the performance of the students. Teaching is about reaching clear to the heart of another human being and using everything you have got to make a difference in their lives. It’s calming kids when they’ve had a rough recess, celebrating when they lose their first tooth, absorbing their struggles and their traumas, channeling their joy, and investing the currency of your own emotions in an effort to help them grow (Emily Kaplan, 2019). So, if the teacher is emotionally unstable, it affects the emotions of learners as well. Although teachers should always expect to bring their humanity and vulnerability to their job, they can’t—and shouldn’t—be expected to alleviate the pressures that cause them to feel such disproportionate ownership over their students’ emotional lives. Instead, we need to address the fact that the system expects teachers to do this in the first place.

LIMITATIONS.
In this research, data was collected from both primary school teachers and the headteacher of a junior high school. Because of time constraint, data has not been collected from the education office which was a focal point of accusation by teachers and the head. This questions the validity and reliability of the findings. The narrative method used gave room to teachers to perceive and interpret situations in a way that might gain sympathy for them.

CONCLUSION
The find out about the factors that cause emotional flinch within teachers, the researcher used narrative research to seek views from teachers. Two teachers expressed their inner feelings and complain about the status of job satisfaction. After a careful analysis of data, it has been realized that teachers emotional flinch occurs per the subject and/class they teach. Joy, Love, Sadness, Anger, and Fear are the outcomes of inappropriate administration. Teachers need to be taken through emotional management skills so that as to reduce the adverse effect their emotions cause to learners. Emotion-focused coping strategies (Feryal Cubukcu 2012) allow teachers to label and acknowledge the actual emotions they are experiencing as well as to temporarily regulate emotions through social recognition. It is advisable that teachers don not focus on the problems more than the solution.

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