

***Leadership Style of Head Teachers of Basic Special Schools as Correlates of Retention of Special Needs Educators in Southern Ghana***

**Felix Kwame Kumedzro, M.Phil. (Ph.D. Candidate)  
University of Cape Coast, Ghana**

**Dr. Nelly Otube  
Dr. Chomba Wamunyi  
Dr. Mary Runo**

**Kenyatta University, Kenya**

***Abstract***

The study aimed at establishing relationship between leadership style of head teachers and retention of special education teachers in Southern Ghana. The study was purely quantitative and utilized descriptive correlation design which allowed the researcher to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Data was collected with questionnaire from 140 teachers from nine special schools. Data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially. The study found a significant positive correlation between the leadership style and retention of special needs education teachers. Head teacher's leadership style was also found to have a statistically significant impact on retention of the teachers. It was recommended that head teachers of special schools should involve their teachers in the decision making process regarding the progress of the school so as to enhance teachers' job satisfaction and retention.

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**Introduction**

The kind of leadership provided by head teachers of pre-university institutions is very critical in improving schools, creating job satisfaction and retaining teachers. Effective leadership and employee job satisfaction are two factors that have been regarded as fundamental for organizational success (Voon, Lo, Ngui & Ayob, 2011). A good leader provides direction for the institutions they head and lead subordinates towards achieving the desired goals. In the same vein, teachers who are contempt with the leadership style of their head teachers are likely to be retained at post and put in more effort in their assigned duties and pursue the school's interests. In Ghana, special schools are administered by the Ministry of Education and managed by the Ghana Education Service through the Division of Special Education. Ghana has constantly improved the provision of special needs education through the expansion of facilities and training of teachers since independence in 1957. After the government established the University of Education, Winneba, in 1987, the number of teachers trained for the special schools had increased tremendously. However, a large number of teachers in special education had been reported to have abandoned their teaching profession as a result of job dissatisfaction (Chambers,

2008; Duesbery & Werblow, 2008; Thornton, Peltier & Medina, 2007). In America, Ingersoll (2001) reported that the attrition rate among teachers had been higher than other professions in the United States, and this situation affected the ability to retain high quality teachers in the classroom.

The situation in Ghana had not been very different from the global picture. In a report published by Kwarteng on the study conducted by the University of Cape Coast in the daily graphic edition of 1st October, 2012 indicated that about 6% of qualified teachers in the special schools had abandoned their jobs between 2010 and 2012 academic years. Earlier on, Avoke, Offei- Nyadu and Mensah (1999) noted that most special education teachers who graduate from the University of Education, Winneba tend to be unwilling and adamant in taking up teaching positions in the special schools after their specialist training. Cobbold (2010) citing Ghana News Agency (GNA) report stated that the media news of Wednesday, 19th June 2002, the Ghana Education Service expressed concern about teachers abandoning the classrooms after benefitting from study leave for their further studies. In Ghana, several studies (Boateng, 2001; Cobbold, 2010; Appiah-Agyekum, Suapim & Peprah, 2013; Saani, 2013; Sam, Effah & Osei-Owusu, 2014) had been conducted with the aim to understand this phenomenon. However, most of these studies only looked at factors such as compensation, remuneration packages and its effect on retention of mainstreamed teachers. For instance, Boateng (2001) studied Ghanaian primary school teachers' satisfaction with their job and what can be done to retain them in the profession. The study found that teachers were generally dissatisfied with the Low salary rates paid to them. In a similar study, Saani (2013) investigated the influence of compensation and teacher supervision on teacher work performance of private school teachers in Ghana and found that compensation and teacher supervision related positively to teacher work performance. At the time that this study was being considered, the researcher had not come across, any study on the relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and retention of special needs education teachers in Ghana and as a result, not much literature is available on the subject. According to Cole (2002), Leadership at the institutional set up is a process whereby the leader is not only responsible for the institutional tasks but rather collaborates with the subordinates in achieving group goals. Balunywa ( 2000) reported that the major occupation of a leader is not only to examine tasks to be performed and who performs them , but also seeks to include greater reinforcement attributes like recognition, service conditions, cohesion and rewards.

It is observed that teachers behave differently under different head teachers or principals. Therefore, head teachers could motivate teachers to be happy and be retained in the schools by identifying their needs and trying to meet them. The head teachers must provide the kind of leadership that make the teachers feel at home. The style of leadership usually adopted by head teachers of special schools in Ghana is an issue that is subject to investigation. It was against this background that this study was purposed to ascertain critically the type of leadership style(s) that special education teachers prefer and also to establish the relationship between head teachers' leadership styles and retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana. Furthermore, the study was also to determine the impact of head teachers' leadership style(s) on retention of the teachers in the special schools.

### **Study Objectives**

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To determine the preferred leadership style(s) by special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana.
2. To establish the relationship between leadership styles of head teachers and retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana.
3. To ascertain the impact of head teachers' leadership style on retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana.

## **Research Questions**

To address the above objectives, the following research questions were posed to guide the study;

1. Which of the leadership styles used by the head teachers of special schools is usually preferred by the special needs educators in Southern Ghana?
2. Is there any statistically significant relationship between leadership styles used by head teachers of special schools and retention of special needs educators in Southern Ghana?
3. To what extent does the leadership style of the head teachers significantly impact on retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana?

## ***Review of Literature***

Educational managers had identified leadership as important agent for the success of any educational institution, since it is the driving force for most institutions. This recognition had come at a time when the challenges of education development worldwide are more demanding than ever before (Nkata, 2005). Aghendta (2001) defined leadership as the ability of the leader to ensure that institutional tasks are performed with the help and co-operation of the group within the institution. Also, Northouse (2010) described leadership as an interactive process between leaders and their subjects where the leader tries to influence subordinates to achieve organizational goals. Oyetunyi (2006) posited that in an organization such as a school, the importance of leadership is reflected in every aspect of the school like instructional practices, academic achievement, students' discipline, job satisfaction and school climate, to mention but a few.

Liberman et.al cited by Adeyemi (2011) identified three approaches of leadership styles that are common among institutional leaders namely; Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-faire leadership styles. In the autocratic leadership style, authority and decision-making is in the hands of the leader. The leader decides how things should be done and the subordinates are expected to comply. This kind of leadership is usually characterized by unclear channel of communication between the leader and the lead. The democratic style of leadership emphasizes clear channels of communication and group participation in the decision making process. Decisions relating to institutional issues are jointly taken after consultation and communication with all members of the group. Under democratic leadership, every individual member of the organization feel part and parcel of the organization. Mba (2004), reported that this style of leadership improves staff motivation. With regards to Laissez-faire leadership style, there is absolute freedom to group decision without the involvement of the leader. Thus, members of the organization have the freedom to do what they deem fit. The main responsibility of the leader is to ensure that subordinates are provided with the necessary working tools. Talbert and Milbrey as cited by

Adeyemi (2011) posited that with *laissez-faire*, the leader does not interfere with or participate in the course of events determined by the members of the organization.

Nyanjom (2013) defined retention as policies and practices companies use to prevent valuable employees from leaving their jobs. It involves the strategies that institutions adopt to encourage their employees to remain in the organization for some period of time. Teacher retention within a given school is operationalized as the percentage of teachers retained from one year to the next. If in a given year a teacher is employed at the same school they taught at the year before, they would be considered “retained”. Evidence suggests that teachers tend to leave certain schools at higher rates than others; research also suggests different types of teachers are more likely to leave certain schools, or teaching altogether, than others. In particular, high-quality teachers are more likely to leave, especially if the school serves students who are impoverished and low-achieving (Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2002).

Several researchers have found a relationship between leadership styles and retention of teachers (Bogler, 2001; Bogler, 2005; Sigilai & Bett, 2013). For instance, Bogler (2001) conducted a study on the influence of leadership style of principals on teacher job satisfaction and retention. The study revealed that leadership styles of head teachers or principals significantly influenced the job satisfaction and retention of the teachers. The study also discovered that a leadership style that involves the teachers in the decision-making processes gives the teachers a higher level of job satisfaction than if they were not involved. The teachers report greater satisfaction in their work when they perceive their principal as someone who shares information with them, who delegates authority, and who keeps open channels of communication with them.

In a related study, Ngururi (2013) conducted a study on the influence of teachers’ job satisfaction on pupils’ performance in public examinations in Nakuru County, Kenya. The findings revealed that job satisfaction of the teachers was affected by the head teachers’ administrative styles used in schools. Similarly, Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh, Hashmi and Shaikh (2012) explored the impact of Autocratic and Democratic Leadership style on job satisfaction in private and public school. Self-developed questionnaire was the main tool for data collection. The data were collected from two hundred and fifty (250) teachers of both public and private schools. Inferential statistics was employed in the data analysis. It was found that leadership style had a positive impact on job satisfaction and public teachers had high level of job satisfaction rather than private teachers. The study found, among other things that employees feel uneasy when working under autocratic leaders.

In a related study, Adeyemi (2011) investigated principals’ leadership styles and teachers’ job performance in senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study population comprised all the 281 secondary schools in the State. Out of this population, a sample of 240 senior secondary schools was selected and out of 7,460 teachers in the schools a sample of 2,040 teachers was selected through the stratified random sampling technique. This sample was made up of 240 principals and 1,800 teachers. The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. It was found that the democratic leadership style was the most commonly used leadership style among principals of senior secondary schools in the State. The study further found that teachers’ job performance was found to be better in schools having principals using autocratic leadership style than in schools having principals using democratic or *laissez-faire* leadership styles.

Omeke and Onah (2012) conducted a study to investigate the influence of principals' leadership styles on secondary school teachers' job satisfaction in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The design of the study was a descriptive survey design. The study used stratified random sampling technique to select a total of 28 public secondary schools from three Local Government Areas in the zone. Some 280 classroom teachers were used as respondents for the study. Answers to the research questions were analyzed using mean and standard deviation and t-test. The results revealed that the principals adopted three leadership styles in their administration namely; autocratic, laissez faire and democratic according to their dominance. Teachers irrespective of gender agreed that only democratic leadership enhances their job satisfaction.

In a similar study, Nsubuga (2008) conducted a study on the analysis of leadership styles and school performance of secondary schools in Uganda. The study aimed at investigating the relationship between leadership styles of head teachers and school performance of secondary schools in Uganda. The study employed mixed methodology that used both the qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection and analysis. It adopted a correlation survey research design that helped in establishing the relationship of leadership styles and school performance. Data for the study was collected through observations, questionnaires, and interviews and focused group discussions. A sample of 625 respondents was chosen for the study and out of the 625 respondents, purposeful and random sampling was used to select 24 head teachers, 200 teachers and 351 students, 49 parents and 10 officials from the Ministry of Education. The finding of the study revealed that the democratic leadership was the most preferred form of leadership style in school. It was also found that although the democratic style was most preferred, school leaders tend to vary their leadership style and at times used the autocratic style of leadership. It was also established that where the democratic style of leadership was practiced, the school was likely to achieve a good overall school performance.

In a related study, Voon, Lo, Ngui and Ayob (2011) investigated the influence of leadership styles on employees' job satisfaction in public sector organizations in Malaysia. The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between two leadership styles and job satisfaction among employees in the public sector. Two hundred Malaysian executives working in public sectors voluntarily participated in this study. Data was collected through survey questionnaires from targeted employees working in public sector. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to selected public sectors using a convenient sampling method. However, only 200 employees responded to the survey, resulting in a 66.7 per cent response rate. The study findings revealed that the leadership style had direct relationships with employees' job satisfaction. The results further showed that transformational leadership style had a stronger relationship with job satisfaction. This implies that transformational leadership is deemed suitable for managing government organizations.

### *Methodology*

The study adopted non-experimental, quantitative and correlational survey design to establish the correlation between head teachers' leadership styles and retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana. Correlational design enables the researcher to describe and measure the strength, direction and the degree of relationship between variables under study (Cresswell, 2005). The quantitative method was adopted because establishing relationships between two or more variables require strict computational approaches.

This study targeted all the 375 special education teachers from the 14 special schools located in Southern Ghana. This consisted of 49 teachers of the Blind, 72 teachers of the Intellectually Challenged and 254 teachers of the Deaf. Stratified, simple random and quota sampling techniques were employed to select a sample size of 150 teachers from 9 accessible special schools within the study locale. Proportional representation method was used to select the participants from the three categories of schools namely; Schools for the Deaf, School for the Blind and Schools for Intellectually Challenged. The study used 140 responses for analysis giving a return rate of 93%.

The study utilized self-developed questionnaire to investigate the relationship between leadership style and teacher retention. The questionnaire was made up of three parts A, B and C. Part A elicited personal information about each of the respondents. These include type of school, gender, age, qualification and teaching experience. Part B requested information on types of leadership styles being used by the head teachers while Part C elicited responses on teachers' perception about their job satisfaction and retention. The questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher after obtaining the necessary permits and consent from head teachers and the teacher participants respectively.

Validity of the questionnaire was determined through a review by experts who ensured that items in the questionnaire were capable of measuring the variables that the researcher intended to measure. The reliability was determined through the internal consistency approach. In determining the reliability, data was collected from 17 teachers from non- sampled schools for pre-testing and Cronbach- Alpha formula was employed to ascertain the reliability coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.77 was found indicating that the teachers' questionnaire was reliable for the study.

In the analysis of the data, the five-point Likert-Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used to measure the teachers' responses as follows; Strongly Agree = 5, Agree =4, Undecided = 3, Disagree =2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. However, responses to negative statements were coded in reverse to reflect the coding values. The data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using means, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment correlation and regression model while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha levels.

### *Results of the Study*

#### **Research Question 1: Which of the leadership styles used by the head teachers of special schools is usually preferred by the special needs educators in Southern Ghana?**

This question sought to determine which of the leadership styles used by the head teachers of special schools is mostly preferred by their teachers. The objective was measured by 21 items in the teachers' questionnaire which was focused on the different types of leadership styles namely; democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. To obtain the responses of the teachers, descriptive statistics were run to determine the mean values of the various types of leadership styles under study. Table 1 represent the mean values.

Table 1: Mean scores of teachers on preferred leadership style

Types of leadership	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Democratic	2.89	1.26	1 <sup>st</sup>
Autocratic	2.78	1.30	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Laissez-faire	2.23	1.16	3 <sup>rd</sup>

The results from Table 1 revealed that the most preferred leadership style by special education teachers in Southern Ghana was democratic leadership style which had a mean of 2.89 and a standard deviation of 1.26 while autocratic leadership style scored second with a mean of 2.78 and standard deviation of 1.30. Laissez-faire leadership style placed 3<sup>rd</sup> position with mean value of 2.23 and standard deviation of 1.16. From the results of the analysis, it was worth noting that the democratic leadership style could yield high teacher retention if properly adopted. Thus overall results revealed that the teachers responded favourably to democratic leadership style of their head teachers.

**Research Question 2: Is there any statistically significant correlation between leadership style used by head teachers of special schools and retention of special needs educators in Southern Ghana?**

The research question sought to find out if there was any statistically significant correlation between leadership style and retention of teachers in the special schools in Southern Ghana. To address the issue, the research question was transformed into the following null hypothesis; **H<sub>01</sub>**: There is no statistically significant correlation between leadership style used by head teachers of special schools and retention of teachers in the special schools in Southern Ghana. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson’s correlational method. In testing this hypothesis, data on head teachers’ leadership style and teachers’ retention were collected from the responses of the teachers’ questionnaire. Table 2 shows the correlation coefficient results from the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Table 2: Correlation analysis of leadership style and retention

		Retention	Leadership style
Retention: Pearson	Correlation	1	.683**
Sign	(2-tailed)	-	0.009
N		140	140
Leadership style	Correlation	.683**	1
Sign	(2 – tailed)	.009	-
N		140	140

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 indicated the results of the correlation between leadership style of head teachers and retention of teachers. The analysis showed a significant positive correlation between the leadership style and retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $n = 140$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) rejecting the hypothesis that there is no statistical significant correlation between head teacher's leadership styles and retention of special education teachers. The correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.68$  and the  $p$  value being less than the significant level ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicate that there was a strong, positive and significant correlation between the two variables.

**Research Question 3: To what extent does the leadership style of the head teachers significantly impact on retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana?**

The research question was posed to ascertain the extent to which leadership style of head teachers of special schools impact on retention of special educators in Southern Ghana. In addressing this question, the following null hypothesis was formulated.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** The leadership style of the head teachers of special schools does not significantly impact on retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana?

To test this hypothesis, data on head teachers' leadership style and retention of teachers were collected from the responses of the teachers' questionnaire. Linear regression method was used to determine the impact of the independent variable of leadership styles on the dependent variable of retention. Table 3 shows the output from the regression analysis.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	Degree of Freedom	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig
	B	SE	Beta						
Constant	.603	71.52		1	.51	.26	.39	5.13	.005 <sup>b</sup>
Leadership	.415	1.08	0.619	138					
Total				139					

Table 3 showed that leadership had a statistically significant impact on retention of the teachers. The regression equation found from the output could be stated as;  $F(1,138) = 5.13, p < 0.05$ . This implied that fitting a model between the two variables would be valid. Thus, the linear regression model obtained from the standardized beta would be stated as follows;

$$\text{Retention (Y)} = .603 + .415 \text{ Leadership (X)}$$

Where Y is the value of retention; X is the value of independent variable of Leadership. This showed that every single unit of improvement in head teachers' leadership style would increase teacher retention by approximately 0.415 but if the constant is given as 0, then retention (Y) would be equal to .415 indicating that leadership style of head teachers in the study had a significant impact on retention of teachers. The results in Table 3 also showed  $R^2$  of 0.26 which represented the coefficient of determination that explained the proportion of variation of the independent variable of leadership style to retention. Thus, the leadership style of head teachers contributed about 26% to retention confirming the rejection of the stated hypothesis that leadership style of head teachers does not significantly impact on retention of Ghanaian special educators in the Southern Sector. The rest of the 74% may be attributed to combination of other variables in the school environment.

### *Discussion of Findings*

In the analysis above, it was revealed that the teachers responded favourably to the democratic leadership style of their head teachers. Thus the study found that the most preferred leadership style by special education teachers in Southern Ghana was democratic leadership style which had a mean score of 2.89 followed by autocratic leadership style which scored second with a mean of 2.78. This finding was consistent with the findings of several studies (Bogler, 2001; Nsubuga, 2008; Bhatti et.al, 2012 & Ngururi, 2013) that found that the democratic leadership style was the commonest style of leadership used by heads of educational institutions. The teachers' choice for democratic leadership style was an indication that the other forms of leadership styles may not be a good style of leadership that could enhance retention of special education teachers. This finding was in consonance with the findings made by Nsubuga (2008) who found that consultative form of leadership was the most preferred form of leadership style in Ugandan schools.

In a related study, Adeyemi (2011) investigated principals' leadership styles and teachers' job performance in senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria and discovered that the democratic leadership style was the most commonly used leadership style among principals of senior secondary schools in the State. The finding of the current study is quite revealing because the general notion among head teachers in Ghana was that teachers prefer leaders who adopt laissez-faire style at the expense of democratic form of leadership style. Similarly, Bhatti, et. al (2012) explored the impact of autocratic and democratic leadership style on job satisfaction in private and public schools and found, among other things that employees feel uneasy when working under autocratic leaders than democratic leadership. Furthermore, in their study, Omeke and Onah (2012) also discovered that teachers irrespective of gender agreed that only democratic leadership enhances their job satisfaction.

Results from the present study also indicated that there was a significant positive correlation between the leadership style and retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $n = 140$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This is perfectly in agreement with the findings of Voon et.al (2011) who noted that the leadership style have direct relationships with employees' job satisfaction. The results showed that democratic leadership style had a stronger relationship with job satisfaction. This confirmed the fact that democratic leadership style is the most workable style of leadership that could enhance better retention among teachers in special schools in Southern Ghana. The analysis regarding the impact of head teachers' leadership style on retention of special education teachers in Southern Ghana, the study established that the leadership style had a significant impact in teacher retention. The results of the study revealed that leadership style contributed approximately 26% of the variation in teacher retention. The present study is perfectly in agreement with Bogler (2001) who found that leadership styles of principals significantly influence the job satisfaction and retention of the teachers. The findings again related well to Ngururi (2013) who observed that job satisfaction of the teachers is affected by the head teachers' administrative styles used in schools.

### ***Conclusion***

The main aim of the study was to establish special education teachers' preference for leadership styles used by the head teachers of special needs schools and how they relate to retention of special educators in Southern Ghana. The results showed that special education teachers in Southern Ghana preferred their head teachers to use democratic style of leadership as against autocratic and laissez faire leadership style. The Pearson moment correlation coefficient analysis showed a significant positive correlation between the leadership style and retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana ( $r = 0.68$ ,  $n = 140$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). With regards to the impact of leadership style on teacher retention, the present study found a statistically significant impact of leadership style on retention of special needs education teachers in Southern Ghana with leadership style contributing about 26% to variation in teacher retention. On the whole, the findings of this study had led the researcher to conclude that the type of leadership style employed by head teachers of special schools play a critical role in special educators' job satisfaction and retention in the special school. It is therefore imperative that head teachers of these schools adopt acceptable management and leadership styles that would enhance job satisfaction and boost retention of teachers in the schools.

### ***Recommendations***

Based on the findings, the study recommended that head teachers of special needs schools in Southern Ghana should be encouraged to adopt democratic leadership style in the governance and leadership of their schools. However, Laissez faire and autocratic kinds of leadership should be discouraged among the head teachers since it has the potential of affecting school outcomes. The Ghana Education Service needs to organize frequent in-service training workshops for head teachers of special schools on leadership and management. This would help to equip the head teachers with the best leadership approaches that could enhance teachers' job satisfaction and their retention in the special schools. This is important to ensure that the schools attract and retain quality teachers to provide quality education to the special needs child.

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### About the Authors

**Felix Kwame Kumedzro (Ph.D. Candidate):** Mr. Kumedzro graduated in June 2003 from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana with B.Ed. (Psychology) and majored in Special Needs Education. He later gained admission to read M.Phil. (Special Needs Education) in the same university and completed in 2008. After his master's degree, he was employed as a lecturer at the College of Distance Education, University of Cape Coast. Currently, he is a Ph.D. candidate in special needs education at Kenyatta University, Kenya. He had successfully defended his final thesis and waiting for graduation in July, 2016.

**Nelly Were Otube (Ph.D.):** Nelly is head of Special Needs Department and lecturer of special needs education at Kenyatta University. She holds a PhD in special education from Hamburg University, Germany. Previously, she has been involved in other administrative duties at the university including coordination of post – graduate special education students, research, departmental linkages and examinations. She is a member of many departmental and faculty committees. She is a teacher trainer involved in supervision of teacher trainees for both primary and secondary schools. Nelly has received many education research awards from among others; Africa Social Sciences Research Organization (CODESRIA), Senegal, DAAD, and FORD Foundation. Nelly is a researcher with research papers presented and published ranging from inclusive education, school safety for children with special needs to relevant assistive technology

for learners with special needs. SIPROSA School with benefit from her teacher supervision skills and experience in managing children with special needs.

**Dr. Chomba Wa Munyi:** Dr. Chomba is a senior lecturer at the Department of Special Needs Education, Kentatta University. He holds B.Ed from the University of Nairobi, M.A, from Michigan State University, USA and D.Ed, University of Marylebon, UK. He has published articles I various peer reviewed journals of special needs education.

**Dr. Mary Runo:** Dr. Mary Runo is a senior lecturer in the Department of Special Needs Education – Kenyatta University. She is currently the Director, Kitui Campus of Kenyatta University. Dr. Runo has successfully supervised so far 5 Ph.D students and over 10 masters’ students from Kenyatta University. She is a researcher in various areas in special needs education and has so far published about 10 articles in peer reviewed journals. She is an external examiner in a number of universities both in East and South Africa.