

# The predictive influence of headteachers' task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours on teachers' retention intentions in Ghana

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## Abstract

The study examined if significant dynamic and reciprocal relationships exist among the task-oriented managerial behaviours of headteachers, and how these behaviours specifically and jointly influence teachers' retention intention. Out of the multistage sampled 350 schools, suitable questionnaires from 279 schools representing 558 questionnaires filled by teachers provided data on 279 headteachers. The analysis showed that headteachers' problem-solving behaviour, clarifying behaviour and monitoring operations behaviour influenced their planning activities as leaders. The planning behaviour significantly predicted retention intention and had a significant mediating effect on the relationships between clarifying, monitoring, and problem-solving behaviours on one hand and teachers' retention intention on the other. The implications of the study's findings and future research directions are discussed.

## Keywords

Planning, problem-solving, clarifying, monitoring, teacher retention

## Introduction

Müller et al. (2009: 574) indicate that “matching vacant teaching posts with qualified candidates is a key issue for the organization and running of schools”. The institutions responsible and in charge of this task in Ghana's educational system at the pre-tertiary levels are the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service (GES). The Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service have a formulated policy framework on pre-tertiary teacher professional development and management in Ghana (Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service, 2012). The policy seeks among other things to decentralise teacher management (recruitment and retention) at district and

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school level. The National Teaching Council of Ghana (Education Act, 2008) are to provide guidelines and regulations for the implementation of the policy in line with the call by Baah et al. (2009: 38) that the Ghana “government and for that matter the GES adopt a policy on the retention of teachers in the classrooms”. The policy is yet to be implemented (Dery, 2016). This makes the roles of headteachers critical. With the policy implementation gap, the study postulated that headteachers of Ghanaian public pre-tertiary schools are better placed to use non-monetary practical and theoretical approaches to manage their schools, which includes teacher retention intention situations. This is more crucial when Ghana needs over 60,000 teachers to fill the teacher position gaps (Avugbey, 2013).

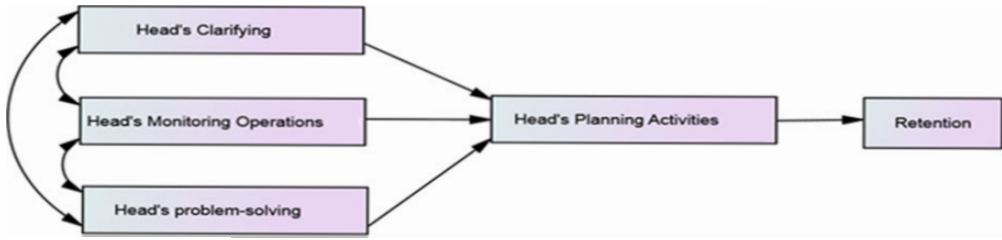
Should the school leader always be described as a pedagogical leader? Headteachers are working in an ever-changing situation with the central role of providing leadership “and the reality of the demands made by their increasingly complex and continually evolving role call for a different leadership style” (Webb, 2005: 86). In sharp contrast and still in use is Ghana’s “old career structure which promoted teachers largely on the basis of years of teaching” although the professional accomplishment evidence-based new career structure had been formulated (Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service, 2012: 14–15); this buttresses the view that most Ghanaian headteachers are not trained as professional managers with requisite formal managerial leadership knowledge and skills hence the call for improvement (Kusi, 2008; Oduro and Bosu, 2010).

Notwithstanding the formal knowledge and skills gaps in managerial leadership among Ghanaian basic level schools’ headteachers, they are expected to be managerial leaders with administrative oversights (Kusi, 2008; Oduro and Bosu, 2010). The study builds on and contributes to the works of Kusi (2008) as well as Oduro and Bosu (2010) by examining headteachers of Ghanaian pre-tertiary level schools. Arts et al. (2006: 402) had argued that “solving workplace problems requires different thinking and different knowledge than the problems during the educational period” although formal knowledge is a good foundation for workplace problem-solving. By extension, solving the school problems, such as, teacher retention will require a headteacher’s day-to-day managerial behaviours to be different from the expected formal knowledge, practices and skills.

Voluntary turnover continues to be “a problem for many organizations, regardless of job industry, in today’s society” (Besich, 2005: 1). Going by Male and Palaiologou’s (2015) praxis, that is, the act of reflecting on how to take action in a situation in order to transform it, the study calls for the understanding of how headteachers’ day-to-day managerial behaviours relate to transformation of teachers’ retention intentions. In the context of the above, the study focuses on how much of the task-oriented managerial behaviours (Yukl, 2012) are employed by Ghanaian headteachers in their leadership roles (Esia-Donkoh, 2014) to solve retention intention problems (Arts et al., 2006).

The study is delimited to the examination of task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours (Yulk, 2012) and employee retention: “new and existing teachers stay in the teaching profession” (Fing, 2005: 2) as thematic research problem areas. The related research questions posed are:

- **RQ.1:** How much do Ghanaian headteachers plan for the teaching work, clarify teaching task, monitor the task of teaching and learning as well as solve problems in their schools?
- **RQ.2:** How do these specific task-oriented managerial behaviours dynamically and reciprocally influence each other?



**Figure 1.** Dynamic System Model of Task-Oriented Managerial Behaviour for Retention.

Yukl and Mahsud (2010: 89) identified the limitation where researchers have not directed their research attention to the fact that “some types of leadership behavior have facilitative or inhibiting effects when used together in the same situation”. The study examined how these task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours (Yukl, 2012) individually and jointly influence teacher retention intentions; hence the research question:

- **RQ.3:** What type of influence do Ghanaian headteachers’ task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours have on teachers’ retention intentions when used together?

The significance of the study to academia and practitioners is the provision of further insights into the linkage between task-oriented managerial behaviours of adaptive and flexible leaders (Yukl, 2012) and teachers’ retention intentions in Ghanaian pre-tertiary schools. Results of the study will be valuable to educational stakeholders who will be appointing school managers as well as formulating appropriate educational management and policy decisions for effective planning, monitoring, problem-solving and clarifying.

## Literature review

Peterson and Peterson (2012: 103) noted that it is possible for an individual “to be a manager and exhibit both managerial behavior and leadership behavior”. Similarly, the management concept as argued by Bush (2006) overlaps the administration and leadership concepts. There is greater decentralization of leadership, management and administrative responsibilities to schools, and as such, their heads will ever more be called on to account for their stewardship (Lekamge, 2010). There is a clear indication that Ghanaian heads of pre-tertiary institutions are no longer seen as administrators but are required to serve as leaders (Oduro and Bosu, 2010) and have to be adaptive and flexible in line with Yukl’s (2012) situational changes.

## Theoretical and conceptual framework

The study assumed that the managerial activities of heads of schools will be “enhanced by an explicit awareness of the theoretical framework underpinning practice in educational institutions” (Bush, 2006: 3). The study adapted Yukl’s (2008) flexible leadership theory conceptualised at the organizational level for organizational effectiveness, performance determinants, situational variables, and leadership decisions and actions. The headteachers’ management task of influencing teachers’ retention intention was examined within the study’s conceptual framework, see Figure 1.

As noted in Yukl (2008) as well as Yukl and Lepsinger (2004, 2005), flexible leadership theory uses leadership, human resource management, strategic management, organization theory, and organisational change ideas from several different literatures. It is a strategic leadership theory that emphasises the use of task, relations, change-oriented leadership behaviours and external-oriented leadership behaviours (Yukl, 2012) to influence the effectiveness, adaptation and human capital of an organisation within the context of performance (Yukl, 2008). The flexible leadership theory is relevant for education management and was employed to examine the use of task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours (Yukl, 2012) by headteachers to influence teacher retention intentions at the pre-tertiary level schools in Ghana.

Specific behaviours was used in place of a broad and abstract behavioural construct in line with Yukl (2002) who had espoused their use for the development of much better contingency theories of leadership effectiveness. Yukl (2002) further asserted that the effects of leader behaviour are dependent in part on the types of other behaviours the leader uses. In a bid to improve our understanding of leadership effectiveness (Yukl, 2012), it has been suggested that researchers examine how different behaviours reciprocally interact with each other in a consistent way. As indicated in Figure 1, the study focused on the task-oriented leadership behaviours of the flexible leadership theory to explore “the mediating processes involved in explaining how leader behaviors influence subordinate . . . commitment” (Yukl, 2008: 718) to stay. Furthermore, the flexible leadership theory as suggested by Yukl (2008) was conceptually extended to incorporate the reciprocal causality of monitoring, problem-solving and clarifying, with a mediating role of planning which is a necessary function that enables leaders such as headteachers to efficiently perform other management tasks successfully (Esia-Donkoh, 2014).

### *Task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours*

Ghanaian headteachers find themselves in an educational system with limited roles similar to the type described elsewhere by Geraki (2014) as highly centralised and bureaucratised. However, the learning environments are “changing even faster” (Male and Palaiologou, 2015: 218) as efforts to decentralise teacher management at district and school level in Ghana under the guidelines and regulations of the National Teaching Council (Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service, 2012) is being pursued. In effect, headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana are expected to do their best to perform key tasks required of them (Esia-Donkoh, 2014).

Webb (2005) in a study showed successful pedagogical headteachers to exhibit pedagogical leadership practices that are paralleled by Yukl’s (2012) managerial leadership behaviours which have been linked to leadership effectiveness. Semarco (2005) found Ghanaian private pre-tertiary school owners’ short-term planning, problem-solving and monitoring operations behaviours to be positively and significantly related to entrepreneurial success. Semarco (2005) also found these school owners’ clarifying behaviour to have an insignificant predictive effect on entrepreneurial success. In another study, teachers reported that their principals’ relations with them were characterised by task-oriented leadership style (Sabanci, 2008). There is further evidence to suggest that the task-oriented style of leadership is prevalent among leaders of contemporary pre-tertiary educational institutions (Geraki, 2014). The study reviewed what has been learned from previous researches conducted; to help us understand how much of Yukl’s (2012) specific task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours do Ghanaian headteachers practice and the influence of the behavioural pattern on teachers’ retention intentions within the context of their limited leadership functions.

### *Planning behaviour*

Planning is seen to be indispensable for the leaders' performance of other management functions successfully in any organisation (Esia-Donkoh, 2014; Saiti, 2015) but making plans that are superficial or unrealistic have been noted to be negative (Yukl, 2012). As cited in van der Vyver et al. (2014), the roles of the school principal are argued by De Bruyn (2007) to be less dominated by traditional planning, organising, leading and control functions. The findings of Geraki (2014), Saiti (2015) as well as Spillane and Lee (2014) showed that principals were burdened with a variety of workloads that needed solutions thereby negatively affecting their adoption of plans and time to plan for anything although the principals claim to prevalently adopt such task-oriented functions. Lowe (2010) also found teachers who indicated that their leaders focused their planning activities more on the structure, timing and objectives of projects than the specific content and delivery of the work. It is worth exploring how headteachers' planning behaviour is able to stimulate perception of headteachers' problem-solving, monitoring operations and clarifying behaviours (Yukl, 2012) for successful enhancement of retention intentions.

### *Problem-solving behaviour*

Planning according to Saiti (2015) provides an enabling system which encourages problem-solving-oriented strategy. Yukl (2012) noted that problem-solving behaviours are used by leaders to identify work-related problems, recognise the cause of the problem, and develop potential solutions for resolving the problem. Principals worry about decisions they have to make in order to solve perplexing problems (Spillane and Lee, 2014). Arts et al. (2006) had indicated that the use of knowledge about a task by the problem-solver significantly correlates with problem-solving performance on that task. Arts et al. (2006) further noted that both specific and general dynamic knowledge rather than theoretical knowledge was the most significant indicator of managerial problem-solving performance at the expert level. Similarly, Lin and Cho (2011) concurred with Lin (2010: 110) who concluded that "without domain knowledge needed in a particular domain, it would be very difficult for anyone to effectively perform creative problem solving".

Saiti (2015: 583) concluded that "school principals often spend valuable time trying to solve problems... among school members"; and tend to become a more useful source of guidance in problem-solving. Notwithstanding, teachers perceived that their principals rarely show open-mindedness regarding problem-solving (Geraki, 2014). In fact, Edmondson et al. (2003) had earlier suggested that when a leader does not use consensus decisions among members to encourage creative problem-solving but imposes a preferred outcome quickly and forcefully on members, such an act may not result in a better solution. Arts et al. (2006) found experts outperformed novices, intermediates and junior-experts by the quality of their solutions, the speed with which the tasks were performed, and the amount of dynamic (practical) knowledge used in managerial problem-solving. What is the level of problem-solving practised among headteachers? It is prudent to understand how Ghanaian headteachers practise their "problem solving to deal with disruptions of normal operations and member behavior that is illegal, destructive, or unsafe" (Yukl, 2012: 70).

### *Monitoring operations behaviour*

One of the challenges faced by leadership within the educational settings is the problem of performance monitoring in the areas of teaching and learning (Browne and Rayner, 2015; Evans

et al., 2013). At the pre-tertiary level, principals were shown to have preference for monitoring the progress of teaching and learning while developing measures and checkpoints to facilitate their monitoring roles (Geraki, 2014). The monitoring practice was noted to be initially resisted but now accepted by staff (Webb, 2005). Teachers' works and behaviour as well as school-wide activities are closely monitored by their subject co-ordinators, senior management teams and/or principals (Eden, 2001; Maxcy et al., 2010; Webb, 2005). Although "local authority had a substantial role in supporting and monitoring schools" (Cottrell and James, 2016: 10) observations and daily monitoring are among the duties of headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana (Esia-Donkoh, 2014). Examining the monitoring operations behaviour among pre-tertiary schools' headteachers will add to our understanding of the use and influence of the behaviour.

### *Clarifying behaviours*

Saiti (2015) deduced that an employee's lack of clarity in the role and the job requirements leads to the experiencing of an unfamiliar working environment which may trigger an unexpected behavioural pattern, such as, intention to quit. At the tertiary level, Evans et al. (2013) recommended that universities could reduce uncertainty and ambiguity by practising clarifying behaviours. Salo (2008) reported that heads tend to be reactive in making clarifications only after teachers have reacted and expressed their views towards a topic. Principals were found to be deficient with regard to clarifying roles and defining expectations although they indicated they most frequently clarify activities (Geraki, 2014). Principals and school-based administrators' provision of clarity about teachers' functions, roles and profiles, work goals and objectives served as an important indirect contributor to teachers' attraction, day-to-day emotional workload and intention to leave or stay (Conley and You, 2016; Müller et al., 2009; Walker, 2010; You and Conley, 2015). How successful will the Ghanaian public pre-tertiary school headteacher be when it comes to enhancing teacher retention intentions through clarifying practices?

Grissom (2012) recommended a more in-depth look at specific practices in order for researchers to obtain a fuller understanding of the roles of supervisors and their participation in influencing workers' attitudes and job decisions. Based on the above reviewed literature the following hypotheses were examined:

**Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>):** "There will be significant dynamic reciprocal relationships among headteachers' task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours".

**Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>):** "Headteachers' problem-solving behaviour will have a significant predictive effect on their planning activities"

**Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>):** "Headteachers' clarifying behaviours will have a significant predictive effect on their planning activities".

**Hypothesis 4 (H<sub>4</sub>):** "Headteachers' monitoring operations behaviour will have a significant predictive effect on their planning activities".

### *Task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours and teacher retention*

More research according to Yukl (2012) is needed to determine how much of the chosen behaviours influence employee outcomes. Further understanding of how behaviours facilitate positive

effects while minimising any inhibiting effects has been advocated (Yukl, 2012; Yukl and Mahsud, 2010). The study deepens knowledge about how interacting task-oriented behaviours are adapted and used effectively by Ghanaian headteachers in situations such as influencing employee retention intentions which is not beyond their control as immediate leaders of the schools. Male and Palaiologou (2015) however cautioned that the pedagogical leader should endeavour not to pursue effectiveness models, but to look for connections between educational outcomes and the set of social realities that will reflect these outcomes. Notwithstanding the preceding position, the quest of the study is to identify the best fitting leadership model that significantly connects with teachers' intention to stay based on the fact that "different tasks usually require a different pattern of leadership behaviour" (Yukl and Mahsud, 2010: 82).

Grissom (2012) found that teachers in schools in which the average rating of principal effectiveness is high, are less likely to leave. Teachers' perceptions of administrators managing their school was noted by Boyd et al. (2011) to be negative and a significant predictor of teacher retention decisions (transfer or quit teaching) when other school and teacher characteristics were controlled. Other researchers have also shown that the type of school leader and administration support significantly and directly or indirectly influence educators' intentions to leave (Billingsley and Cross, 1991; Boe et al., 1999; Cancio et al., 2013; Conley and You, 2016; Müller et al., 2009; Theron et al., 2014; You and Conley, 2015). The "administrative support variable emphasized the importance of the principal in providing clarity about work goals and objectives..." (Conley and You, 2016: 15) which reflects an earlier position of You and Conley (2015). Sokoll (2014) found Stogdill's (1963) supervisor's initiation of structure, operationalised as supervisor task-oriented behaviours, to be significantly and negatively related to employee turnover among university staff and faculty. Ghamrawi and Jammal (2013) found transactional leadership style which is task-oriented in nature, not to have any impact on teachers' turnover intention. The study examined specific task-oriented behaviours. Integrating the view that planning is essential for performing other management functions successfully with the findings that task-oriented behaviours of supervisors significantly and negatively relate to employee turnover the effects of the joint linkages were examined as follows:

**Hypothesis 5 (H<sub>5</sub>):** "Headteachers' planning behaviour will have a significant predictive effect on teachers' retention intention".

**Hypothesis 6 (H<sub>6</sub>):** "Headteachers' task-oriented managerial behaviours: monitoring operations; clarifying and problem-solving will have significant indirect effects on teachers' retention intention; with planning significantly mediating the linkages".

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

The research design of the study was a correlational cross-sectional research survey. The study was designed to predict teachers' retention intention with teachers' evaluation of headteachers' task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours as predictors. The quantitative nature of the research enabled the researchers to choose appropriate statistical techniques to analyse the relationships among the variables.

## Population and sample

The Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service (2012) description of the pre-tertiary education sector in the Policy Framework on Pre-Tertiary Teacher Professional Development and Management in Ghana guided the description of the study's target population. The teacher with chief principal teacher rank, per the policy, can serve as a head of senior high school; whereas, the principal teacher I and principal teacher II can serve as heads of basic schools (Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service, 2012). The population consists of Ghanaian headteachers of public schools at pre-tertiary education level under the GES. Headteacher was operationalised in the study to represent a head of school in the pre-tertiary education sector and is the unit of analysis.

The multistage sampling design was used. Respondents from thirty-eight (38) senior high schools/technical and vocational institutions, 106 primary schools and 135 junior high schools participated in the study. The type of schools used in the study involved pre-tertiary schools in the urban and rural settings of five of the ten regions of Ghana: Ashanti; Eastern; Greater Accra; Northern; and Western regions. The five regions were randomly selected at the first sampling stage. Three hundred and fifty pre-tertiary schools were subsequently selected randomly from the school categories. Two teachers per headteacher (first teacher and last teacher from the list of teaching staff generated by the headteacher) of a selected pre-tertiary school provided data which were integrated per variable. Out of the 350 pre-tertiary schools, only 336 completed and returned the survey. The review of the questionnaires for appropriateness showed that sets of questionnaires received from 57 schools were incomplete and were not used in the analysis. This resulted in 558 usable questionnaires which provided information on 279 headteachers. Based on Tabanick and Fidell's (1996) formula ( $n > 50 + 8m$ : where  $m$  = number of independent variables and  $n$  = sample size), the sample size of 279 headteachers is appropriate to obtain a reliable regression equation and model.

## Questionnaires

The managerial practices survey questionnaire (Yulk, 2012) and retention intention questionnaire were among a larger pool of questionnaires administered among headteachers and teaching staff of Ghanaian pre-tertiary schools. The managerial practices survey questionnaires were filled by teachers. The averaged possible scores for each variable ranged from 1 (low application) to 5 (high application). The integrated average score of each school's two teachers reflects the practice of a headteacher's managerial leadership behaviour.

Four items that elicited information on teachers' willingness to either continue or quit teaching (sample item: "I will stop teaching at the end of the month") were added to Allen and Meyer's (1990) normative commitment scale to develop the retention intention questionnaire. The scores ranged from 10 to 50. Higher scores of the weighted average scores of each schools' two teachers reflect the headteacher's effectiveness at influencing teacher retention intentions.

The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) showed reasonable internal consistency for all the variables (from  $\alpha = 0.61$  to  $\alpha = 0.96$ ) when the questionnaires were piloted on teachers of 47 schools who provided information on their heads' managerial behaviours and their retention intentions. In the main study, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) results were retention intention ( $\alpha = 0.63$ ); and the task-oriented managerial behaviours: clarifying ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ); monitoring operations ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ); problem-solving ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ); and planning ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ), see Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics, school type *F*-test and correlation coefficients and reliabilities ( $\alpha$ ) among headteachers' task-oriented managerial behaviours and teachers' retention.

Number	Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	$F_{(2,276)}$	1	2	3	4	5
1	Retention	3.0387	0.48832	0.101	(0.63)				
2	Planning	3.5694	0.65137	1.122	0.210**	(0.79)			
3	Clarifying	3.7751	0.64137	0.287	0.105	0.578**	(0.77)		
4	Monitoring operations	3.7670	0.65473	0.310	0.190**	0.584**	0.608**	(0.83)	
5	Problem-solving	3.5479	0.68596	1.482	0.161**	0.645**	0.525**	0.659**	(0.83)

\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ ;  $n = 279$ .

### Data gathering procedure

Six weeks were used by the researchers, aided by research assistants, to administer and retrieve the questionnaires. Each variable's scores for the two teachers selected from the headteacher's list were averaged and used for the analysis. The corresponding author can be contacted for research materials.

## Results and interpretation

### Teachers' retention intention and headteachers' task-oriented managerial behaviours

The study first employed the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, Pearson – '*r*' test to obtain the preliminary results. These results enabled the researchers to perform the hierarchical multiple regression analysis and the structural equation modelling using the SPSS and AMOS 23 respectively to fit the Dynamic System Model of Task-Oriented Managerial Behaviour for Retention to the observed data. The comparative analysis for the four task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours and retention by type of schools (Primary, Junior High and Senior High/Technical and Vocational Schools) yielded no significant differences when the ANOVA test was performed. Statistically significant correlation coefficients (from 0.161 to 0.659,  $p < 0.01$ ) were found among the study variables, with the exception of the insignificant relationship between headteachers' clarifying behaviour and teachers' retention intentions ( $r = 0.105$ ,  $p =$  not significant), see Table 1. Teachers of forty-one (41) headteachers reported having limited retention intention; teachers of 192 headteachers reported moderate retention intention; and teachers of 46 headteachers indicated a considerable to great retention intention.

From Table 2, significant models emerged ( $F_{(4,274)} = 3.951$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) when retention was regressed on heads' problem-solving, heads' clarifying, heads' planning activities, and heads' monitoring operations using the hierarchical multiple regression analysis (enter method). The  $R^2$  was 0.055 indicating that the model as a whole significantly explained 5.5% of the total variance, leaving 94.5% unexplained. This is an indication that factors other than the task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours may be having important explanatory influence on retention, hence the need for further exploration, especially the pattern of influence. In the second hierarchical multiple regression, heads' planning activities was regressed on heads' problem-solving, heads' clarifying, and heads' monitoring operations with a significant model emerging ( $F_{(3,275)} = 94.074$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), see Table 2.

**Table 2.** Hierarchical multiple regressions of teachers' retention intentions and headteachers' planning activities on respective predictor variables.

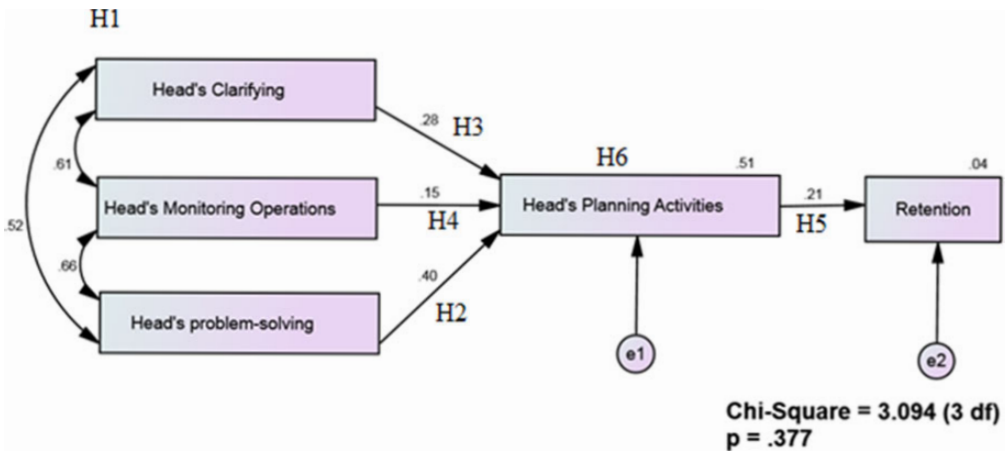
Variables	R-square	Non-standardised beta ( $\beta$ )	Standardised beta ( $\beta$ )	F
<i>Retention intentions</i>				
	0.055			3.951**
(Constant)		2.414		
Head's planning activities		0.133	0.177*	
Head's clarifying		-0.061	-0.080	
Head's monitoring operations		0.102	0.137	
Head's problem-solving		-0.001	-0.001	
<i>Planning activities</i>				
	0.506			94.074**
(Constant)		0.593		
Head's clarifying		0.280	0.275**	
Head's monitoring operations		0.152	0.153*	
Head's problem-solving		0.380	0.400**	

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

The heads' planning activities being the only significant predictor of retention ( $\beta = 0.117$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), coupled with heads' problem-solving ( $\beta = 0.400$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), heads' clarifying ( $\beta = 0.275$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and heads' monitoring operations ( $\beta = 0.153$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) significantly predicting heads' planning activities (see Table 2) led to the next analysis.

The Structural Equation Modelling was employed to examine the dynamic and reciprocal linear relationship among the headteachers' task-oriented managerial behaviours and the specific and joint effects on teacher retention intention. Employing the AMOS path analysis Chi-square indices as shown in Figure 2, a close fit of the Dynamic System Model of Task-Oriented Managerial Behaviour for Retention model to the sample data was hypothesized and found to fit the observed data, since a desired non-significant Chi-square test result  $\chi^2(3, n = 279) = 3.094$ ,  $p = 0.377$  was obtained. In line with Hu and Bentler's (1999) suggestion, root mean square error of approximation = 0.011 (with its confidence intervals of 90% CI: 0.00 - 0.102), comparative fit index = 1.000 which is greater than 0.95 (Bentler, 1990), normed fit index = 0.994, as well as, the relative Chi-square ( $\chi^2/df$ ) of 1.031 (see Byrne, 1989), indicate that the overall hypothetical model adequately fit the sample data.

In terms of path coefficients, the model's result is an answer to the second research question, that is, there exist significant dynamic and reciprocal linkages between headteachers' task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours: clarifying, monitoring and problem solving on one hand and planning on the other (see Figure 2). This proves the flexible leadership theory's proposition of using specific leadership behaviours when interacting with subordinates, peers, and outsiders to influence performance determinants (Yukl, 2008). This also supports Hypothesis 1 ( $H_1$ ) which states that "There will be a significant dynamic reciprocal relationship between headteachers' task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours". Furthermore, Hypothesis 2 ( $H_2$ ), Hypothesis 3 ( $H_3$ ) and Hypothesis 4 ( $H_4$ ) were all supported, given that, problem-solving behaviour ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ); clarifying behaviours ( $\beta = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ); and monitoring operations behaviour ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ) of headteachers were found to be significantly and positively related to their planning activities. Specifically, one standard deviation increase in headteachers' problem-solving



**Figure 2.** Dynamic System Model of Task-Oriented Managerial Behaviour for Retention.

behaviour, clarifying behaviour and monitoring operations behaviour are respectively associated with 0.40, 0.28 and 0.15 increases in their planning behaviour’s standard deviations. In answer to the first research question, the results showed that teachers perceive their headteachers as leaders who will effectively monitor, clarify and solve problems when they engage in effective planning. The data also provided support for Hypothesis 5 (H<sub>5</sub>) which stated that “Headteachers’ planning behaviour will have a significant predictive effect on teachers’ retention intention” where the path coefficient for the linkage between headteachers’ planning and teachers’ retention intention ( $\beta = 0.21, p < 0.001$ ) was statistically significant. Specifically, as headteacher planning behaviour increases by one standard deviation, teacher retention intention increases by .21 standard deviations. The results related to hypotheses 1 to 5 are shown on Figure 2.

Per the Dynamic System Model of Task-Oriented Managerial Behaviour for Retention shown in Figure 2, the squared multiple correlation of planning behaviours of headteachers is 0.51. It implied that headteachers’ clarifying, monitoring, and problem-solving behaviours jointly explain just about 51% of headteachers’ planning behaviour variance. In other words, the 49% error variance of headteachers’ planning behaviour may imply that other specific managerial behaviours may account for the variance in planning. In other words, “the effective pattern of behavior may involve multiple components of the same metacategory or component behaviors from different meta-categories” (Yukl, 2012: 76). Similarly, headteachers’ planning activities although significant, explained just about 4% of the retention intention variance with the remaining 96% unexplained. This has implications for task-oriented headteachers and researchers, since Flexible Leadership Theory postulates that the consequence of direct leadership behaviours can be enhanced by relevant management programmes and systems (Yukl, 2008).

The study examined Hypothesis 6 (H<sub>6</sub>): “Headteachers’ task-oriented managerial behaviours: monitoring operations, clarifying and problem-solving will have significant indirect effects on teachers’ retention intention; with planning significantly mediating the linkages”; by using the Bayesian analysis to estimate the posterior distribution of the indirect effects of task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours of headteachers on the dependent variable: teachers’ retention intention. As shown in Figure 2 and Table 3, Hypothesis 6(H<sub>6</sub>) was fully supported, since significant indirect effects of headteachers’ clarifying, monitoring, and problem-solving behaviours

**Table 3.** Standardised indirect effects of task-oriented managerial behaviours on retention.

Variables	Clarify	Problem- solving	Monitoring operations	Planning
Planning	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Retention	0.058	0.084	0.032	0.000
(95% LB - 95% UB)	(0.023 - 0.101)	(0.035 - 0.139)	(0.005 - 0.068)	

LB: lower boundary; UB: upper boundary.

on teachers' retention intentions did exist; with headteachers' planning behaviour playing a significant mediating role. This result answers the third research question and further illustrates the importance of planning among headteachers in Ghanaian pre-tertiary institutions.

Under the appropriate convergence statistic ( $CS = 1$ ), the 95% confidence intervals (95% lower boundary and 95% upper boundary, see Table 3) for the true estimated indirect effects of clarifying behaviour ( $\beta = 0.058$ ), problem-solving behaviour ( $\beta = 0.084$ ), and monitoring operations behaviour ( $\beta = 0.032$ ) on retention intention is an evidence that the hypothesized indirect effects were strong, in other words, the path coefficients do significantly differ from zero. This indirect-effects finding as captured in Table 3 indicates that as each of a leader's clarifying behaviour, problem-solving behaviour, and monitoring operations behaviour increase by 1 standard deviation, employee retention goes up by 0.058, 0.084, and 0.032 standard deviations respectively; an indication of the leaders' planning behaviour serving as a significant mediator.

## Discussion

Major findings were obtained from the analysis and are discussed below. First, the correlation analysis results indicate that two-way dynamic relationships between the task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours exist and were each significantly related to retention intentions, except for clarifying behaviour. Specifically, planning, clarifying, monitoring, and problem-solving (Yukl, 2012) showed significant and reciprocal linkages with each other. Headteachers' monitoring operations had an insignificant facilitative effect on retention intention. Planning on the other hand had a significant facilitative effect on retention intention. Headteacher's problem-solving and clarifying behaviours however had inhibiting effects on retention albeit insignificant when used together with the other specific task-oriented behaviour components. Problem-solving, clarifying and monitoring operations behaviours of headteachers significantly influenced their planning activities. Again headteachers' planning behaviour was found by the study to have a significant mediating effect on the relationships between their clarifying; monitoring, and problem-solving behaviours on one hand and teachers' retention intention on the other.

### Planning

The evidence of a significant mediating role of planning behaviour supports results from previous researches which found planning to be a significant factor in school leadership, management, administration and ownership (Runhaar, 2016; Semarco, 2005). It contradicts the view that traditional planning and organising were less dominant roles of school principals who focused less when it comes to specific content and delivery of the planned works (De Bruyn, 2007; Lowe, 2010), and the limited adoption and use of planning by these school principals (Geraki, 2014; Saiti,

2015; Spillane and Lee, 2014). The study illustrated that teachers described their headteachers as leaders who, more than moderately, develop short-term plans for school tasks, determine how to schedule and coordinate activities to efficiently use resources and teachers as well as other stakeholders for accomplishing tasks, and determine the action steps and resources needed to accomplish the tasks. This reflects Yukl's (2012) description of planning behaviours of leaders. This finding builds on the view that planning is indispensable for the headteachers activities in Ghana (Esia-Donkoh, 2014).

### *Problem-solving*

Ghanaian headteachers were depicted as leaders who identify school-related problems that can disrupt teaching and learning tasks, hence take steps to make rapid diagnosis systematically, while ensuring that appropriate actions are decisively and confidently taken to resolve the problems. This reflects Yukl's (2012) definition of a problem-solver. The study's findings relate well to problem-solving among school proprietors (Semarco, 2005) and principals solving problems among school members (Saiti, 2015). These findings contrasted with teachers' perception that their principals seldom demonstrated open-mindedness concerning problem solving (Geraki, 2014). The observed use of problem-solving behaviours by headteachers is presumed to be based on their re-organised knowledge in the appropriate domain (Arts et al., 2006; Lin, 2010; Lin and Cho, 2011) of educational leadership, management and administration. Ghanaian headteachers are deemed as experts who are positioned to produce "more accurate solutions than partially accurate solutions" (Arts et al., 2006: 402).

### *Monitoring operations*

Similar to Yukl's (2012) description of monitoring operations behaviour, headteachers were perceived to more than moderately check on the progress and quality of teaching and learning tasks at schools; examine relevant sources of information such as lesson notes, students' academic reports, and field observations to determine how well the teaching and learning tasks are being performed, while evaluating the performance of teachers and non-academic staff members in a systematic way. This finding supports the view that co-ordinators, senior management teams as well as principals have preference for monitoring the progress of teaching and learning (Eden, 2001; Geraki, 2014; Maxcy et al., 2010; Webb, 2005). It confirms that the observations and daily monitoring duties of headteachers in Ghana (Esia-Donkoh, 2014) are practiced beyond moderate levels, similar to the findings of Semarco (2005).

### *Clarifying*

The teachers saw their headteachers as leaders who provided clear explanation of the responsibilities of all staff members which includes teaching and learning tasks. They were perceived as persons who set specific goals and deadlines for important aspects of the teaching work. They tend to explain priorities for different objectives, rules, policies, and standard procedures. Ghanaian headteachers were reported to practise Yukl's (2012) clarifying behaviour at more than moderate levels. The importance of clarifying outlined by previous studies (Evans et al., 2013; Saiti, 2015) was emphasised by the study. The study's findings however contradicted the deficient and

reactionary nature of headteachers' clarifying behaviour in their day-to-day work and at staff meetings (Geraki, 2014; Salo, 2008).

### *Task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours and retention intention*

Ghanaian teachers' indication that their headteachers practise task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours in a little above moderation is similar to Sabanci's (2008) findings and proves Yukl and Mahsud's (2010: 89) position that "a moderate amount of a behavior is sometimes optimal". Going by Arts et al.'s (2006) social internalisation process proposition of new employees, headteachers may have re-organised their knowledge base which may be different from the context of their educational period and pedagogy. This includes different thinking and different knowledge required in solving school problems, clarifying and monitoring school operations as well as planning for the school.

The findings that headteachers' planning, clarifying, monitoring, and problem-solving behaviours showed significant and reciprocal linkages with each other, agrees with and extends the works done by Browne and Rayner (2015), Evans et al. (2013), Semarco (2005, 2009), Webb (2005), Yukl (2008, 2012) and Yukl and Mahsud (2010). The results showed that problem-solving behaviour, clarifying behaviour and monitoring operations behaviour significantly and positively predict planning activities of headteachers, thereby reinforcing the perception that planning is an indispensable activity which provides an enabling structure that promotes other management functions (Esia-Donkoh, 2014; Saiti, 2015). Ghanaian headteachers use of the task-oriented behaviours pegged above moderate levels indicates that their workloads and time spent solving problems do not negatively affect time spent on constructive planning. This sharply contradicts the findings of Geraki (2014) and Saiti (2015). This finding suggests that action steps required for headteachers' monitoring operations, clarifying and problem-solving activities in pre-tertiary schools should be scheduled, coordinated and included in the development of the schools' plans. This is expected to facilitate the efficient use of teachers and resources as well as other stakeholders for effective teaching and learning. Although task-oriented behaviours of pedagogical leaders should promote effective teaching and learning (Esia-Donkoh, 2014; Saiti, 2015), they have implications for teachers' retention intentions.

Clarity on work goals, functions and job expectations served as an important contributor to intention to leave (Conley and You, 2016; Müller et al., 2009; Walker, 2010; You and Conley, 2015). In contrast, the study found an insignificant relationship between clarifying and retention intention which mimics school owners' insignificant clarifying and success linkage found by Semarco (2005).

The observation that out of the task-oriented behaviours only headteachers' planning behaviour showed a significant relationship with teachers' retention intentions points to a cause to refine Boyd et al.'s (2011) significant school administration effect, Ghamrawi and Jammal's (2013) insignificant transactional leadership effect, and Sokoll's (2014) significant supervisors' task-oriented behaviours effect on retention intention within the Ghanaian teachers' context. The assertion that planning has been linked severally to leadership effectiveness (Yukl, 2012) and is expected of school leaders (Esia-Donkoh, 2014; Saiti, 2015) is supported by the study's planning and retention intentions' association.

Previous findings on the type of school leaders' behavioural influence (direct and/or indirect) on educators' intentions to leave (Billingsley and Cross, 1991; Boe et al., 1999; Cancio et al., 2013; Conley and You, 2016; Müller et al., 2009; Theron et al., 2014; You and Conley, 2015) were

confirmed by the study. In adding to our theoretical understanding of educational management (Bush, 2006), the study used Yukl's (2008) flexible leadership theory and found support for the assertion that leaders' planning behaviour significantly mediates the relationships between clarifying, monitoring, and problem-solving behaviours on one hand and retention intention on the other (Esia-Donkoh, 2014; Müller et al., 2009; Sokoll, 2014; Walker, 2010).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study provided an understanding of how leadership roles performed by pre-tertiary schools' headteachers which included Ghanaian basic level headteachers (Kusi, 2008; Oduro and Bosu, 2010) and the senior high school headteachers influence teachers' retention decisions in these schools. The findings also showed that the set of predictor variables in the model can be expanded to include other intervening variables, hence will stimulate future investigation in the area of relation-, change-, and external- oriented managerial leadership behaviours within the adaptive and flexible context of school management. While much remains to be learned about the complexity of Yukl's (2008) flexible and adaptive leadership (Yukl and Mahsud, 2010), the study showed that teacher retention in schools can be influenced by relevant pattern of task-oriented managerial leadership behaviours within the constraint of unequal representation of pre-tertiary school levels. The study buttresses the call for a non-linear analysis of managerial leadership behaviours, distributed leadership and employee outcomes among others (Yukl, 2012; Yukl and Mahsud, 2010).

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