

English Language Teachers' Sustained Motivation to Teach Until Retirement: A Phenomenological Study of ESL Retirees in The West African Subregion

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Abstract

Focus: Teacher motivation is crucial for educational success, yet little is understood about the sustained motivation of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in West Africa who teach until retirement. This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of retired ESL teachers in the region, aiming to identify the factors that sustained their motivation throughout their careers. **Theoretical Framework:** Grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the study examines the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on long-term commitment to the teaching profession. **Methodology:** Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 10 retired ESL university teachers from Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Gambia, and Sierra Leone, selected via purposive sampling. **Findings:** The study identifies seven key motivators; personal passion, student success, strong collegial support, and professional growth. Additionally, supportive school environments, professional development opportunities, and community recognition were found to play critical roles in sustaining motivation. The outcome also reveals challenges such as inadequate resources and low remuneration. **Recommendations:** The study recommends that education policymakers should invest in teacher support systems that address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to foster a motivated teaching workforce. **Implications:** These findings contribute to the broader discourse on teacher retention and motivation, offering empirical insights for sustaining teacher commitment in resource-constrained contexts.

Keywords: Teacher motivation; ESL (English as a Second Language); Retired teachers; West Africa; Teacher retention