

Challenges of Head Teachers as Instructional Leaders: A Ghanaian Perspective

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Özet: Bu alıřmanın amacı, Gana eđitim sisteminin, eđitimde mükemmellik arayışın önündeki engelleri belirlemektir. Bir başka ifade ile Gana okul müdürlerinin mesleki gelişimi ve bu süreçte karşılaşılan sorunların üstesinden gelinmesi için öneriler geliřtirmektir. Gana’da okul müdürlerinin öğrenme, öğretme ve öğrenci başarısındaki etkisi çok düşüktür. Gana’da okul yöneticileri, günlük rutin işlerde zamanlarının büyük bir kısmı harcamaktadırlar. Gana’da müdürlerin mesleki gelişimi ve eđitimi eđitim bakanlığı veya il milli eđitim müdürlükleri tarafından merkezi olarak hazırlanıp yürütölmektedir. Merkezden yürütölen hizmet içi eđitim alıřmaları oldukça yetersiz ve çođu zamanda düzensiz, rastgele yapılmaktadır (Anamuah-Mensah, 2006). Ayrıca okul müdürlerinin atanmasında prosedürler ve atamalarında da yalnızca kıdemin esas alınması okul müdürlerinin etkililiđini düşören en önemli sebeplerin başında gelmektedir. Bu bakımdan mesleki bilgi temelleri zayıf olan okul yöneticilerinin etkililiđi de zayıf kalmaktadır (Godwyll 2008; Oduro, 2003). Bu alıřmada, il veya eđitim bakanlığı tarafından düzenlenen mesleki gelişim eđitimleri yerine okul temelli mesleki gelişimin esas alınması önerilmektedir. Bu alıřmanın sonucunda; okul merkezli mesleki gelişim, profesyonel öğrenme toplulukları anlayışı esas alınarak okul yöneticilerinin kapasitelerinin geliřtirilmesinin öğrenci başarısı için daha yararlı olacağı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretim liderliđi, mesleki gelişim, mesleki öğrenme toplumu, okul temelli mesleki gelişim.

Abstract: This paper identifies a limitation in the Ghanaian educational system, which is respected for its pursuit of excellence. Recommendations are offered for the remediation of the shortcoming that reflects an inadequacy in the professional development that is provided for the country's head teachers. The significance of the shortcoming is that it influences instruction, learning, and student achievement in the country's schools. Professional development for the head teachers has typically been organized by the Ghana Education Service, the operational office of the country's Ministry of Education. The nationally-based endeavor tends to be delivered in a limited manner, which contributes to the unsystematic and ineffective development of the head teachers (Anamuah-Mensah, 2006). To make matters worse, the procedures, which are used to appoint and train the head teachers, are respectively seniority-based and ineffective. The outcome is head teachers, who are without the knowledge-base and skill-set that are needed to provide relevant instructional leadership and management (Godwyll 2008; Oduro, 2003). A proposal is offered to implement school-based, as opposed to the current district and regional-based, professional development. The school-based approach would be framed based upon the tenets of a professional learning community, with an ultimate objective of improving the capacity of the head teachers to provide leadership for student achievement (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Hoyle, 1986).

Keywords: Instructional leadership, professional development, professional learning community, school-based.

This is a conceptually based paper regarding education in Ghana. The paper is focused, in general, upon the administration of Ghanaian schools, which are typically led by head teachers. More specifically, attention is given in the paper to the work of the head teachers and the nature of their preparation for the work, particularly as it pertains to instructional leadership and management. In order to address this objective and to provide the reader with an introduction to the study, a short historical review of education in Ghana from 1592 is provided. Education from the time that Ghana gained its independence in 1957 is described in more detail, with a description of the role of the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service including their relevance to the work of head teachers. A shortcoming in the Ghanaian education system is described. The shortcoming pertains to the insufficient training of head teachers and its ramifications on instruction and learning. The problem statement, research question, and the significance of the study, which particularly pertain to the need for enhancement of the professional development of the Ghanaian head teachers and their provision of leadership and

management, are then presented. A discussion of proposed ways in which the needed professional development might be pursued is included. The paper ends with a proposal of related studies that might be conducted in the future in order to pursue a broader and deeper understanding of the preparation of head teachers and its relation to instruction and learning.

Overview

Formal education in what is now Ghana began in 1592 in the castles along the Gold Coast, with the arrival of European merchants (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1978). The goal of these merchants was to use education to produce clerks, who were capable of assisting in trading activities and who also could help with the introduction of Christianity to the indigenous population of the region (Graham, 1971; McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1978). While the merchants may have been served by the objectives, they construct had been narrowly constructed and had failed to address the socio-economic aspirations of the clerks. Their needs were served more effectively when successive merchants, particularly the British who colonized the Gold Coast, diversified the curriculum. These efforts led to the declaration of the Educational Ordinances of 1852, 1887, and Guggisberg's 16 Principles of Education (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1978).

Current System

Ghana gained independence in 1957, which led to multiple changes in its education system. The structure of the current educational system consists of (a) two years of pre-school education, for children who are four to six years of age; (b) six years of primary education for children who are six to twelve years of age; (c) three years of junior high school education for children who are twelve to fifteen years of age; and (d) three years of senior high school and tertiary education. The latter consists of four years of university education or two to three years at a polytechnic and teacher training college. Several specialized institutions in nursing and agriculture also exist (Report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002).

Changes Leading to the Current System

Some of the major changes in the educational system, leading up to the current system, seem pertinent to the focus of this paper. The governments, which have existed since the time of independence, have intensified the struggle for an effective education for Ghanaian children. For example, the government in place in 1972, which was under the military regime of Colonel I. K. Acheampong, mandated that a committee would be led by Professor N. K. Dzobo of the Faculty of Education, University of Cape Coast, in order to review the structure and content of Ghanaian education with the intent of making recommendations for improvements (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1978).

The report of the Dzobo committee presented in 1974 and initiated in 1975, had suggested that the structure of education should constitute:

- Kindergarten education: with a duration of eighteen to twenty-four months for children of four to six years of age;
- First cycle education: with a duration of six years of primary and three years of junior secondary school education; and
- Second cycle education: for junior secondary students, who would address two years of coursework at the senior secondary level. This coursework would be followed by two years of coursework course at the advanced level or in a teacher or a polytechnic program.

The junior secondary school system is the idea of the Dzobo committee. The system had been designed to replace the middle school system. However the replacement had not been initially successful, as the middle school system had continued alongside of the junior secondary school system, particularly in the rural areas (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1978). The junior secondary schools had been led by head teachers, who had been considered to be experienced due to their long tenures of service as teachers. Unfortunately, their experience had not been complemented with relevant professional development regarding effective ways to provide leadership and management for the schools (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1978). The implementation of the Dzobo report suffered other setbacks, as a result of the shortage of teachers and textbooks, coupled with a poor infrastructure.

The Provisional National Defense Council government, under the leadership of Flight Lieutenant J. J. Rawlings, gained control of Ghana in the early 1980s. Rawlings decided to address the anomalies

of the educational system with financial support from the World Bank, an initiative which led to the Educational Reform of 1987. The reform replaced the remaining middle schools in the country with junior secondary schools and introduced the Basic Education Certificate Examination, as a requirement for entrance into senior secondary schools. While the Provisional National Defense Council government had been determined to make positive changes in the educational system, the head teachers of the junior secondary schools remained unprepared, as they had been during the implementation of Dzobo's report. The head teachers, not only were untrained, but they experienced limited opportunities to obtain training to improve their leadership and management skills.

Improvement to the management of the junior secondary schools was emphasized in the 1992 Constitution, which introduced the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Act (Ghana Education Service, 2001). The importance of school management was recognized in the act, as it required head teachers to receive training in school management (Ghana Education Service, 2001) in order to perform their tasks more effectively. The act also mandated that the work of the head teachers be augmented by the stakeholders of the individual schools, who were expected to contribute to school policy formulation and implementation (Ghana Education Service, 2001).

Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service

The Ministry of Education currently is responsible for the provision of education in Ghana. The ministry exercises financial control and formulates national educational policies. The ministry, however, directs that the policies be implemented by its agencies, one of which is the Ghana Education Service. It is responsible for implementing all pre-university educational policies formulated by the ministry. The Ghana Education Service has offices in the various municipalities and regions of the country. The offices are headed by directors of education, through whom the service attempts to ensure that the schools are operated effectively. The schools can be categorized as being public and private schools. Some of the public schools are solely established and managed by the government, while others are the function of religious organizations and in individuals in some cases.

The expected work of head teachers had been formulated by the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service in 1995 through the introduction and implementation of a handbook (Oduro, 2003). A purpose of the handbook had been to define and support the work of the head teachers. However, the implementation of the hand book had not met the objective of equipping the head teachers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for their job. While management efficiency of the schools had been emphasized with the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Act of 1992, the literature suggests that preparation of the head teachers is still one of the problematic areas in educational development of the country (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Oduro, 2003; Report of the President's Committee on the Review of Education Reforms in Ghana, 2002).

Head Teachers in Ghana

The purpose of this section is to describe the preparation, basis of appointments of teachers to head teachers, the responsibilities, and the implications on instruction and learning of the shortcomings of the preparation of the head teachers. An attempt is made to create a rationale for the premise that the head teachers have not received adequate training to address their responsibilities.

Preparation and Appointment of Head Teachers

Teachers in Ghana traditionally are expected to obtain the senior superintendent rank in the Ghana Education Service before they are appointed as head teachers. At the senior superintendent rank, the teachers are considered to be experienced enough to manage schools. Head teachers begin their careers as teachers. Teachers are prepared during a two-year period, which includes little or no attention to leadership and management skills (Zame, Hope, Respress, 2008). Appointments to the head teacher role occur without any form of specialized preparation, other than experience as a teacher. More specifically, the appointment of head teachers is largely based upon a teacher's seniority in "rank" and "teaching experience," as opposed to pre-appointment training (Oduro, 2003 p. 310). The appointments appear to be made on the assumption that an experienced classroom teacher will make an effective head teacher (Amuzu-Kpeglo, 1990). This practice has become a norm, as the educational reforms that

have occurred in the Ghanaian educational system lack the inclusion of leadership development for aspiring head teachers (Zame, et al., 2008). This lack of professional leadership development, according to Zame, et al., (2008), results in head teachers, who possess inadequate preparation for the professional tasks and competencies which have been identified by Davis, Darling-Hammond, La Pointe & Meyers, 2005; Levine (2005), as being needed by current school leaders.

Responsibilities of the Head Teachers

The lack of leadership and managerial preparation that teachers, prior to the time that they are appointed as head teachers, is coupled with enormous responsibilities of the position. The head teachers of schools are expected to address many tasks, including the appraisal of the teachers, curriculum implementation, instructional supervision, school-community relationships, and school facilities. The head teachers are also responsible for managing financial, staff, and student matters (Ministry of Education, 1994; Ministry of Education, 2002).

The responsibilities of the head teachers are addressed with the help of assistant head teachers. Support is also expected from a school management committee, a board of governors, and a parent teacher association, which are supposed to provide the schools with needed infrastructure and equipment such as furniture. Teachers also contribute to the operation of the schools by managing the day-to-day instructional and learning environment (Ministry of Education, 1994; Ministry of Education, 2002).

Even with the assistance that is provided for the head teachers, they have enormous responsibilities. For example, Ghanaian head teachers, by definition, are expected to be instructional leaders and managers. However the expectation has to be addressed under challenging conditions. For example, head teachers often teach and supervise teaching. Attempting to be the leader and manager of a school, while at the same time trying to address a full-time teaching load, is rather common in Ghanaian schools, especially in the locations in which there are shortages of teachers. Some head teachers even have to address combined classes. The supervisory roles of head teachers involves ascertaining if the teachers are teaching and the children are learning, which necessitates considerable time and effort that

could easily conflict with teaching a classroom or a combined classroom of students. For example, the supervisory role requires witnessing the manner in which the teachers are delivering their lessons and the ways in which the children are responding to the lessons. This endeavor is coupled with an examination of the contents of the pupils' exercise books, with the intent of gleaning information that could be used to provide the teachers with specific information regarding the levels of success of the students with their lessons.

The head teachers have other duties. For example, they are expected to review and provide reactions to the lesson notes of the teachers. This vetting process ranges from performing rigorous reviews to confirming that the teacher actually has developed notes. The ideal approach, which is not always met due to all of the other duties of the head teachers, is to ascertain if the objectives of the lessons are achievable, the teaching-learning aids are relevant to the lessons, and the stated methods of presentation are suitable for the pupils. Another role of the head teachers pertains to continuous assessment, which is an educational policy of the country that is used to assess the cumulative performance of the students over the entire duration of their education (EQUIP 1, 2003). To this end, the head teachers are expected to ensure that the teachers maintain timely and accurate records of the students' progress (Ministry of Education, 1994).

Head teachers, out of necessity, are expected to work with trained and untrained teachers (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Oduro, 2003; Oduro & MacBeath, 2003). The untrained teachers are often recruited to meet the demand for teachers in rural schools. The national policy mandates the number of teachers that are required for a school. However, the number of teachers in each of the schools varies. The schools in the urban and suburban areas often have the required number of teachers. On the other hand, the schools in the rural areas are often not able to obtain the required number of teachers, which contributes the challenges facing the head teachers in these schools. The phenomenon appears to reflect the perception among teachers that an attractive social lifestyle is available in the urban and suburban areas, as compared to the limited opportunities to engage in social and cultural activities that exist in the rural regions. The limited number of teachers in the rural schools, itself, tends to contribute to less attractive working conditions. More specifically, the fewer number

of teachers in these schools can result in assignments of more than three subjects per teacher, while the teachers in the urban and suburban areas often have two subjects, usually subjects of specialization (Ministry of Education, 1994; Ministry of Education, 2002).

The expectations of the head teachers in Ghana are described by Kennedy (2002) to include the work of a child advocate, community leader, emotional leader, visionary, instructional leader, politician, strategist, and manager responsible for increased levels of achievement for all students and the equitable allocation of resources. Kennedy (2002) expresses that the work of head teachers is so overwhelming that the job postings might read, "Only God Needs to Apply."

Head Teacher and Teacher Development

One of the roles of the head teachers involves teacher development. The lack of preparation of the head teachers to provide leadership for the professional growth of the teachers and the expectations for these teachers to address the contemporary challenges of instruction and learning represents a troublesome conflict (Reiman & Sprinthall, 1993; Speck, 1998; Thies-Sprinthall, 1984). After all, teachers now require different instructional skills than those employed in the past (Chermack & van der Merwe, 2003). In addition, the traditional methods of providing professional development through short-term workshops and in-service training, which has represented the norm in Ghana, are typically limited and insufficient to prepare the teachers to address the current challenges of their work. In other words, the inefficiencies in the traditional approaches necessitate the need for improved methods of teacher development that are relevant to the demands of the contemporary classroom.

The inadequacies of the preparation of the head teachers to address teacher development appear to have resulted in the Ghana Education Service conducting onetime in-service trainings for teachers. The actions of the service seem to reflect that it does not regard the head teachers as instructional leaders and managers, capable of providing professional development for the teachers. The Ghana Education Service appears to be aware of the inadequacies of the training that has been given to the head teachers, which has rendered them incapable of addressing their responsibilities as instructional leaders (Zame, et al., 2008).

The one-time in-service trainings provided by the Ghana Education Service do not appear to have been successful. The in-services have been conducted at the district and regional, as opposed to the school, level. A few teachers are selected to partake in the one-time in-service trainings, due to the lack of funds to sponsor all of the teachers in the school. A portion of the strategy is that the selected teachers, who have participated in the in-services, will transfer the knowledge learned to the other teachers, who have not been able to partake in the trainings. However, this strategy, as it has been implemented, is not resulting in the desired objective, as the teachers who receive the training are not always able to share what they have learned with their colleagues. The lack of opportunity reflects the tight school-day schedule for teachers and the lack of financial resources to provide a per diem for the teachers to attend weekend training sessions.

The preparation of the head teachers is evidently limited and for that matter inadequate (Bush & Oduro, 2006). Even on the rare occasion that head teachers receive training, it tends to occur after, as opposed to prior to, their appointments. According to a finding of Oduro's research, the participants had complained that the training had been conducted too late and should have been provided prior to the time that they had been appointed as head teachers. Training at both stages is obviously needed. The post-appointment training is typically structured in a limited in-service format. To contribute to the limitation of the approach, the preparation is usually provided by international agencies for urban and semi-urban schools, which results in the rural school head teachers not having an opportunity to benefit from the training. The identification of the number and categories of the schools for which the head teachers are selected to receive the training, often is made by outside agencies, which appear to lack an understanding of the contextual needs for ongoing training for all head teachers in Ghana. Another limitation of the in-service program funded by outside agencies, according to Oduro (2003), is "the training programs cease once the project is accomplished because the Ghana Education Service complains of lack of money to sustain them" (p. 309).

Additionally, Kitavi and van der Westhuizen, (1997) emphasize that the ways that head teachers are trained, selected, inducted, and in-serviced, have caused them to be ill-suited as effective and efficient school managers, let alone to be instructional leaders. The Ghana Education Service, according to Weller (2001) views the role of the head teachers as the manager of schools and enforcers of discipline, as opposed to

instructional leaders. If the findings of Weller (2001) are accurate, then a rhetorical question might be raised regarding the manner in which the Ghana Education Service should help the head teachers to become instructional leaders.

While the procedures used in appointing, training, inducting, and in-servicing head teachers tend to be recognized as being inappropriate in many developing countries, not just Ghana, they still represent a substantive deficiency for the operation of the schools (Bush & Oduro, 2006). Appointing head teachers, without equipping them with relevant and useful knowledge and competences, affects the quality of leadership and management, which they are prepared to provide (Kitavi & van der Westhuizen, 1997). With consideration of this discussion of the educational system of Ghana, this paper seeks to highlight the need to prepare the head teachers more thoroughly and effectively to become leaders and managers of instruction, as opposed to appointing the head teachers simply based upon the number of years that they have been teachers.

Problem Statement

Professional development for Ghanaian head teachers, as it has been previously described in this paper, is reported to be inadequate. The attempts, which have been made for professional development, have typically been organized at the regional and district levels in the form limited in-services with less than favorable outcomes. Meaningful professional development, which captures modern approaches, is significant to the preparation of head teachers for their provision of effective leadership and management of instruction. For this reason, the quality of instruction and learning in the schools of Ghana are being influenced in a negative manner by the inadequacies of the professional development. Student achievement appears to be suffering. Options to solve the problem exist. However they are not being utilized. Suggestions to address the problem will be proposed later in the paper.

Research Questions

Consideration of the problem statement for this study has resulted in the identification of the following research questions that are offered to guide the study.

1. What are the inadequacies and sources of the inadequacies in the professional preparation of Ghanaian head teachers and teachers?
2. Why should the inadequacies be addressed? Are the negative implications of the inadequacies of adequate substance to deserve the appropriation of resources to address them?
3. What thoughtful and strategic approaches might be used to remediate the inadequacies?
4. What challenges appear likely to be encountered with the implementation of plans to address the inadequacies in professional development?

Significance of the Conceptual Study

The significance of this conceptual study pertains to the insufficient manner through which professional development is offered to support needed leadership, instruction, and learning in Ghanaian schools. The ultimate outcome to this inadequacy appears to be its influence on student achievement. After all, student achievement typically thrives in an environment that has effective instructional leadership. Related evidence is provided that could be used by the Ghana Education Service to develop a framework to create and implement improved and relevant professional development.

Educational policy makers in Ghana and for that matter, the developing world, would hopefully find the outcomes of this study to be useful to their work. The results of the study could be used by the policy makers as a rationale for the development of statutes and appropriations that would nurture a meaningful desire among head teachers and teachers to embrace and implement useful forms of professional development. The content of this paper may also provide information for university-based programs in Ghana and other parts of the world regarding leadership and management development. An immediate objective would be to prepare head teachers, who are capable of addressing the complexities that confront contemporary Ghanaian education.

Ways to Address the Shortcoming

This section includes a continued discussion of professional development and its related shortcomings for the teachers and particularly

the head teachers in Ghana. The discussion of the shortcomings is coupled with suggested ways to improve the situation. Specific attention has been given to the use of school-based professional development and professional learning communities. The section is culminated with a proposal to help head teachers to become more effective leaders, particularly as leaders of instruction and learning, which is the primary objective of their work.

Discussion of Professional Development

The term “professional development” is frequently used to refer to human resource development, in-service training, and staff development. The foundation for the term can be found in the concept of such enterprises as adult education, training, consultation, and planned change. The ingredients of these enterprises can be used to craft ongoing and systematic staff development. The typical objective of the development is to support the capacity of the participants in a manner that is focused on the pursuit of organizational and individual goals. The intent of professional development, within schools, is to enhance instructional practices and learning outcomes by improving the instructional leadership skills of the head teachers (Harris & Bessent, 1969).

The degrees of obtained desired outcomes of educationally-based professional development most often reflect the manner in which the development is approached. For example, the development of teachers and head teachers is best grounded in an approach that reflects respect and offers attention to andragogy (Knowles, 1989), the study of the precepts of adult education. Other important aspects of adult education include the involvement of the participants in the identification of the topics to be studied. Involvement, in this context, pertains to meaningful and engaged learning, which is relevant to the work and lives of the participants (Barber, 1983; Bruder & Nikitas, 1982; Harris, 1989; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1991; Sadowski, 1993; Urick, Pendergast, & Hillman, 1981).

Many teachers, according to Guskey (2000), consider professional development to be a waste of their time and they simply tolerate the form of education in order to fulfill their licensure obligations. The teachers perceive development as a “necessary evil,” which provides limited relevant professional growth (Guskey, 2000). These reactions tend to

reinforce the importance of exhibiting respect for the adult participants, by including them in the planning and participation of the professional development.

In spite of the apparent need for the provision of professional development for head teachers and teachers in developing and underdeveloped countries, as previously mentioned in this paper, very few of these countries have devoted meaningful attention to the implementation of such training. Professional development programs are often organized in ineffective ways. An example would be the countries, such as Ghana as previously mentioned, in which the professional development activities are located at centralized locations and for this reason are often inaccessible to the head teachers and teachers in the rural areas, who are frequently beginners and particularly needing of the training Oduro (2003). The centralization and subsequent lack of accessibility of the professional development often represents a failure of governmental and non-governmental agency leaders to recognize that professional development represents a priority for which resources should be appropriated.

School-Based Professional Development and Learning Community

The reported shortcomings of the district and regional-based in-service programs of the Ghana Education Service have resulted in the authors of this paper suggesting that careful consideration be given to the use of an alternate, namely a school-based approach to professional development. It can be defined as an initiative that is focused upon the provision of professional development, as a function of a school, as opposed to a district, region, or nation. School-based programs are often a part of a school-based professional learning community (Dufour, 2004; Dufour & Eaker, 1998), which represent a concerted and collaborative effort by the stakeholders of a school to focus its resources on learning. While a bit different, the concepts of a learning community tend to intersect with tenets of a learning organization (Senge, 2006). School-based professional development is typically provided for head teachers and teachers with the intent of helping them to improve their capacities to address the learning needs of their schools' students (Evans, 1993).

A primary value of a school-based approach is that its location can contribute to enhanced opportunities for the involvement and participation of the head teachers and teachers. The involvement and participation frequently lead to the obtainment of a sense of ownership and commitment among the participants to the work of the school. A related value of a school-based professional learning community is that it can foster an intrinsic focus instruction and learning (Harter, 1981; Husman, Derryberry, Crowson, & Lomax, 2004) that would almost certainly bolster student learning. An intrinsic focus emerges with the obtainment of a strong sense of commitment. The obtainment of an intrinsically motivated commitment within a learning community will lead to the enhancement of instruction and learning.

School-based professional development also can act as a conduit to organize the work of the head teachers and teachers for the pursuit of identified leaning objectives. Many schools have objectives, as do the members of the staff within the schools. As stated by, Evans, (1993) schools are served by objectives, particularly learning objectives, which define the work of the instructional staff members. The identification of the objectives can be used to focus the members' work in a manner that will result in the desired outcomes and in accord with the available resources.

Both financial and human resources need to be considered in this context. The obtainment of the learning outcomes can be improved if the human resource, that is the work of the members of the school, is supported by professional development, particularly development that is focused upon the objectives of the school. For example, the school-based administrators and teachers in the schools of some countries develop individual objectives that are complementary to the objectives of their schools and approved by their supervisors. The approval includes support for professional development that will help the teachers and school administrators to pursue the objectives. In other words, the professional development process is based upon and coordinated with the learning objectives of the school, which frequently have been developed to be in sync with objectives of the district and the available resources.

The implementation of a school-based professional development program in Ghana could be augmented if the head teachers had the capacity to create among the teachers the collective vision of a professional learning community. However, the pursuit of such a vision (Chermack

& van der Merwe, 2003) would require that the head teachers had participated in related professional development. Such preparation could help the head teachers to understand and act as the leaders of communities. This understanding would represent a new perspective for many of the head teachers and would necessitate that they be prepared to provide instructional leadership in ways that are different from the approaches with which they have been accustomed. For example, the head teachers would need to interact with and seek input, in an authentic manner, from the other teachers and even the students in order to establish and pursue the type of learning goals that are typically inherent to a professional learning environment (Chermack & van der Merwe, 2003). Such an approach would positively affect the ultimate goal of improving student achievement.

Effective Leadership for Instruction and Learning

Being able to provide effective leadership for the implementation of school-based professional learning communities in Ghana could augment the work of the of head teachers. Among other things, the head teachers of Ghana are regarded as the primary school leaders at the elementary, middle and high school levels, who are responsible for instruction, learning, and student academic success (Southworth, 2002). In order to obtain these objectives, the head teachers are responsible for related matters such as aligning and implementing the standards-based curriculum in a way that contributes to student achievement and for assessing the teachers in a manner that is in alignment with curriculum (Elmore, 2000). In fact, research reflects that the work of head teachers is second only to the effects of classroom teachers on instruction and learning (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). Three of the primary domains of instructional leadership, according to Hallinger and Murphy (1987), relate to the work of a head teacher. They pertain to the vision of a school, a positive learning culture and climate, and the effectiveness with which the school is managed, which of themselves can be monumental. Head teachers are reportedly torn between focusing on their instructional and managerial responsibilities (Dimmock, 1996).

The demands on the work of head teachers appear to be too large to be addressed without even support than they already receive (Hulme, 2003) and to coordinate well with the notion that school leadership works best in a transformational (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood &

Poplin, 1992) and distributive (Elmore, 2000; Harris, 2004) as opposed to a transactional and directive, manner (Hulme, 2006). The proposed relevance of the use of a distributed leadership by head teachers appears to be complementary to the notion that classroom teachers are the instructional experts in the building. In fact, head teachers depend upon the teachers for the implementation of the curriculum; a relationship that is based on cohesion and collaboration as promoted in a professional learning community (Hulme, 2006).

Closing and Recommendations

The outcomes of research, as reported in this paper, support a relationship between the effectiveness of the head teachers and the outcomes of their school. The question that the paper attempts to address is whether the head teachers of Ghana just need to have a healthy amount of experience as teachers or if they would be better served to have been engaged in ongoing professional development regarding effective ways to provide educational leadership and management (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Darling-Hammond, Orphanos, LaPointe, & Weeks, 2007). The proposed need for the head teachers to benefit from meaningful pre-appointment and ongoing professional development appears evident with consideration of the magnitude of their responsibilities and need to understand and be able to implement relevant and current approaches to the leadership and management of their schools.

However, professional development is provided in Ghana in a manner that is difficult to access by those head teachers, who would likely benefit most from the opportunity. For this reason, a proposal has been made that school-based professional development be initiated within the context of a professional learning community. In addition, a suggestion is offered that the head teachers pursue the magnitude of their responsibilities from a transformational and distributive leadership approach. In a like manner, the head teachers appear to need to have the critical skills to be able to ascertain the appropriate theoretical constructs and approaches, which should be applied given the uniqueness of each context (Leithwood, Seashore, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004).

While this conceptually based paper has explored the work of Ghanaian head teachers and offered suggestions regarding ways, which they could be prepared and could provide more effective leadership for

their schools, additional research appears needed in order to understand the dimension of the situation in greater detail and to be able to offer more specifically-focused proposals. For this reason, a gap analysis is proposed to compare the exact skills that the head teachers have with those that they need. The next step of the proposed research would involve the identification of professional development initiatives that could be used to address the differences.

In addition, the paper is focused primarily upon professional development for current head teachers. The pre-appointment preparation of the head teachers also needs to be explored. Aspiring head teachers appear to receive little in the way of relevant leadership and management training. Such preparation, which could be addressed at Ghana's two colleges of education, could form a useful foundation for the work of beginning head teachers.

The proposals found in this paper and the recommendations purported for further research, which are based on research outcomes and theoretical constructs conducted and formulated in and outside of Ghana, are offered within an awareness that they will need to be implemented in a manner that offers recognition to the culture of the country. Sensitivity to the culture (Schein, 1984; Schein, 1996) of a country, region, city, and township are typically needed whenever general theoretical constructs are implemented, particularly in the public sector, such as in schools.

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