

# **PERSPECTIVES OF GHANAIAN HEADTEACHERS ON THEIR ROLE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF KEEA DISTRICT PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is substantially my own work. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at any other University. It does not include any work done in collaboration with any person or institution. References to the works of others have been duly acknowledged in the text and bibliography. The length of the thesis *including* appendices but *excluding* footnotes, tables, figures and bibliography does not exceed 80,000 words.



# **PERSPECTIVES OF GHANAIAN HEADTEACHERS ON THEIR ROLE AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF KEEA DISTRICT PRIMARY SCHOOLS.**

**GEORGE KWEKU-TOKU ODURO**

School effectiveness and improvement research has increasingly accepted that the success of a school is to a large extent influenced by the manner in which a headteacher perceives and performs his/her work in the school. Consequently, what school leaders do and how they are prepared for their work have, in recent times, become crucial. This study sought to explore, through an interpretive approach, how primary school headteachers within one district of Ghana - the Komenda-Eguafo-Edina-Agona-Abrem (KEEA) district, perceive their role as heads and their professional development.

The study, which was based on semi-structured interviews, observation and focus group discussion, suggests that tradition, culture and the political geography of Ghana are crucial factors in understanding what primary school headteachers in the KEEA district do and how they conceptualise headship. Headteachers' understanding of headship is skewed towards the exercise of 'power and authority'. The country's urban-rural dichotomies are characterised by teacher shortages and female headteacher under-representation in rural schools; thereby causing rural headteachers to lead the school and at the same time manage a full-time teaching load. These are compounded by frequent interactions with visitors, attending to incidents in school, collecting fees and keeping financial records and, in some cases, inspecting building projects, which meant pupils being left on their own in the classroom while the head attended to other matters. It is further suggested that the range and complexity of the tasks undertaken by the headteachers and how they construed their visions are to a large extent shaped by expectations which significant others (the Ministry of Education, the School Management Committees, parents, the local community, teachers and pupils) hold of them.

Coping with the challenges posed by public demands requires that headteachers develop the appropriate 'competences' and 'competencies'. Yet the data suggest that the headteachers, among other things, lacked competence in managing people, managing time and keeping financial records confidently. This implies a need not simply for more careful selection but for a more sophisticated approach to recruitment and sustained professional development of headteachers in the district. Two major questions emerge from my study, which require further investigation: (i). To what extent does the under-representation of female headteachers affect the attitude of girls towards learning in rural schools, (ii). To what extent does the indigenous language influence the understanding of contemporary school leadership issues among headteachers in Ghana?

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## DEDICATION

To my late father Isaac Kwasi Oduro and my mother Grace Akosua Otsenwaa.



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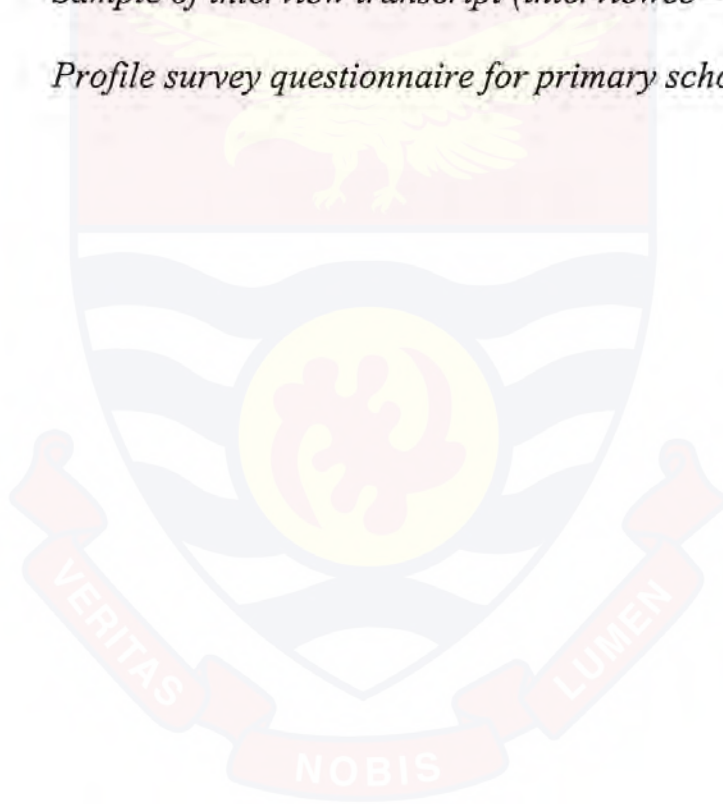
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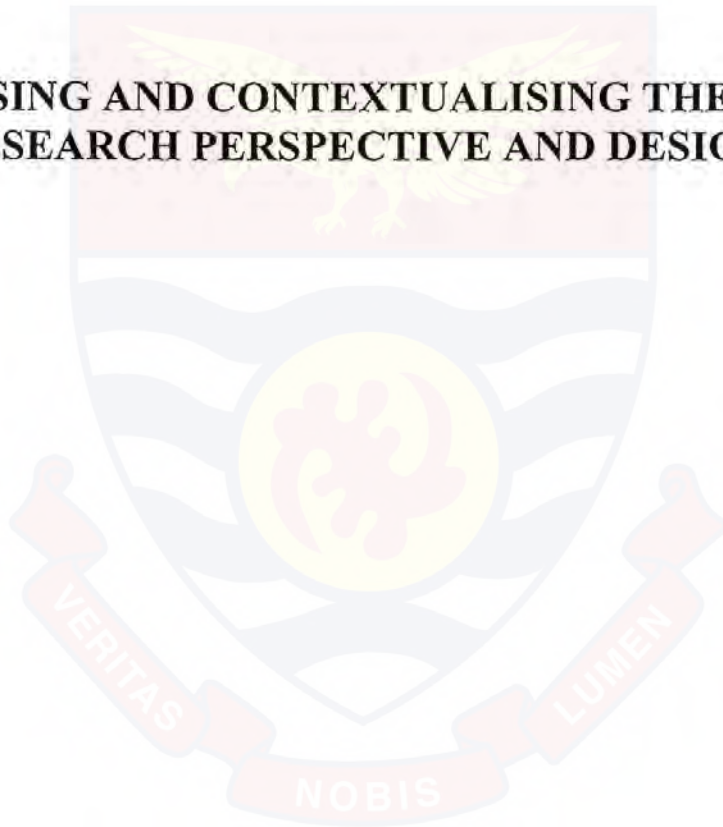
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## **PART 1**

### **THEORISING AND CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY, RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE AND DESIGN**



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*One of the fundamental areas of agreement between researchers who have investigated educational change concerns the powerful impact of school leaders on processes related to school effectiveness and school improvement. [...] Whatever else is disputed about this complex area of activity known as school improvement, the centrality of leadership in the achievement of school level change remains unequivocal (West & Jackson, 2001)*

#### Background to the study

The quote above confirms the importance of school leadership. School effectiveness and improvement<sup>1</sup> research agree that a school's success is largely influenced by the manner in which the headteacher perceives and performs his/her work (Hoyle, 1969, quoted in Grace, 1972:95; Fagbulu, 1972:39; Bolam *et al.*, 1993; Southworth, 1995). Consequently, school leadership has increasingly become 'essential in the business of running schools effectively' (Buckley, 1985:5). In this light, the professional development of headteachers is now a policy priority for most governments in their quest for quality improvement in primary schools (Hall *et al.*, 1986).

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<sup>1</sup> Historically, Stern (2000) explains, 'school effectiveness' studies have tended to focus on measuring how 'effective' schools are, often listing a number of key 'indicators', whilst 'school improvement' studies tended to focus on strategies by which schools can change. The two traditions started working together by the 1990s.

### *The case of Africa*

In the 1990s, the Commonwealth Secretariat, informed by Daddey's (1990) ethnographic study of three headteachers in Ghana and Harber's (1989) study of headteachers in Botswana, observed that, though school heads carried prime responsibility for creating an effective educational environment, many of them were overwhelmed by the task, because strategies for training and supporting them are generally inadequate. Besides, there was a lack of 'good quality, comprehensive and user-friendly resource materials on school management. In many cases, materials available were found to be written in 'language ill-suited to busy heads' Commonwealth Secretariat (1993:iii).

To improve the situation, the Commonwealth Education Programme initiated a joint Commonwealth Secretariat/UNESCO/SIDA/GTZ<sup>2</sup> Training and Support Programme for School Heads in Africa in 1991. Representatives of seven Ministries of Education in Africa, namely Ghana, Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe were mandated to draft materials covering the primary aspects of running a school in Africa.<sup>3</sup> Training modules were adopted for use by Ministries of Education in Africa, including Ghana, at a Commonwealth Africa Workshop in March 1993. In addition to these Commonwealth Secretariat Training (CST) modules, some countries in Africa have prepared their own manuals for headteachers.

In Ghana, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has, since the 1987 Education Reform, initiated interventions aimed at improving the quality of headteacher performance in primary schools. In 1995, a Headteachers' Handbook was produced to guide headship practices in the country. In addition, measures have been put in place to ensure that

<sup>2</sup> *UNESCO*: United Nations Education, Scientific & Cultural Organization; *SIDA*: Swedish International Development Authority; *GTZ*: German Agency for Technical Co-operation.

<sup>3</sup> The work of Harber (1989) and Daddey (1990) had described the unique work patterns of school heads in Africa. They had proved that management techniques appropriate elsewhere could not be



the inspectorate division of the Ghana Education Service (GES),<sup>4</sup> which is responsible for school supervision, carries out its supervisory role effectively. For example, motor bicycles have been provided for circuit supervisors, especially those in the rural areas, to facilitate their contacts with the schools. Furthermore, the government, as a way of motivating headteachers to enhance their performance, built bungalows very close to school sites for basic school headteachers. Available statistics show that by 1993, the government had built 2,143 bungalows for headteachers (NDC Manifesto, 1996:38).

### Statement of the problem

The aforementioned interventions notwithstanding, government officials and educational authorities in Ghana continued to complain about ineffective management of schools, especially at the primary school level. The result of a 1997 survey carried out by the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of the state of basic school management in the country, for example, suggests that ineffective school management is a major factor affecting the successful implementation of basic school improvement programmes in the country (Atakpa and Ankomah, 1998:13-16).

The fact that headship practice at the primary school level continues to be, largely, poor in spite of these interventions remains a puzzle. Is it that the existing scheme for preparing teachers for school leadership is inadequate? Do headteachers use competencies they already have instead of competences they should have in meeting the daily challenges they grapple with? Is the issue one that goes beyond the competences of the head? These were major questions that kept bothering me.

Unfortunately, none of the available literature reviewed informs us about what primary school heads themselves think and say about (a) the adequacy and relevance

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imported unmodified into African systems. This perhaps explains why the seven African Ministries of Education constituted the writing teams for drafting the resource materials for Africa.

<sup>4</sup> In Ghana, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for formulating educational policy, while the Ghana Education Service (GES) is responsible for policy implementation at the pre-tertiary level.

of existing training schemes for headteachers in the country, or (b) the competences they require for meeting their headship tasks. While Daddey's 1990 study focused on task-related problems of headteachers, Amuzu-Kpeglo's (1990) training needs survey focused on headmasters and principals of secondary schools and colleges. The primary head was neglected. The most recent research conducted by the IEPA (1997) also limited itself to characteristics of effectively and ineffectively managed schools. It did not attempt to find out from the headteachers themselves if factors such as *pre-service* or *in-service* training had any effect on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of their headship tasks<sup>5</sup>. It is these gaps in the literature, coupled with my conviction that headteachers themselves have a lot to say about their professional practices, thinking and development, that motivated me to undertake the study.

## Objectives of the study

The study sought to find out how headteachers within the KEEA Educational district, Ghana themselves:

- Perceive their professional preparedness prior to their assumption of duty.

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<sup>5</sup>In the light of the aforementioned puzzle I assumed that the existing professional development structure for training primary school headteachers in the country was inadequate. This stemmed from the fact that the criterion for appointing a primary school headteacher in Ghana predominantly remains 'seniority in rank' and 'experience' rather than 'professional' or 'academic' qualification. I also assumed that the lack of sustained pre-service training places the headteacher in a very awkward position. This is because, unlike the United Kingdom where the headteacher has the support of teachers who have themselves had access to frequent professional development opportunities, the Ghanaian primary school head – especially the rural-based – is expected to provide support and give direction to a group of teachers whose initial training has often been variable in quality and who have had little by way of systematic professional updating. I wondered, however, if the headteachers themselves would think the same way?

- Conceptualise their headship roles (Do they see themselves as managers, administrators or leaders?)
- View the adequacy and relevance of existing headteacher training schemes in the country
- View the most appropriate training strategy for equipping them with the competences they require for their headship task accomplishment.

### **Significance of the study**

Firstly, the study contributes to the current debate as to whether pre-service training is necessary for obtaining high professional performance of primary school headteachers in Ghana. It has exposed some issues that primary school improvement policy-makers and implementers within the KEEA district tend to take for granted in terms of appointing and developing the professional skills of headteachers. These, it is hoped, would ultimately set an agenda for future headteacher recruitment policy evaluation and transformation of the existing training programme for primary school headteachers in the country. Secondly, it is anticipated that the findings would be a source of updating the existing knowledge that the international community, especially the Commonwealth Secretariat, has about the cultural context of primary school leadership, as well as challenges and training needs of primary school headteachers in Ghana. Thirdly, it provides another perspective as to how knowledge can be created in the field of educational leadership and management, more particularly among educational researchers in Ghana. Lastly, it is anticipated that some of the issues that have emerged from this study would serve as the basis for a major future research in the area of preparing headteachers for primary schools in the country.

## Structure of the report

The report is presented in three main parts. **Part one** is focused on introduction, theorising and contextualising the study and describing the research perspective and design. It consists of three chapters. In chapter one, I provide a general background to the study and articulate the puzzling issue that my study sought to explore. I also outline the objective of the study and discuss its significance. In chapter two, I discuss the theoretical context of the study. In chapter three, I discuss the research perspective and design within which the study was conducted

**In part two**, I discuss how the research design was operationalised, problems I encountered and ethical issues with which I had to grapple in the field. In addition, I discuss the technique I used in analysing the data and the theoretical considerations that guided that choice. I then describe the main categories that emerged from the data and further present a descriptive analysis of the main findings as identified by the participants themselves. It consists of eight chapters: chapters four to eleven.

**Part three** is focused on discussing the findings. I interpret the findings in the light of the literature, and conclude with their implications for headteachers' professional development practice and for policy within the KEEA district. This section also examines implications of the findings for educational leadership research in Ghana. It consists of eight chapters: twelve to nineteen

## THEORISING AND CONTEXTUALIZING THE STUDY

### Introduction

A range of literature informed the study: published and unpublished research-based articles on school effectiveness and educational leadership, as well as related official documents. The review of literature was in two phases. Phase one preceded my fieldwork. It provided the basis on which my research topic, the problem and the research questions were formulated. It exposed me to strategies that previous studies had used to create knowledge in the field of educational leadership and also enabled me to determine the uniqueness of my study. Above all, it provided theoretical justification for the study and helped me to formulate an appropriate research design. During the second phase, issues that emerged from the data determined the literature reviewed. The literature provided the theoretical frame for the interpretation of the issues, which were progressively reviewed during the discussion of the data analysed.

Of particular interest in the preliminary review was the way in which concepts such as leadership, administration, management, effectiveness, professionalism, competence and other related issues are theorised by experts in the field of educational leadership. Techniques used in researching these phenomena were also pertinent to the way in which these had been theorised and investigated. I was also interested in understanding the Ghanaian context of public primary school education within which headteachers operate. As a result, the review focused on the following issues: the historical context of primary school leadership in Ghana, effective school leadership,

headship competencies, cultural influence on school headship and models of professional development.

## Historical context of primary school leadership in Ghana

Primary school education in Ghana, as it operates today, is credited to the efforts of three early European missions: the Basel, the Wesleyan and the Bremen who introduced the school system into the country as an evangelistic tool around the 1840s (Antwi, 1992; McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh, 1975). Local catechists, whose main job was to ensure that the evangelistic goals of the missions were met, headed these schools<sup>6</sup>.

By 1900, two categories of primary school were recognised: *government* which had full state funding and *assisted* which were run by non-government bodies and were to receive government grants on condition that all forms of discrimination in their operations were stopped. These did not, however, have any strong influence on the appointment of headteachers, since the missions continued to be the main providers of primary school education. As part of the country's preparation for self-governance, an Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) was initiated in 1951, which, among other things, sought to rapidly expand primary education and make it accessible to all Ghanaian children. Provision of primary school education was to be the full responsibility of the government. An Education Act of 1961, which provided for

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<sup>6</sup> Until 1852 when the first Education ordinance was passed by the colonial government to 'provide for the better education of the inhabitants of Her majesty's forts and settlements on the Gold Coast' (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh, 1975:36), one could not become a headteacher of a primary school unless one had identified him/herself with the ideology held by a particular mission. Indigenes who became headteachers were those who had been trained as catechists to support the missionaries' evangelistic work.

compulsory primary education for children, followed this. In both cases, emphasis was placed on the supply of trained teachers but none of the literature shows that any effort was invested in the preparation of headteachers.

The need to train primary headteachers became paramount after the country's 1987 Education Reform, and particularly the introduction of the Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (fCUBE) programme in 1995<sup>7</sup>. To achieve the goals of the FCUBE programme, the Ministry of Education (MOE) through the Ghana Education Service (GES) has embarked on a number of interventions<sup>8</sup>. This suggests that a major concern of the MOE/GES at present is to make headteachers effective in order to ensure that primary schools are managed effectively.

## Factors of school effectiveness

'Effectiveness' is sometimes used interchangeably with 'efficiency' as if they mean the same thing. According to Beare *et al.* (1989), both terms derive from the same Latin root, and both involve accomplishment but differ in meaning. The concept 'effectiveness' can be viewed from different perspectives (Kydd *et al.*, 1997). To be 'effective', according to the Merriam-Webster (1999:166) is to produce 'a decisive or desired effect'. Barnard (cited by Beare *et al.* 1989:11) explains that 'an action is effective if it accomplishes its objective aim'. 'To effect' means 'to bring about, to accomplish'; thus, to be effective an action or an institution or an individual must

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<sup>7</sup> The fCUBE aims at providing equal access to quality education for all children of school-going age in the country by 2005. Among other things, the policy seeks to address problems relating to the management of primary schools. Specifically, it seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of management performance at the basic education level.

<sup>8</sup> These include the establishment of School Management Committees (SMC) and District Support Teams (DTS) to assist in the management of schools. A number of in-service training (INSET) programmes in the forms of workshops, seminars and lectures are also organised for headteachers. These are often organised in conjunction with foreign bodies. In 1998, for example, the MOE/GES with the support of the British Department for International Development (DFID) embarked upon a

bring something about or accomplish something. One is effective if one sets oneself a target and is able to hit it. In the context of education, effectiveness may refer to the degree to which educational means or processes result in the attainment of educational goals (Schereens, 1992:11)<sup>9</sup>.

In the case of schools, Madaus *et al.* (1980:22-27), explain that the concept of school effectiveness is 'extremely complex', partly because 'effectiveness is not an all-or-nothing proposition'. To King and Peart (1990:46), 'there is no formula or easy set of rules available for arriving at a good<sup>10</sup> school' because each school is exceptional. Hence, as Purkey and Smith (1983:429-430) observe, 'reviews do not always find the same features to be characteristic of effective schools, even when considering basically the same literature' and that 'while all reviews assume that effective schools can be differentiated from ineffectiveness, there is no consensus yet on just what the salient characteristics happen to be'. Levine (1992) also observes that techniques for categorising schools as 'effective or ineffective' tend to 'produce conflicting results,' hence 'one must be cautious regarding conclusions [about school effectiveness] drawn from school effectiveness research' (p.25). The complexity of issues involved in school effectiveness may be summarised in Goldstein and Myers' (1997:2) statement: 'the term "school effectiveness" is a misnomer. Effectiveness, if it means anything, is multidimensional. Schools differ in their effectiveness by curriculum subject, and are differentially effective for different groups of pupils [...]'. Thus, the interface among

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Whole School Development (WSD) programme to support headteachers and teachers in developing their schools for effective teaching and learning.

<sup>9</sup>This suggests that a school can be effective by achieving its objectives but also inefficient by operating at too great a cost or vice-versa. Where a school is able to promote both efficiency and effectiveness, it may be described as a good school though it 'may not necessarily be excellent - in the sense of being the best among its peers' (Beare *et al.*, 1989:12). By extension, it means that an effective headteacher may not necessarily be an efficient head; hence promoting both efficiency and effectiveness are important in the professional development of primary heads.

<sup>10</sup> Although I understand a 'good' school as used in this context to mean an 'effective' school, I am aware of Jenson's (2001:3) caution that 'one has to be cautious in interpreting reports on school goodness, effectiveness or exemplariness because these terms may be used interchangeably by some yet differently by others'. According to her, *effectiveness* may generally refer to the extent to which schools meet academic objectives, which 'are frequently measured by standardised tests'. *Goodness*, on the other hand, is 'usually an holistic measure of the extent to which schools meet social as well as academic goals'.



factors within the school ‘make it difficult to distinguish cause and effect’ (King and Peart, 1999:178).

To this end, determining factors that influence school effectiveness and the extent to which school level factors contribute to such effectiveness are therefore complicated. In America, Coleman *et al.* (1966) studied the association between **school inputs** and **student achievement** (Constant and Konstantopoulos, 2002). Their report, later supported by Jencks (1972), suggests that ‘schools had little or no effect on pupil achievement’. Instead, student’s socio-economic background ‘as measured by household income, parental socio-economic status etc.’ was viewed as ‘the strongest predictor of academic performance’ (Education Research Paper No. 06, 1993:61, Website)<sup>11</sup>.

From this perspective, a major challenge with which school leaders have to grapple is how they can utilise these environmental factors in order to make the school effective. To achieve this, Goldring and Sullivan (1996) propose a kind of leadership which they term ‘environmental leadership’ and which integrates the *external* (parents and community) and the *internal* (school contexts). Goldring and Rallis (1993, cited in

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<sup>11</sup> Coleman seemed so confident about the marginal effect schools have on pupils’ academic achievement that, 35 years after his 1966 controversial report and prior to his retirement in 1999, he still argued: ‘My main research interest was effective schools. In particular, I was concerned with the relationships between schools and external forces, which often strongly influence effectiveness. School districts, governments, and families all demonstrably affect school quality’. He emphasised, ‘it has recently become clear that the family is the dominant shaper of school quality, and indeed of the educational attainment of the child’ (Coleman, n.d.); hence the ‘school doesn’t matter’. Amuzu-Kpeglo’s (1990) review of a range of school effectiveness literature also identified the ‘school environment’ as an influential factor. School environment was defined to include external factors that tend either to positively or negatively influence the attainment of the school’s goals. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) point out that high parental involvement correlates positively with school effectiveness. Mackenzie, (1983); Purkey & Smith (1983); Murphy *et al.*, (1983) stress that parental involvement and support by way of contributions from the parent-teacher association (PTA) highly influence the attainment of the school’s goals. In this light, Goldring and Sullivan (1996:195) claim that ‘internationally, there is increasing interest and emphasis on parental and community involvement as a strategy for improving education’.

ibid.) also stress the need for school leadership to go beyond instructional leadership and the management of internal functioning to activate environmental leadership skills (p.197). Simply put, headteachers need to consider administrative, professional, social and family influences and how they influence each other, in their (headteachers') efforts to improve school effectiveness (Coleman and Collinge, 1991).

In contrast with Coleman *et al*'s (1993) and Jencks' (1972) suggestion that 'schools do not matter', subsequent studies have demonstrated that 'within school factors may be more important than previously supposed' (Education Research Paper No.6 Website, p.1) In the United Kingdom, researchers such as Reynolds (1992), Rutter *et al* (1979), Mortimore *et al* (1988), Reynolds and Creemers (1990) and Myers (1995), in the United States Brookover *et al* (1979) and Edmonds (1979) and in Canada Gaskell (1995), for example, strongly suggest that schools can make a difference. Rutter *et al*'s comparative survey of 10 year-olds in twelve inner London schools, for example, found a significant correlation between qualities such as *positive rewards* and *teacher punctuality*, and outcomes such as *low truancy rates, good behaviour, and good examination results*' (Stein, 2000). Mortimore *et al*'s (1988) study of London primary schools, Smith and Tomlinson's study of multi-racial comprehensive schools supports Rutter's finding. Reynolds and Creemers (1990:1) also claim that 'schools matter, that schools do have major effects upon children's development and that, to put it simply, schools do make a difference'. In the United States, Card and Krueger (1992), the first to establish the link between school effects and earnings later in life (Constant and Konstantopolous, p.4) found that 'improvements in school quality characteristics, such as pupil/teacher ratios, teacher salary, and length of academic year had positive effects on black and white men's earnings and helped narrow the black-white gap between 1960 and 1980' (ibid.). Illuminating the significance of school effects, Huber (1998:2) explains: 'even if family background,

for instance, determines pupils' achievements, schooling may influence and compensate for initial differences.'<sup>12</sup>

Mortimore *et al* (1993) propose twelve factors, Edmonds (1979), Lezotte (1989) and Creemers (1994) agree on five factors, while a more recent report prepared by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995) provided eleven key factors for effective schools. **Table 2.1** below illustrates these differing indicator sets:



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<sup>12</sup>Data emerging from Heyneman and Loxley's study of science achievement in 16 developing and 13 industrialised countries suggest that in developing countries, including Ghana, 'school effects might be even more important than in developed countries' (Education Research Paper No. 06, 1993, Website). The study, which examined a range of school variables and regressed science achievement scores against them, found relatively little variance explained by school factors in the industrialised countries but much larger amounts explained in the developing countries. For example, 27 percent of the variance in achievement was explained by school quality in Indian children and only 3 percent by social class. In Thailand, 25 percent of the variance was explained by school quality and only 6 percent by social class. The researchers concluded that on the whole 'school effects seemed more important in subjects like science where systematic study is generally only possible in schools.

**Table 2.1: Key factors for effective school**

<b>Mortimore's Model</b>	<b>Creemeers, Edmonds and Lezotte Model</b>	<b>Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore Model</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• purposeful leadership</li> <li>• involvement of deputy head</li> <li>• involvement of teachers</li> <li>• consistency among teachers</li> <li>• structured sessions</li> <li>• intellectually challenging teaching</li> <li>• work-centred environment</li> <li>• limited focus within sessions</li> <li>• maximum communication</li> <li>• record keeping</li> <li>• parental involvement</li> <li>• positive climate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strong leadership</li> <li>• high expectations of student achievement</li> <li>• an emphasis on basic skills</li> <li>• a safe and orderly climate</li> <li>• frequent evaluation of pupil progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional leadership</li> <li>• shared vision and goals</li> <li>• a learning environment</li> <li>• concentration on teaching and learning</li> <li>• purposeful teaching</li> <li>• high expectations</li> <li>• positive reinforcement</li> <li>• monitoring progress</li> <li>• pupil rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• home-school partnership</li> <li>• a learning organisation</li> </ul>

**Source: Extracted from Huber, S.G (1998) Dovetailing School Effectiveness and School Improvement, ICSEI**

Purkey and Smith (1983) also stress that the school's culture and climate are key ingredients in its failure or success. The influence of the school's culture is underlined in MacBeath *et al.*'s (1995) study for the UK's National Union of Teachers, which found that 'good schools were those whose culture provided opportunities for growth, not only for pupils but for teachers and school leaders' (in MacBeath, 1998:146). To

Duignan (1986:69), the work culture of the school is a major factor influencing school effectiveness. He defines the culture of effective schools to include a belief system that values academic achievement, creates high expectations for everybody's performance, demands order and discipline so that students can learn effectively, and encourages collaborative and collegial work and relationships.

This suggests that when headteachers, teachers, pupils, parents and all stakeholders of the school share the same world view and their views of reality are consistent with each other or are sufficiently homogeneous in their core assumptions, then a common 'culture' emerges (Beare *et al.* 1989:18). It is this culture that enables members of the school to work relentlessly towards making their school effective. They observe:

What seems to be emerging as a powerful factor about the acknowledged 'best' schools in school effectiveness research is that they have developed a culture, milieu, environment, atmosphere, a *cultus corporis*, which in a myriad of ways influences how well children learn.

Goodlad (1994) has long expressed scepticism as to whether schools are really performing their primary purpose. Goodlad, for instance, argues that schools are taking on non-functional social problems as part of their curriculum, thus depleting their resources and distracting them from their fundamental goals. Goodlad is, perhaps, referring to the traditional role of teaching and improving exam results<sup>13</sup>.

In contrast, Holtz (quoted in Silver, 1994:101, quoted in MacBeath 1998:145) sees the mission of the school beyond the mere promotion of examination results. He laments that, while it was hoped that schools would create new models of community, encourage new commitments towards meaningful vocations, end racial

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<sup>13</sup> This suggests that a school can be effective by achieving its objectives but also inefficient by operating at too great a cost or vice-versa. Where a school is able to promote both efficiency and effectiveness, it may be described as a good school though it "may not necessarily be excellent - in the sense of being the best among its peers" (Beare *et al.*, 1989:12). By extension, it means that an

discrimination, and open up new avenues out of poverty and unhappiness, we rejoice if children can simply be taught to read. Attempting, therefore, to determine a universally acceptable role for the head in formulating a school's mission presents a complex problem.

Duignan *et al's.*, (1986) study of the role of school principals in Australia, for example concludes that the pluralistic and fluid value orientations of many members of today's society make it difficult to establish a standard mission for school conduct. Similarly, Amuzu-Kpeglo (1991:5) comments on the complexity of the school's mission in Ghana as follows:

In Ghana, failures in home and community responsibilities become new agenda on the school curriculum. Sex education has become a liability on the school curriculum. Some members of the general public feel that traffic education should also be the responsibility of the school.

Notwithstanding the complexities involved in determining a specific mission for the school, it is essential that the school clearly defines its mission, since many studies on school effectiveness identify mission as a critical factor (Wimpelberg *et al.*, 1989; Cuban, 1984; Duignan, 1986).

The importance of school culture and school mission discussed above implies a high level of responsibility for the head in creating and maintaining a culture that promotes effectiveness. A study of eighteen high achieving and twelve low-achieving schools, for example, suggests that 'differences among schools were strong principals who participated in the instructional programme' and 'high expectations held by those principals about themselves' (Austin, 1979:12).

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effective headteacher may not be necessarily an efficient head; hence promoting both efficiency and effectiveness are important in the professional development of primary heads.

Furthermore, what children are required to learn is seen by many studies as the key factor in influencing change at the classroom level. Schools that have a highly structured and sequenced curriculum appear to be more effective (Amuzu-Kpeglo, 1991;8). Murphy *et al.*, (1983) stress that in a highly coupled curriculum, materials employed, instructional approaches and assessment instruments used need to be consonant with basic goals and objectives, so giving a clear direction to the school in its drive for effectiveness. Secondly, the behaviour of the teacher has a marked effect on the child's learning in the classroom (Creemers, 1994; Peretomode, 1992)<sup>14</sup>.

The mainstream of effectiveness studies is premised on achievement in tests and examinations (Harber and Davies, 1997:27), assuming this to be the central mission of the school or that these data provide the most reliable proxy available for comparative purposes. Sammons *et al.* (1996), for example, argue that measuring public examination results does adequately reflect the important goals of education' (cited by Huber, 1998:6). So, both school level factors, which emerge from these studies, are those that appear to correlate spontaneously with schools whose achievement (or attainment) outcomes are highest<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> The pupil's performance is affected by teacher behaviour variables such as clarity of lesson presentation, teacher enthusiasm, achievement-oriented behaviour in classrooms, use of a wide variety of question types, level of teacher expectation for pupils' academic achievement, effective use of teaching/learning aids and class control acts, which, taken together, are seen as having a significant impact on pupil achievement.

<sup>15</sup> Using examination results as the top-most criterion for determining effective schools has implications for the school. It suggests that the school's main task should focus on getting 'as many children through examinations as possible by de-emphasising other equally important tasks of the school related to family life preparation, social responsibility, respect for old age, political awareness, self esteem, etc.' (Harber and Davies, 1997:28). Creemers (1994:10-29) have criticised the over dependence on test scores in determining effective schools. Brandt, for example, cautions that using examination results as 'basis for effectiveness could lead to practices many educators think unwise: uniform state-wide curriculum; fixed promotion standards; a required college-preparation programme for every student. To Creemers, educational goals are not limited to mathematics and language achievement. Cuban (1984:695-696) also laments, 'in the pursuit of effectiveness based on test scores, declining attention might be given to music, art, speaking skills, personal growth and self-esteem'.

However, critics of this limited conception of effectiveness point to other central goals of schooling such as personal and social development (Cuban, 1983, Creemers 1996a, cited by Huber, 1998:8). A community that becomes concerned about the moral degradation among its young ones may well expect a school to be judged in terms of how well its products behave. Some parents would perhaps decline sending their children to a school where pupils are noted for bad behaviour, no matter the quality of teaching (Adler *et al.*, 1989)<sup>16</sup>. In Ghana, for example, it is common to hear some parents using the term 'good school' to describe schools where pupils exhibit self-discipline, respect for authority and old age, truthfulness and, to some extent, academic excellence, while the term 'bad school' describes schools where pupils are generally disrespectful to authority and exhibit behaviours that seem counter to cultural values.

Given different conceptions of the school's purpose, therefore, an effective school may not necessarily be a 'good' school. To MacBeath (1998:143), the notion of what constitutes a 'good' school is bound up in history, culture and local context and the fact that a 'good' school is a social construct, shaped by national expectations and local aspirations. Equally, the notion of an effective school is socially constructed. Thus both notions rest on the belief that those schools can make a difference (Mortimore *et al.*, 1988, Reynolds *et al.*, 1996), although, perhaps, appealing to different conceptions of the primary mission of schooling. As Glickman, (quoted in Macbeath, 1998:140) argues 'effective schools can be good schools, and good schools must be effective schools, the two are not necessarily the same'. Gammage (quoted in MacBeath 1998:145) describes a good school:

Perhaps therefore the good school is that which most successfully matches its curricular organisation and ethos to an expectation of high commitment by children . . . a school is 'good' not so much because of the specific nature of what is taught (though that is important) but

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<sup>16</sup> Adler *et al.*'s study, which involved 616 parents in three Scottish Educational Authorities, found that 'parents were more influenced by factors such as the disciplinary climate, a school's general reputation, and proximity, than by educational considerations such as teaching methods or examination results'.



through the manner in which a positive, supportive, richly and frequently interactive atmosphere is created.

While the 'good' and the 'effective' remain contested notions, the central place of pupil achievement in public standardised exams remains and researchers continue to pursue those factors, internal and external, which influence the school's accomplishment of its tasks<sup>17</sup>. These have implications for school headship and raise the question of what specific role the headteacher is expected to play in order to make the school he/she heads effective, and the criteria by which the effectiveness of a particular headteacher may be determined. The review in the next section focuses on these issues.

### **The role of the headteacher in promoting school effectiveness**

The literature reviewed in the last section supports Gray's (1990:206) observation that 'the importance of the headteacher's leadership is one of the clearest of the messages from school effectiveness research'. Southworth's (1995:ii) review of a number of studies affirms that those studies concerned with school culture (e.g. Nias *et al.*, 1989), instructional leadership (e.g. Beare *et al.*, 1991) and the leadership for change (e.g. Fullan *et al.*, 1991, Fullan, 1996; Nias *et al.*, 1989) consistently stress the central importance of the head's leadership and his/her active involvement in curriculum and school development. Gray further stresses that reviews of effectiveness research do not show any evidence of effective schools with weak leadership.

Gray does not define what constitutes 'weak leadership' but the contention is that all effective schools operate under strong leadership. While school effectiveness research

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<sup>17</sup> These return persistently to: productive school climate and culture; focus on pupil acquisition of central learning skills; appropriate monitoring of pupil progress; practice-oriented staff development at the school site; salient parental involvement; higher operationalized expectations and requirements for teachers; effective instructional arrangements and implementation and outstanding leadership.

associates 'strong leadership' with other characteristics of effective schools (Firestone, 1996:395), there is no evidence to deny that a school headed by an effective leader could be ineffective, or that it is possible for an effective school to have weak leadership. A school, which is well resourced materially and humanly with established ethos of high achievement and a strong collaborative culture (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1990)<sup>18</sup> may have considerable success even under an ineffective head. While effective leadership would seem to be a valuable ingredient in providing effectiveness, this does not necessarily imply that effective schools always have effective heads. Dutch school effectiveness research, for example, reveals that 'instructional leadership' is not necessarily associated with school effectiveness (Creemers, 1992, in Harber & Davies, 1997:27).

Nevertheless, school effectiveness research largely views the school head as a leader who contributes significantly to raising standards of achievement. A problem, however arises when one raises the questions, 'leader of whom and toward what?' (Wilson *et al.*, 1966). To understand the leadership role of the primary school headteacher, therefore, it is necessary to trace the background to conceptions of the current leadership role in primary schools.

### **Development of leadership role concept: the context of school headship.**

The emergence of 'leadership role concept' in school headship can be traced to the twentieth century when changes in society and increasing public interest put pressure on schools (Huber 1998:11-13; Owen 1992:22-56; Jones 1999:441). As Fullan (1995:25) clarifies, changes in society affect the 'educational environment for

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<sup>18</sup> The writers identify collaborative school culture as an indispensable ingredient in transformational leadership.

schools' and present 'new tasks and challenges', which the school has to grapple with (Huber 1998).

According to Owen, in 1975 parents in the United Kingdom became critical of the academic work of schools (Owen, 1992:26)<sup>19</sup>. In 1976, the then government proposed that 'the education profession should be made accountable to society and non-professionals should have a greater say' (ibid). The Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 further increased the pressure on schools; thereby making the need for a new interpretation of school headship necessary. As Jones (1999:41) put it, 'headteachers had to manage the consequences of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA), including the diminishing role of the Local Education Authority (LEA), increased power for school governors, local financial management of schools and open enrolment.'

Similar public pressure led to the reshaping of school headship roles in America (Murphy and Beck, 1996). According to the writers, in the 1990s, reformers of the economic system had drawn a connection between a stagnant economy and a deteriorating educational system and thereby subjected the educational system to 'a barrage of criticism from nearly every quarter of society' (ibid. p.185). This climate of blame posed many challenges to school headship and influenced a redirection of headship roles. Murphy and Beck argue:

If there is an all encompassing challenge for principals in the 1990s, it is to lead the transition from the bureaucratic model of schooling, with its emphasis on minimal levels of education for many, to a post-industrial model, with the goal of educating all youngsters well - while

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<sup>19</sup> Owen explains that unlike the early 1960s, when 'schools made their own choices about what to teach' (p.22), the 1970s saw increasing public interest in what went on in UK schools. There was public discontent with the standard of education in the UK, particularly in terms of 'children's ability to read' (p.26). This led to establishing the Bullock Committee in 1972 to 'enquire into the teaching of literacy and into means of improving the way in which language development could be monitored'. In 1975, for example, an inquiry into parents' complaints about their children's learning in one school – the William Tyndale School in Islington – led to the dismissal of the headteacher and several teachers (p.26).

at the same time completely changing how the principals themselves operate. The first challenge, then, is to reorient the principalship from management to leadership<sup>20</sup> [...].

Thus, unlike the early 1960s when the public showed little interest in how schools were managed, Sayer (1989) suggests that changes emanating from government policies and public pressure meant that (i) schools in the 1990s were no longer going to be organised as though they were complete in themselves, and (ii) sharing and co-operative modes of management were to be part and parcel of the learning experience. The headteacher was therefore to be seen as: 'one who can be alongside colleagues, part of a consensus; one who takes initiatives and encourages others to do so as well; one able to help others to overcome weaknesses and is prepared to recognise his or her own' (cited in Owen, 1992:51).

The need for new skills and competencies to manage challenges posed by public pressure and educational reform therefore requires the headteacher to be a leader<sup>21</sup>. The leadership role of the headteacher, however, poses a conceptual problem. What do we mean when we refer to the headteacher as a leader? How different is the headteacher's leadership role from his or her administrative and managerial role?

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<sup>20</sup> Louis and Miles (1990) differentiate between *management*, related to designing and carrying out of plans, getting things done and *leadership* related to mission, direction, inspiration, and stressed that both implied different sets of characteristics that are essential and must be combined within the same person.

<sup>21</sup> Huber (1998:14) identifies *transformational* or *transformative* leadership as a concept that better explains the headteachers' leadership role in times of transition, as expected in the 1990s. He distinguishes between transformational leadership and instructional leadership. Transformational leadership, he explains, involves 'building a shared vision, improving communication, developing collaborative decision-making and problem-solving processes'. A transformational leader, therefore, empowers 'those who participate in the change process, provide the incentives for people to attempt improvement in their practices, and exercise 'a form of power through people, not over people' (Leithwood, 1992:9). An instructional leader, on the other hand, focuses on so-called first order

## What constitutes headteachers' leadership role(s)?

The word leadership is a sophisticated modern concept 'full of ambiguity and a range of interpretations' (MacBeath, 2003:1). Its meaning may therefore depend on the kind of institution in which it is found (Bass, 1990:11-18). Writers therefore differ in their conceptualisation of 'leadership' and in their explanation of who a 'leader' is. Classical leadership writers, such as Plato, Machiavelli and Pareto, who write against the background of war, conflict or impending strife, conceptualise leadership from an anti-democratic and an authoritarian perspective where authority and power is invested in one person.

Plato's *The Republic*, for example, argues, 'it is evident that the captain of the boat is the only one to be trusted with its control, since only the captain has the necessary knowledge' (Grint, 1997:19:20). Traditional leadership theorists such as Barnard, Stogdill and Fieldler have disputed this notion of a single form of leadership (cited in Grint). Barnard, for example, defines leadership as 'the quality of the behaviour of individuals whereby they guide people or their activities in organised effort'. Leadership, to him, depends on three things: *the individual, the followers and the conditions*. He stresses that leadership emerges from the integration of these three things. The tendency to concentrate wholly on the role and capacity of the individual leader is therefore a mistake. Our understanding of leadership, he argues, is contingent upon our understanding of individuals, of organisations and of conditions.

To Stogdill, leadership is 'the process of influencing the activities of an organised group toward goal-setting and goal achievement'. He explains that for leadership to prevail, there must be a group with a common task or objective, and at least one member must have responsibilities that differ from those of the other members.

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changes, i.e. improving the technical, organisational, instructional activities of the school, for instance,

Leadership cannot therefore emerge unless members of a group assume distinctive responsibilities. A leader then, according to Stogdill, is a person who becomes differentiated from other members in terms of the influence he/she exerts upon the goal setting and goal achievement activities of the organisation. For his part, Fieldler sees leadership as an interpersonal relation in which power and influence are unevenly distributed so that one person is able to direct and control the actions and behaviour of others to a greater extent than they control his.

A common feature that runs through almost all the definitions above is that leadership involves an element of *human interaction, direction and goal achievement*. In relation to the school, therefore, the headteachers' leadership role is focused on these three elements.

Research conducted by Acker (in Southworth, 1995) on headteachers' work in urban primary schools paints a picture of the headteacher's leadership task as varied, fragmented and people-centred. The Commonwealth Secretariat's Headteacher Training Programme for Anglophone Africa, which began in the early 1990s, also suggests that the headteacher's leadership role overlaps with his/her administrative and managerial roles<sup>22</sup>.

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through close monitoring of teachers' and students' classroom work.

<sup>22</sup> The roles are summarised as follows:

- Implementers of the policies and procedures of government
- Administrators of educational institutions
- Head teachers and lead providers of interesting, challenging and relevant learning experiences;
- Facilitators for creating school communities in which co-operation, creativity and achievement are prized;
- Leader, *primus inter pares*, of teams of professional educators
- Managers of the supply and effective use of resources (human, financial and material)
- Enablers of parental and community involvement in teaching/learning processes and in the school management and development
- Co-ordinators of quality assurance mechanisms, including monitoring and evaluation, which lead to useful and continuing changes and innovations.

Similarly, the GRUBB Institute Report (1988) analyses activities of the headteacher from three perspectives: (a) *Leadership activities* which involve defining and communicating aims and objectives to others, motivating staff, working with and valuing differences, using expert advice, thinking holistically, keeping in mind the relation between the classroom and the wider context and believing in the potential and resource that lies within others; (b) *Managerial activities* which consist of working with aims and objectives, recruitment and selection, defining boundaries and managing transactions across boundaries; assessing resources and their application, defining priorities and relating them to each other, judging how roles are being taken by self and others, reviewing the performance of the system and making judgements about necessary changes and their implementation; (c) *Administrative activities* which involve understanding policy and working with it, setting up and maintaining systems of records, scheduling and timetabling processes, assessing progress, financial records, identifying resources and logging their use, working under pressure created by others and recognising the limits of a policy and acting accordingly. This categorisation suggests that whereas administration and management focuses on the school as a system, leadership is more focused on motivating people towards achieving school goals. What the GRUBB report fails to tell us is whether these three categories complement each other in the school situation. Do headteachers draw a distinct line between administration, management and leadership in their day-to-day activities? These are issues that, in my opinion, need to be explored in order that relevant training programmes are designed for headteachers.

Southworth (1995:1) argues that, despite the importance attached to the headteacher as central to the success or failure of a school, 'we still know relatively little about what a headteacher actually does'. Books on the subject usually provide a list of functions, which are both generalised and prescriptive and often become a set of exhortations (Harber and Davies, 1997:63). From an African context, Musaazi (1982:16 -18) writes:

The school head must know that he is an employee and that his employer, the Ministry of Education, expects from him good quality work, loyalty and integrity. The school head as the leader of the teaching staff has the responsibility of promoting effective teaching in the school. It is also his duty to ensure that his employer appoints qualified and competent teachers to his school.

Writing on activities of headteachers in industrial nations of the West, Fullan (1991:145-146) observes:

Nearly all school district role descriptions (and courses in educational administration theory, which nearly all school principals take) stress the instructional leadership responsibilities of the principal - facilitating change, helping teachers work together, assessing and furthering school improvement and so on. However, how principals actually spend their time is obviously a better indicator of their impact on the school<sup>23</sup>.

Saran and Trafford's (1990: 103-104) review of Mintzberg's (1973) observational study of managerial work, Thomas, Phillips & Adamson's (1981) study of the activities of five Australian primary school principals; Kmetz & Willower's (1981) investigation of American elementary school principals and Davies' (1987) study of British primary heads, confirm that headteachers' work is characterised by a brisk rate

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<sup>23</sup> He listed the following as some commonalities:

- Virtually all the time of headteachers is taken up with one-to-one personal encounters, meetings and telephone calls.
- Headteachers' workdays were sporadic and characterised simultaneously by brevity, variety and fragmentation.
- Headteachers perform on the average 149 tasks a day with constant interruptions - in the study 59 per cent of their observed activities were interrupted.
- Most of their activities (84 per cent) were brief (one to four minutes)
- Headteachers demonstrated a tendency to engage themselves in the most current and pressing situation. They invested little time in reflective planning.
- Most of their time is spent on administrative housekeeping matters, maintaining order and crisis management.



of actions, with their time normally split into many different and temporary activities<sup>24</sup>.

In Ghana, Atakpa and Ankomah's (1998) study found that the work of the headteachers was generally characterised by maintenance of discipline in school, managing human resources (teachers and pupils), communication, managing instructional time, managing school funds, managing school intake and attendance, assessing pupil performance, staff development (in-service training for teachers) and school community relations. Like Mintzberg's observational studies, the IEPA's study was based on structured observation guided by a list of predetermined focused criteria against which the characteristics listed above were determined. A team of researchers visited the selected schools, held discussions with school heads and observed their activities within the limits of specific pre-determined elements leading to the conclusion drawn above.

The observational study approach provides researchers with first-hand information about realities on the ground but may be constrained by pre-determined categories. Does the structured nature of the observation, for example, not limit what is seen to the specific pre-framed elements that guided their study? I raise these doubts because Gronn (cited in Saran & Trafford, 1990:104) identify structured observation with quantitative research methods which 'cannot convey the deeper and more fundamental processes being enacted; it reveals little about culture, symbols, context and meaning' (Kmetz & Willower, in *ibid*). Might unstructured observational studies provide scope for a more detailed description of what headteachers actually do?

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<sup>24</sup> Davies' study, for example, shows that about 25% of heads' activities are frequently interrupted: they do two or more things simultaneously- they spend much of their time dealing with unplanned and often poorly-understood problems, crisis and dilemmas. These studies, which were based on structured observations, further indicate that much of what heads do is reactive rather than proactive management. They indicate a tension for practitioners between spontaneously handling day-to-day demands and pursuing valued longer-term goals.

So far, the review has explored literature predominantly drawn from the West and little from developing countries. It has suggested strongly that headteachers play a crucial role in the process of achieving the schools' goals. For a headteacher to successfully carry out his/her leadership role, he/she is required to possess certain qualities and competences. Knowledge of what the available literature theorises about such qualities was very relevant to my study.

### Qualities of an effective leader

According to Grint (1997:86), different situations require different forms of leadership; hence leadership qualities are not necessarily transferable across time and space. Southworth (1995:22) investigated primary school headship in the 1990s involving ten experienced headteachers and presented the headteachers' responses with a question about what they thought were the characteristics of an effective primary school headteacher under two headings: *personal qualities* and *professional characteristics*<sup>25</sup>.

The qualities listed by Southworth are not exhaustive; yet they have implications for educational authorities in terms of recruiting and developing headteachers. This is because the qualities inherent in an individual *per se* may not ensure efficiency and effectiveness. It is therefore necessary that educational authorities clearly define the specific competences required from a prospective head. So personal and professional qualities have to be seen in relation to the competences of the job and those individual qualities heads need to meet the context in which they are deployed. As MacBeath

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<sup>25</sup> Under *personal qualities*, the headteachers' responses were summarised to include characteristics such as: positivity and enthusiasm, approachability, fairness, consistency, sensitivity to others, caring, perceptivity, resilience and strength. In terms of *professional characteristics*, the headteachers' thoughts were summarised to include: knowledge about what is going on, having an overview of the school, monitoring teaching and learning, awareness of individual's and the school's strengths and weaknesses, vision, philosophy about how children learn, being proactive and trying to be ahead of the game, reflecting and thinking things through, ability to deal with children, good time management, discipline in the use of time, skills in diplomacy, awareness of personal authority, managing finances and being organised.

and Myers (1999) suggest, the competencies that people bring to the workplace have great influence on their performance and are necessary but not sufficient. What competence(s) then does the primary school head require in order to achieve the school's objectives? And what does that term 'competence' contain?

## Models of headship competences

Boyatzis (in Derek, 1993:19), broadly defines competence as 'an underlying characteristic of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's own self-image or social role or a body of knowledge used by an individual'<sup>26</sup>. He argues that competence is context-dependent in that criteria for determining individual competences in one organisation may not necessarily be the same for another organisation. MacBeath and Myers (1999:2) distinguish *competence* from *competency*. To them, *competence* is located within an organisational context and is characterised by 'a set of preconditions'. They classify recruitment requirements, such as 'subject degree qualifications, teaching certificates, experience of classroom teaching, expertise in managing people, organisational and communicative skills' under *competence*. *Competency*, on the other hand, is located within an individual,

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<sup>26</sup> Some writers and policy formulators tend to limit its definition to skills. Illuminating this point, Smith (1995), asserts that around the 1980s, competence in the UK 'was basically viewed as "the ability to do a particular activity to a prescribed standard". It was limited to "what people can do rather than what they know". The TTA (1988) also laid emphasis on 'doing' in its definition: 'a description of something, which the person should do. It is a description of an action, behaviour or outcome which the person should be able to demonstrate'. The emphasis on *doing* implies one's ability to use skill. In such a situation, what constitutes competence, I think, would depend on the particular task to be performed at a particular time and within a particular place, and can therefore be better understood within the language, which takes account of context. Hence, as Smith argues, 'if competence is concerned with doing then it must have a context'. In that sense, applying generic competences to all organisations or individuals could be problematic. It is, perhaps, to simplify the problem of language in defining competence that Torrington and Hall (1998:422) recommends the need to differentiate *competence* from *competency*. Other writers define 'competence' beyond 'doing'. In a paper submitted to a BEMAS Competences Workshop in Birmingham in 1990, Burgoyne included *knowledge*, *understanding* and *will* in his definition (Derek, p.118). It is 'not simply a skill but is a virtue; a general sense of excellence and goodness' (Smith, p.3). To Derek, competence involves one's ability 'to perform whole roles, not just specific skills and tasks, to standards expected in employment, in real working environment'. Although the writer explains that 'whole roles' as used in his definition 'are not a bundle of tasks or routine procedures', he fails to articulate clearly what constitutes 'whole roles'. This, to me, makes his definition a bit hazy; underlining again the importance of denotative language.

and focuses on his/her personal qualities: 'their driving force, their strengths and frailties' (ibid.).

If these distinctions are valid, it implies that educational authorities, especially those responsible for headteacher recruitment, clearly define competences and competencies that headteachers require for effective practice. As Jiransinghe and Lyons, (1996) explain, competencies may serve two purposes. Firstly, they provide the basis upon which a more holistic view of headship can be built. Secondly, they provide the basis for selection, recruitment, development, training and appraisal processes<sup>27</sup>.

Competences<sup>28</sup> required of headteachers are varied and complex. Burgoyne (in Derek, 1993:15) argues:

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<sup>27</sup>Derek (1993:16-19) traces the competence-based management approach in schools to the 1920s when the United States Office of Education attempted to develop precise specification of competences or behaviours to be learned by trainee teachers, and also identify the competences of superior performers based on the qualities, skills and behaviours of effective managers. In the United Kingdom, the need to develop a national strategy for vocational qualifications led to the origin of competence-based qualifications. The 1988 Government White Paper (Department of Employment 1988), for example, outlined as one of the six principles for the new training and enterprise framework as 'there must be recognised standards of competence, relevant to employment [...]'. Unlike the USA model which focuses on *qualities, skills and behaviours*, the British competence model put emphasis on *outcomes in terms of performance*. From the UK perspective, competence is defined as a description of something, which the person should be able to do. It is a description of an action, behaviour or outcome, which the person should be able to demonstrate (Training Agency, 1988).

<sup>28</sup>UK's National Educational Assessment Centre (NEAC) identifies twelve competences that heads should possess (West-Burnham and O'Sullivan, 1998:9-15). (a) **Administrative Competences** which involves (i) *Problem analysis*: ability to seek out relevant data and analyse information to determine the important elements of a problem situation; searching for information with a purpose (ii). *Judgement*: ability to reach logical conclusions and make high quality decisions based on available information; skill in identifying educational needs and setting priorities; ability to evaluate critical written communications, (iii) *Organisational ability*: ability to plan, schedule and control the work of others; skill in using resources in an optimal fashion; ability to deal with a volume of paperwork and heavy demands on one's time. (iv) *Decisiveness*: ability to recognise when a decision is required (disregarding the quality of the decision) and to act quickly (b) **Interpersonal competences**: (i) *Leadership*: ability to get others involved in solving problems; ability to recognise when a group requires direction, to interact with a group effectively and to guide them to the accomplishment of the task (ii) *Sensitivity*: ability to perceive the needs, concerns and personal problems of others; skill in resolving conflicts; tact in dealing with persons from different backgrounds; ability to deal effectively with people concerning emotional issues; knowing what information to communicate and to whom. (iii) *Stress tolerance*: ability to perform under pressure and during opposition; the ability to think on one's feet. (c) **Communicative Competences**: (i) *Oral communication*: ability to make clear oral

Being competent is different from having competences. Managerial competences cannot just be used as a tool-kit list. The necessity of developing the whole person cannot be driven out of any effective approach to management development.

*Competence* should not therefore be conceptualised solely in terms of ability to accomplish a clearly defined task: it should be perceived within the context of wider intellectual, cognitive and attitudinal dimensions (Whitty & Willmott, 1991). As Boam and Sparrow (1992) observe, 'competence' is subject to the influence of time and would be valued differently depending on the time that a particular competence is required.

The suggestion that competences play a major role in the selection, recruitment, training and appraisal (Jirasinghe and Lyons, 1996) gives credence to the aspect of my research question that explored the competence and competencies that the headteachers involved in my study considered important for the accomplishment of their professional task. The question, however, is 'is the possession of the appropriate competences and competencies a guarantee for successful school leadership?' Do they become operational only when apposite leadership styles are employed by the headteacher? The deployment of appropriate leadership styles and strategies then puts specific competences and competencies to the test.

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presentation of facts and ideas (ii) *Written communication*: ability to express idea clearly in writing, to write appropriately for different audiences - students, teachers, parents etc. (d). **Personal Breadth Competences**: (i) *Range of interest*: ability to discuss a variety of subjects – educational, political, current events, economic etc; desire to actively take part in events (ii). *Personal motivation*: need to achieve in all activities attempted; evidence that work is important to personal satisfaction; ability to be self-evaluating (iii). *Educational values*: possession of a well-reasoned educational philosophy; receptiveness to new ideas and change.

## Styles of leadership

Researchers have identified a number of leadership styles. Blatchford (1985:3-8), for example, identifies *dictatorial and authoritarian; persuasive; democratic; permissive and laid back* styles of leadership as the most common ones.

### *The dictatorial/authoritarian leadership style*

This style of leadership, which Blatchford (1985:4) calls the 'Sunshine Style', refers to a situation where the leader exercises undue power<sup>29</sup> and authority over members of the group and controls the progress of the set goals as well as the interrelationship of group members. H/she resists any attempt to change his/her leadership function. Techniques of coercion and withholding information and knowledge from those who work under him/her are utilised as a way of protecting the leader's authority (Grint, 1997:12). This, perhaps, is because of the belief that 'knowledge is power'. Manz & Sims (1991, cited in Grint, *ibid*) refer to this model as the 'traditional' or 'the strong-man' view of leadership. Charismatic leaders who demand obedience on the basis of the 'mission' they fees called upon to fulfil (Weber, 1968, cited by Grint) often tend to employ this style of leadership.

Applying this model of leadership to the school, Blatchford argues that a dictatorial leadership style becomes appropriate in situations where the staff recognise that the head holds most of the necessary information to carry out a particular task and thereby willingly concede to the head the right to adopt it. This style also comes unto its own when the head is dealing with lazy or unwilling teachers. Blatchford argues, 'once lack of ability and have knowledge have been ruled out, then the underachieving teacher can quite properly be managed in a 'dictatorial' style'. The major defect of the dictatorial style of leadership, however, is that the absence of the leader may grind the activities of the organisation to a halt.

<sup>29</sup>Some thinkers see *power* as 'the capacity to cause things to happen or ability to change behaviour.'

### ***Persuasive style of leadership***

This leadership style is employed when the head, after deciding on a course of action to be taken, tries to win staff compliance by creating the opportunity for the decision to be explained, questioned and clarified. Leaders with high charisma can more easily get their followers to comply with a decision because of the reverence given to the persuasive power of charismatic individuals. In his study of English headteachers, MacBeath (1998:2) found headteachers admitting to 'being manipulative and deceptive in order to achieve the goals of the school'. The major weakness in such a persuasive style of leadership is that it does not necessarily promote natural commitment of the staff towards the implementation of the decisions. It is not therefore recommended for use in situations where the commitment of the staff is considered to be very vital to the successful implementation of decisions. The persuasive style of leadership is ideal only when the staff are happy to accept a decision made for them, or at least can be encouraged to support it enough to implement the decision.

### ***The democratic style of leadership***

The democratic leader is described as one who distributes responsibility among members rather than concentrating it in him/herself. Decisions are not made beforehand and pushed onto the staff. The head discusses and analyses the problem with his/her staff, elicits ideas from them and then makes the final decision in collaboration. Researchers, such as Harris and Chapman (2002) suggest that a democratic leadership style has the greatest likelihood of leading to the best quality of decision, since all those with the greatest expertise, and those who are expected to carry through the decision, will have contributed. Blatchford explains that this style

requires staff to be fairly able in their field and to have the knowledge or abilities to enable them to make a worthwhile contribution to decision-making. Despite the strength of the democratic style of leadership, the literature suggests that it brings with it its own range of problems. It can unnecessarily delay decisions, especially when the staff do not co-operate with the head.

### *Permissive and laid back style*

This style of leadership refers to a situation where the leader clearly briefs the staff on the mission or task, provides them with the requisite resources, sets the time limit for accomplishing the task for them and then concludes with 'make your own arrangements. If you succeed your rewards will be great; if you fail, the buck stops with you'. This style is ideal in situations where the staff have experience, knowledge, ability and the commitment necessary for task accomplishment and where the head is open and freely releases information relevant to the delegated task. The writer cautions that this leadership style requires a mature approach on the part of the head, the preparedness of the staff and the willingness of the head to delegate tasks. A major problem associated with this style of leadership is that it is time-consuming. To employ this leadership style, therefore, the head needs to 'define the limits of the task being delegated, its purpose, its time limit, its budget, its key result areas in which success will be judged' (Blatchford, 1985:8).

In Africa, applying democratic leadership styles in most schools is believed to be difficult. This is because power relations in schools are largely authoritarian and bureaucratic. In Nigeria, for example, DuBey, Edem & Thakur's (1979:37) describe the prevailing leadership styles as follows:

In theory, it is expected that most heads of Nigerian schools will fall into categories like autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire, but most heads tend to be authoritarian, if not altogether autocratic. To a certain extent, this tendency can be attributed to the traditional ways of life, in



which the elder or the man in authority .has the final say in all matters and must be obeyed.

The writers' suggestion that traditional ways of life tend to affect leadership styles employed by most heads of Nigerian schools motivated me to formulate a research question so as to explore whether or not leadership styles adopted by the headteachers involved in my study were in any way influenced by indigenous beliefs and practices. It also led me to review relevant literature so as to get a broad view of ways in which cultural beliefs and practices tend to influence organisational leadership.

### **Cultural influences on leadership tasks**

Cross-cultural researchers and comparative management theorists have long recognized that environmental influences penetrate organizations and shape their character in various ways. As far back as the 1950s, Dill (cited in Towers, 1996) argued that the values, beliefs, norms and ideals that are embedded in a culture affect the leadership behaviour, goals, and strategies of organizations. Similarly, Martinko and Gardiner (1990), Stewart (1982) and Kotter (1982) have ascribed some importance to the effects of the environment on what the manager does (cited by Towers, 1996:489). Bass (1990:772-775) identify four dimensions of values that tend to influence leadership practice:

#### ***Traditionalism versus modernism.***

*Traditionalism* emphasizes the family, class, revealed truths, reverence for the past, and ascribed status. The traditional leader is likely to be the oldest, usually male, head of family and the status of women is relatively low. Traditional societies are said to be more responsive to authoritative leadership. In contrast, *modernism* stresses merit, rationality, and progress (Inkeles, 1973; Inkelles *et al.*, 1974.).

### ***Particularism versus universalism***

Particularism, according to Parsons & Shils, (in *ibid.*), implies institutionalised obligations to friends, whereas the universalism stresses institutionalised obligations to society and places a lesser emphasis on interpersonal considerations. In the particularistic value orientation, family relations and friendships take precedence over considerations of merit and equity.

### ***Idealism versus pragmatism***

*Idealists* search for the truth while *Pragmatists* tend to look for the kind of leadership that will work. In a study of approximately 2000 managers in the USA and England, Lee (n.d.) concluded that successful managers are more likely to hold pragmatic values that emphasise productivity, profitability and achievement.

### ***Collectivism versus individualism***

Collectivism is characterised by a tight social framework in which one is more concerned with one's relations with others and achievement of the team. In collective societies, one's group is more important than one's individual achievement. Distinctions are made between in-groups (relatives, clans etc.) and out-groups (non-relatives); collectives expect their in-group members to look after them in exchange for absolute loyalty. How do these values affect management in Africa and specifically, Ghana?

## **Management within the context of African culture.**

Formal management development in Anglophone Africa owes its origins to Western management theory and practice (Kiggundu, 1991). Prior to the advent of formal management concepts in Africa, during the colonial era, the people of Africa had their

own indigenous administrative systems that were deeply rooted in their cultural values and practices. These administrative systems were relatively small in size, homogeneous in terms of membership, used local technology and indigenous knowledge systems and co-existed in relative harmony with the environment. Chiefs and hereditary kings were imbued with both secular and divine authority and functioned as absolute rulers. Their source of authority was principally due to special relations with the supernatural or ancestors. Directives were carried out with the assistance of administrative officials and well-developed supportive networks of local rulers and family heads. Though routine decisions were delegated, the person at the top controlled key decision-making and implementation processes. Even today, one finds these management practices in indigenous African settings<sup>30</sup>.

## The impact of colonisation on management development

The colonisation of West Africa brought with it new management theories, which have influenced management practices of West African public organizations. These include:

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<sup>30</sup> During that period, no classroom instruction was given to prospective leaders. The training given them tended to be informal and took the form of apprenticeships, on-the-job training with long periods of behavioural observations, try-outs, testing, coaching and feedback from elders and experienced observers (Antwi, 1992:8-13; Kiggundu, 1991:32-35). In Ghana, McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh (1975:6-9) report that since the *ohene* (chief) was considered as the embodiment of the customary laws and institutions, heirs to the stool often studied in the court of a superior King. He was trained to know all the customs and laws of the society, understand the traditional drum language, acquire the skills of dancing to the drum music, learn how to speak like a chief in public and how to relate well with his *mpanyinfo* (elders). There was no foreign influence on the training of those who assumed leadership positions (Kiggundu, 1991:34). Training was based on indigenous knowledge systems and carried out within the context where the candidates were to carry out their leadership responsibilities. Accordingly, Kiggundu explains that problems of transfer from the learning situation to the job did not arise. Trainees continued to relate to the same task, technological, environmental, social, and cultural conditions.

### ***Classical/scientific management theory***

This theory hinges on “formal structures and processes vis-à-vis people” (Damachi, 1978:5; cited by Atitso, 2000). To the classicist, *management* means ‘directing people’s function’ and ‘performing a function especially of planning, organising and controlling’. Scientific management theorists, according to Damachi, concentrate authority<sup>31</sup> at the top, which flows down the hierarchy to the work units of an organization. They focus on three main themes: (a) *The search for efficiency*: the theory stresses that men are by nature inefficient compared with machines and that the only way by which they could be made efficient is to standardise their work activities. (b) *The search for general principles*: organizations need to be governed by general principles such as specialisation, span of control, chain of command, unity of direction and authority; (c) *The search for a perfect organisational structure*: they argue that an ideal type of organization is required to complement the general principles to ensure that top efficiency of operation is produced. The major criticism levelled against the theory is that it treats employees as inert instruments that simply perform assigned tasks.

### ***The human relations/behavioural theory***

According to Torrington & Hall (1998:10), the human relations theory ‘was in many ways a reaction against scientific management’. Advocates of the theory, Follett (1918) and Mayo (1927-1932), argue that performance at work places could improve when managers pay attention to human relations and treat workers with respect (cited by Riegly 1995). In his study at Western Electric’s Hawthorn Works, for example, Mayo found that employees reacted better when they had good relations with

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<sup>31</sup> Authority in this context refers to “a prescribed right to influence subordinates in the formal hierarchy” (Damachi, 1978:5).

management (Dingley 1997; *ibid*). The theory therefore mainly focuses on attitudes, values and emotional responses.

It emphasises non-authoritarian leadership style, group participation in decision-making and jobs that capture the participant's interest.

### *The contingency theory*

This theory employs a pragmatic approach to problem solving by applying concepts drawn from the major schools of management. It acknowledges that no single approach to management is universally applicable and makes use of both the internal and external environment of organizations. The internal environment deals with the way the organization works, its corporate culture and management structure and communication systems. The external environment consists of social, political and economic factors. Organizational managers are therefore required by this theory to be aware of the relationship between the internal and external environment and to deal with issues appropriately.

## **Cultural factors militating against Western Management practice in Ghana**

Since Ghana is still in transition from a traditional to a modern democratic society, traditional Ghanaian behaviours, beliefs, practices and attitudes exist alongside modern Western beliefs and practices (Gardiner, in Towers, 1996:489-508). Ghanaian managers, in varying degrees, therefore, have the unique challenge of having to interact in both these sharply contrasting and often conflicting arenas in the course of carrying out their managerial duties (*ibid.*). Among other issues, she identifies the

following as cultural practices and attitudes that seem to militate against the exclusive practice of a Western management system in Ghana. These are:

### *The extended family system*

Traditional families in Ghana tend to be very large: they include relatives such as uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, parents, grandparents and others. Heads of public organizations, therefore, have great commitment towards their extended as well as their nuclear families. Family members who see the head as being better placed than themselves financially make unceasing financial requests. In some cases, the head is expected to support his/her less well-placed brothers and sisters by paying their children's school fees. Headteachers experience such demands when it comes to the admission of pupils. Extended family members expect the head to admit their children regardless of their qualifications. When the head fails to offer them the required assistance, he/she is branded wicked and an individual who does not think about the welfare of the extended family.

### *Attitude to authority*

Ghanaian culture emphasises respect for age, which in most cases is associated with status. It is culturally unacceptable for one to question the wisdom behind what an older person says or does. Gardiner describes the attitude of people towards the elderly or those in authority 'as almost subservience - certainly a little more than just respect'. Consequently, people often find it difficult to speak their minds openly but do so behind the person's back or on private. The fact that Ghanaians are brought up to be polite and courteous makes it even more difficult for them to be blunt when necessary.

Against this backdrop, one wonders what happens when a person is appointed to head a school where the teaching staff appear to be older than the headteacher? How does

she/he reconcile this cultural value with her/his official role of giving instruction and disciplining subordinates where necessary? Are headteachers equipped with the requisite competences with which they could succeed under such situations? Perhaps, it is this feature of the Ghanaian culture that has sustained the practice within the educational system where 'seniority' rather than 'merit' continues to be the major criterion for appointing primary school headteachers.

### *Begging and mediation*

The habit of begging for forgiveness is another cultural practice that affects managerial practice in Ghana. Regardless of the seriousness of an employee's transgression at the workplace, once the transgressor goes to 'beg', it is expected that the head will forgive. Considering the great societal respect for 'age', a problem is created for the head when an elderly person mediates on behalf of the transgressor. His/her decline of the 'begging' would be regarded as disrespect to the elderly.

In this light, heads of public organisations face the challenge of being able to successfully reconcile codes of behaviour that are culturally acceptable in the wider society, but which are unacceptable in the organizations they head, with acceptable organizational practices. To what extent are primary school heads in Ghana able to manage this situation? What competences and/or competencies do they use in addressing problems emerging from such conditions? These are issues that underscored the significance and relevance of my study.

The foregoing discussion suggests that the concept of leadership, administration and management as prescribed by the Western world, may mean different things in different cultural settings. In understanding the way headteachers perceive the adequacy of their professional development in my study therefore, it was deemed necessary that the cultural thinking about the headteachers' role was explored. I

assumed that understanding how the headteachers perceive their role may, perhaps, depend on their cultural values and practices.

## Concept of professional development

The term 'professional'<sup>32</sup> development' (henceforth, referred to as PD) is often used interchangeably with 'staff development' and 'in-service education' (Dean, 1995:4). On the surface, one may conclude that the three concepts are the same. In the strictest sense, however, 'in-service training' and 'staff development' emerge as components of professional development. This observation is reflected in Joyce and Showers' (1982) advice that a comprehensive programme of professional development should provide adequate systems of in-service training for all teachers; provide support for schools that will enable them to fulfil their programmes and create a context in which teachers are enabled to develop their potential<sup>33</sup>. To Ruohotie (in Leithwood 1996:425), professional development 'includes all developmental functions which are directed at the maintenance and enhancement of professional competency'<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup>The term 'profession' may be commonly defined as, an occupation, which requires a long training, involves theory as a background to practice, has its own code of behaviour and has a high degree of autonomy (Dean 1995:). A person who is a professional has a substantial background of knowledge and skill acquired during initial training and thereafter. He/she is expected to be highly ethical within the terms of that profession. Besides, h/she is expected to be highly committed and able to stand back from current situations and see them in perspective and also work together with other people for the good of the organisation. Though Dean's definition of 'profession' was done from the perspective of teachers, the issues raised are applicable to headteachers as well.

<sup>33</sup> Professional development (PD), to him, is career-long, starting with initial training and continuing until retirement; it is an active process. It involves both pre-service and in-service training programmes designed to help teachers, headteachers and others to improve upon their knowledge and skills. The major tool used in achieving professional development goals is 'training'; hence one cannot talk about PD without mentioning 'training'.

<sup>34</sup>Following the increasing public demand for school accountability and the frantic efforts being made by governments of both developed and developing countries to provide quality education for all children, training has now been identified as the best means by which headteachers can be equipped with the practical knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for their headship task accomplishment. It is assumed that better heads lead to better schools and better education for children. From the perspective of Sweden, Buckley (1985:28), identifies the need for training heads as follows: 'headmasters [...] play a very important part in school activities. At present they lack the training required for many of the tasks, which will be confronting them. ... School management training is therefore very important and should include a wide range of practical and theoretical items'.



## **Models of headteachers' professional development**

The following models have been identified from the UK, France and US:

### **The United Kingdom model**

Two major headteacher professional development schemes have, since September 1995, emerged in the United Kingdom: the Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

#### ***HEADLAMP***

The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) launched HEADLAMP in September 1995 as the first national training scheme that had been specifically designed to support newly appointed headteachers. It offered ten training modules with focus on leadership and management tasks in developing their leadership and managerial skills and abilities. The modules covered topics such as vision and leadership, exploring personal values, strategic management for schools, interactive skills, managing teaching and learning, financial management and accounting administration. Strategies employed in the training of headteachers under this scheme included courses and workshops, lectures and seminars (TTA, 1995:12).

### *National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH)*

The need for a standard qualification for headteachers led to the establishment of the NPQH, in 1997. The Secretary of State for Education at the time, Gillian Shepherd (1995, 10 October), underscored the importance of providing a standard qualification for headteachers by remarking:

Nothing matters more to a school than the quality of the head [...]. The training leading to the National Professional Qualification will produce more effective headteachers. This in turn will produce effective schools. (DFEE, Press Release 228/95).

The NPQH provides training through twelve 'Training and Development Centres' throughout England and Wales. The training techniques include taught sessions, seminars, workshops, case studies, simulation exercises, group reviews and presentations. All prospective headteachers undertaking the NPQH training are required to take a compulsory module which focuses on 'Strategic Leadership' and 'Accountability'. It involves 60 hours contact time and 120 hours school-based projects, individual study and preparation for assignments. Candidates who successfully complete the training and pass the final assessment are awarded the NPQH to certify that he/she has acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively practise as a headteacher<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup>The literature identifies five key principles that underlie the NPQH as follows:

- The qualification is rooted in school improvement and draws on the best leadership and management practice inside and outside education.
- It is based on the 'National Standards for Headteachers' (NSfH), which set out a range of school leadership and management tasks for each of the five key areas of the standards, in addition to the professional knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes that are required from headteachers for their headship.
- The qualification signals readiness for headship, but does not replace the selection process.
- It is rigorous enough to ensure that those ready for headship gain the qualification, while being sufficiently flexible to take account of candidates' previous achievements and proven skills and the range of contexts in which they have been applied.
- It provides a baseline from which newly appointed headteachers can subsequently, in the context of their schools, continue to develop their leadership and management abilities.

### **The United States' Professional- Service model**

In the US, prospective principals (headteachers) are legally obliged to acquire a Master's degree in Educational Administration from the State Education Department prior to their appointment as principals (Cooper and Shute, 1988). The aspirant is required to take appropriate professional courses in areas such as management sciences, school law, school finance or labour relations in universities approved by the State Department of Education. It is only after the candidate has successfully gone through the courses and has been certified by the State or Provincial department of Education as qualified that he/she is given the licence to practise as a principal. Without this professional qualification, one cannot be appointed to head a school. This model has similarities with those practised by professions such as medicine, law and accountancy.

### **France's initial training model**

According to Buckley (1985: 43), France has an impressive and logically developed initial training programme for all newly appointed school leaders. The initial training model became necessary in the early 1970s because the role of principals in France had become more complex following major changes in France during the period. Until 1973 when the Ministry of Education laid down the guidelines upon which the initial training was to be based, the training programme took the form of a ten-day seminar. A modified guideline, upon which the initial training programme was based specifies that the initial training is only the first step in the total career development of a school leader and that in-service training would form part of the candidate's overall performance.

The training has two phases: a preparatory course which candidates are required to take prior to their appointment and training which they have to take during the first year of appointment. The preparatory course lasts for a minimum of eleven weeks and includes four weeks in a school, five weeks with the training team and two weeks in a commercial firm. The training teams in the Academies decide the method and content of the training programme. Primarily, the training aims at helping successful candidates, many of whom had no previous school leadership experience, to make a smooth transition from a classroom or a support role to that of representative of the state as head of a public institution.

## Summary

The review has so far explored literature on school effectiveness indicators and has established that the role of the primary school headteacher plays a significant part in promoting effectiveness in schools. It further suggests that the role of the headteacher varies and that little is known about what headteachers actually do in the school. Whereas substantial studies have been carried out in the United Kingdom, the US and few in Africa to find out more about what heads actually do, not much work has been done in Ghana on primary school headteachers' professional development. This situation gives credence to my study, which seeks basically to explore what primary school heads themselves have to say about the adequacy of existing training schemes. The review has shown that the dominant data collecting instruments employed in headship related research are structured observations and interviews. These provided the basis for the data collecting strategies that supported my study. The next chapter discusses these strategies.

## CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE AND DESIGN

### Introduction

The last three decades have seen a number of research studies into various aspects of school leadership based on a range of research methods. Between the 1970s and 1980s, many of these studies were based on observational studies and tended to generalise and/or discuss what heads did in terms of fairly broad and abstract 'leadership' categories (Coulson, 1986:3-4). Specifically, Saran and Trafford (1990:103) explain that they derived from Mintzberg's (1973) study of the nature of managerial work<sup>36</sup>.

Reynolds is reported, by 1993, to have compiled over 60 school management and effectiveness-related studies in developing countries, but almost all of them are based on quantitative research (Harber and Davies, 1997:34). Vulliamy *et al.*, (1990:16 and 17) also explain methods that have typically been used most frequently in developing countries to evaluate educational policies:

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<sup>36</sup>Mintzberg conducted a detailed unstructured, observational study of five American managers, sifted the information to analyse patterns and then suggested their meaning. Although these examples seem to suggest that exclusive use of observational studies is appropriate for collecting data on the work of school heads, the method's major drawback is that it tends to limit its focus very much to the activity of the individual who is the subject of the study. Coulson (1986:4) asserts that information gained from these observational studies is mainly quantitative while Gronn (1982; 1984) argues that observational studies result in 'a list of behaviours, leaving unresolved the question of their meaning [...] they fail to answer the central question, what do school principals do?' (quoted by Coulson, 1986:5).

Are empirical and quantitative, characterised by the development of standardised tests and questionnaires, the production of data from large samples of schools and individuals, and the analysis of statistical method.

The consequence, according to the writers, is that some educational research questions have rarely been addressed at all, despite their potential relevance to both the process of policy-making and to the more theoretical study of schooling in the developing world.

In light of the foregoing background, the formulation of the research design for my study and the data collection methods employed were informed by a critical consideration of the assumptions underlying the two overarching research perspectives: 'positivism' and 'anti-positivism'. This was considered necessary because Cohen and Manion (1994:9) stress that the 'positivist' and 'anti-positivist' divide largely shape our understanding of research.

### **Assumptions and strategies of the positivist model**

'Positivism', according to Silverman (2000:5), is a very slippery and emotive term, which is difficult to define. It is believed to have been coined by Auguste Comte as early as the 1830s and was used synonymously with science or with positive or observable facts. The positivist research orientation insists on objective enquiry based on measurable variables and provable propositions (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:3) and holds that science is, or should be, primarily concerned with the explanation and prediction of observable events.

The major strategy associated with positivist research is the quantitative approach (Filmer *et al.*, 1972, cited in Silverman, 2000:5; Lincoln and Guba, 1985, cited in Maykut and Morehouse, 1994:12). Traditionally, methodological strategies such as 'experiments, correlation, and survey' as well as data collection instruments such as 'structured interviews, postal questionnaires, standard tests of performance and

attitude inventories,' which draw predominantly on statistical and mathematical models of analysis, have been designated as quantitative (Scott, 1996:59).

Quantitative research, therefore, aims at objectivity, standard procedures and replicability (Bryman, 1988, quoted in Silverman, 2000:4; Johnson, 1994:6-8; Higgins, 1996:27). It is basically interested in aggregating data, most of which are assigned numerical values, and relies on certain categorisations that enable the making of generalised statements. It tends to ignore the difference between the natural and social world by failing to deal with the 'meanings' that are brought to social life (Silverman, 2000:4; Garfinkel; 1967, cited in Vulliamy *et al.*, 1990:8). Critics cited by Cohen and Manion, (1994:24,25) have argued that much quantitative research leads to the use of a set of ad hoc procedures to define, count and analyse its variables, which often conceal basic social processes. They further contend that experiments, official statistics and survey data may simply be inappropriate to some social science research.

### **Assumptions and strategies of the anti-positivist model**

Anti-positivism emphasises qualitative instead of quantitative methodology. It rejects the belief that human behaviour is governed by general laws and characterized by underlying regularities. It is represented by three major schools of thought <sup>37</sup>(Cohen and Manion, 1994.29):

- **Phenomenology:** which advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value and sees behaviour as determined by the phenomena of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality.
- **Ethnomethodology:** which is concerned with how people make sense of their everyday world by concentrating on mechanisms by which participants achieve and sustain interaction in a social encounter – the assumptions they

make, the conventions they utilize, and the practices they adopt. Ethnomethodology, thus seeks to understand social accomplishments in their own terms; its concern is to understand them from within.

- **Symbolic interactionism:** focuses on the world of subjective meanings and the symbols by which they are produced and represented; thus not making any prior assumptions about what is going on in an institution, but rather giving priority to the subjects' own accounts. They create a more active image of the human being by rejecting the image of the passive, determined organism.

Qualitative researchers are generally interested in the complexity of social interactions as expressed in daily life and with the meanings the participants themselves attribute to these interests. According to Patton (1990), qualitative research is based on a phenomenological approach that 'focuses on understanding the meaning events have for persons being studied'. It values context sensitivity that understands a phenomenon in all its complexity and within a particular situation and environment. A synthesis of the writings of Silverman (2000:8); Marshall & Rossman (1999:2-3); Vulliamy *et al.*, Burgess (1985:8-10); Graddol *et al.*, (1994:1-8); Maykut and Morehouse (1994:11-14) suggests that qualitative research has the following features:

- The researcher works in a natural setting. The main research instrument is the researcher who attempts to obtain a participant's account of the situation under study.
- It is flexible in terms of methods. Rather than testing preconceived hypotheses, qualitative research aims to generate hypotheses and theories from the data that emerge, in an attempt to avoid the imposition of a previous, and possibly inappropriate, frame of reference on the subjects of the research.
- It is conducted within a theoretical framework that focuses upon social processes and the meanings which participants attribute to social situations. It

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<sup>37</sup> These varied schools of thought notwithstanding; anti-positivists generally agree that the social world can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who constitute the ongoing action being investigated.



attempts to provide a contextual understanding of the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behaviour.

- It is holistic in that it tends to incorporate a wide variety of specific research techniques, even within one research project. Thus, it draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of participants in the study<sup>38</sup>.

The foregoing discussion suggests a clear contrast between assumptions and strategies associated with the *positivist* (quantitative strategy) and *anti-positivist* (qualitative strategy) divide. Higgins (1996:27-28), although an oversimplification perhaps, argues that the distinction between quantitative research (search for causes) and qualitative research (search for meaning) are made perhaps for purposes of simplification:

In order to clarify our thoughts, and as part of learning and describing a field; but the distinctions are not mutually exclusive. The search for meaning does not exclude the search for causes, any more than the search for causes excludes the search for meaning. An approach through qualitative research does not exclude a quantitative approach [...] the two poles complement each other<sup>39</sup>.

16. In spite of the foregoing strengths of anti-positivism and its associated qualitative research strategy, it has some weaknesses. Rex (1974), for example, argues that, whilst patterns of social reactions and institutions may result from the actor's definitions of the situations as claimed by anti-positivists: 'there is also the possibility that those might be falsely conscious [...] sociologists have an obligation to seek an objective perspective, which is not necessarily that of any of the participating actors at all [...]. We need not be confined purely and simply to that [...] social reality which is made available to us by participant actors themselves'.

<sup>39</sup> Hammersley (1993), also argues that distinction between *quantitative* and *qualitative* methods is of limited use and in some cases leads to misleading conclusions. To him, both quantitative and qualitative researchers employ terms which relate to number and that accuracy may not best be expressed numerically. Secondly, he finds the idea that qualitative researchers focus on meaning while their quantitative associates concentrate on behaviour to be fallacious. He claims that many educational researchers who would place themselves within research traditions, which stress the interpretive and meaning-making capacity of the social actor, would also in various ways subscribe to a model of natural science.

## Choosing the research perspective

Informed by the positivist and anti-positivist debate and considering my research objectives as well as the research questions formulated to guide the study, the qualitative research perspective was considered more appropriate. As articulated clearly in chapter one, my study sought, among other things, to explore the perception of headteachers themselves as to how they perceive their professional preparedness prior to their assumption of duty. To achieve these objectives, I required a research strategy that could allow me to operate in a natural setting.

The research questions that were formulated to guide the study also provided justification for adopting the qualitative approach. The questions, which predominantly focused on headteacher perspectives, were of three different types: those which sought to elicit information from headteachers themselves about how they conceptualised their work (*phenomenological*); those which sought knowledge about the worth of existing managerial training schemes; specific activities performed by primary school heads and the level of headteacher awareness of headship tasks prior to assumption of office (*epistemological*); and those which sought perspectives about the worth of existing headteacher training initiatives in Ghana (*evaluative*). The questions were as follows:

## Research questions<sup>40</sup>

### *The phenomenological category*

1. How do primary school headteachers within the KEEA Educational District conceptualise headship in Ghana?
2. How do primary school headteachers within KEEA perceive competences they require for carrying out their daily headship tasks?

### *The epistemological category*

1. What specific activities do headteachers perform in primary schools within KEEA?
2. What vision(s) do KEEA headteachers have for their schools?
3. Are headteachers adequately informed about tasks to be performed and competences required fulfilling such tasks prior to their assumption of duty?

### *The evaluative category*

1. How far do headteachers' perceived competences match the contents of existing headteacher training programmes in Ghana?
2. What do the following categories of persons perceive to be the ideal professional training programme for primary school headteachers: (a) headteachers themselves, (b) GES Training Officers?

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<sup>40</sup>The formulation of the research questions considered the fact that the research problem largely required data from an insider's perspective. Furthermore, they were guided by issues that emerged from the literature review such as management, leadership, administration, and recruitment policies.

## Specific qualitative framework - *interpretivism*

The specific qualitative framework within which my study operated is interpretivism. The 'interpretive' tradition of social enquiry, according to Carr and Kemmis (1986:83,87), assumes that actions have meaning in relation to the understandings, purposes and intentions of the actor, and the actor's interpretations of the significance of the context of the action.

Designing my study within the interpretive framework afforded me the opportunity to explore and understand the situation of the individual headteachers. This was in line with Adler and Adler's (1987) and Cantrell's (1993) descriptions of the interpretivist approach as enabling the researcher to put him/herself in the shoes of the individual and by that means learn through the process of interaction the individual's perception and interpretations and the meanings he/she attaches to his/her actions. It gave me the opportunity to understand the meaning that the headteachers themselves attached to their professional tasks vis-à-vis their competences and the training required to fulfil such types. Moreover, it offered me the chance to work in a natural setting, thereby creating a congenial atmosphere for the participants to talk about their work.

## Choosing the research design – *case study*

Based on my research objectives that focused on exploring the interpretive dimensions of the professional development of primary school headteachers and obtaining detailed knowledge about how primary school headteachers practise, the case study design<sup>41</sup> was adopted. The group of primary school headteachers within

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<sup>41</sup> Oppenheim (1992:6-7) urges researchers to clearly distinguish between research design and research techniques. He explains that 'the research design should tell us how our sample would be drawn, what sub-groups it must contain, what comparisons will be made, whether or not we shall need control groups, what variables will need to be measured [...]. Research design is concerned with making our problem researchable by setting up our study in a way that will produce specific answers to specific questions. Good research design should above all make it possible for us to draw valid inferences from our data in terms of generalization, association and causality. Research techniques, on the other hand,

the Komenda/Edina/Eguafo/Agona/Abrem (KEEA) Educational District of Ghana constituted the case<sup>42</sup>.

### *Justification for choosing the case study design*

The case study design was deemed most appropriate for my research because, firstly, the nature of the study required the use of an eclectic technique in gathering, analysing and interpreting data. Merriam-Webster (1999:164) defines eclectic as 'selecting or made of what seems best of varied sources'. Within the context of my research, therefore, eclecticism constituted the utilisation of a mixed method in collecting relevant data from varied sources and used both qualitative and simple descriptive quantitative tools in analysing the data. Different data sources: headteachers, Ghana Education Service Training Officers (GESTO) and official documents were used to enable me get relevant information from a wider perspective, particularly on issues related to the evaluative and some of the epistemological questions (see p.53).

Although the study focused predominantly on headteacher perspectives, I assumed that headteachers and the GESTOs would have varied views about the tasks and training needs of primary school headteachers. Moreover, I assumed that it was possible for me to obtain opportunistic data, which I was able to do while in the field (see p.133).

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are the methods used for data generation and collection [...]

<sup>42</sup>Robson (1993:52) defines a case study as a research design that 'involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of

It was essential, therefore, that I chose a research design that would be flexible enough to accommodate and help me to explore these varied views so as to enhance the richness of my data. As Miller and Frederick (1996:27-29) observe, the richness of data is a necessary condition for creating comprehensive understanding of the issues one studies.

While adopting the case study design, I was aware of the problems<sup>43</sup> associated with it. Unlike a survey that permits generalizations based on 'standardized questions of large, representative samples of individuals', a case study tends to limit the scope within which a researcher can generalize claims emerging from the results of the study (Cohen and Manion, 1994:38). Moreover, defining what exactly constitutes a case in a study is sometimes problematic. Nevertheless, the design was found to have the advantage of offering me the chance to delve deeply into the characteristics of individual headteachers and helping me to understand how headteachers within the KEEA district felt about the adequacy of their professional development.

Although my study was qualitative by nature, quantitative data collecting strategies such as the questionnaire and simple descriptive statistics in the form of percentages were used. Niglas' (1999) extensive and systematic review of 46 studies justifies this combination. About 40 percent of the studies she reviewed mixed quantitative and qualitative features, especially data collecting methods, at different levels of enquiry. While some of the studies used quantitative data handling methods alongside

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evidence'. The case may refer to the situation, the individual, the group, or organization being studied or whatever it is that we are interested in (ibid. p.50; Yin 1989:29-31).

<sup>43</sup> Hammersely criticises the eclectic approach, associated with case studies, for neglecting the 'heterogeneity and internal inconsistencies within two rather artificial categories'. He cautions that while rejecting the paradigmatic view of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, one has to be very careful in combining these approaches. While I observed this note of caution about mixing the two strategies, I found eclecticism to be a necessary evil because adopting a multimethod approach to research, which the case study provides, has a very high prospects for objectivity, reliability and validity; hence literature on research methodology, generally agree that using varied methods of data collection yields higher valid results. Denzin (1978:28) for example, argues that combining methods of collecting data is essential because 'no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors'. Each method reveals different aspects of research phenomenon; hence multiple methods must be utilized to help illuminate a phenomenon in its totality.

qualitative research strategies and sampling methods, others used case studies with non-sampling methods; yet concentrated on quantitative data. Yet other studies used both quantitative and qualitative data handling methods alongside quantitative strategies such as experiments and small-scale surveys.

In sum, the case study design enabled me to use multiple methods in collecting my data: interviewing headteachers individually, interviewing headteachers in groups, observing school-specific activities of headteachers, administering questionnaires for headteachers' profile survey, and analysing policy documents and other related literature. Marshall (1995:144) has observed that a study that utilizes more than one data collection method has the greatest advantage of strengthening the study's usefulness for other settings.

## Research instrument

Instruments used in collecting data for the study consisted of the following:

### *The interview* (see appendix 1)

The primary instrument through which the data were collected was the interview. Social scientists agree that interviewing makes clearer the meanings interviewees attribute to a given situation and helps the researcher see situations through the eyes of the participants (Sharp and Howard, 1996). It was therefore hoped that making interviewing the main tool for collecting data in my study would provide opportunities for me to adapt to the situations of the headteachers. The smallish number of headteachers (20) involved in my study made it more convenient for me to use interviewing as a data collecting strategy. As Drever (1995:1) points out, 'interviewing is one of the commonest methods used in small-scale educational research'.

The interviews were semi-structured. Following Drever's (1995:1-17) guideline for using semi-structured interviews, I decided in advance the ground(s) to be covered and the main questions to be asked prior to the interview sessions. This was to ensure that, as far as possible all the headteachers had the opportunity to respond to the same questions. It was guided by an interview schedule involving twenty open-ended questions and was used in collecting data from the headteachers and the Ghana Education Service Training Officers (GESTO). The questions were carefully formulated to ensure that, as far as possible, my own views would not intrude and that the interviewee would not be led.

Since my study sought to get firsthand information from the primary school headteachers about what they themselves had to say about the state of their professional development, the questions were designed to allow open-ended responses and avoid restricting answers given. . The open-ended nature of the questions helped to promote a non-threatening atmosphere and allow a lively discussion with the participants during the interview sessions.

The choice of the semi-structured interview approach was greatly influenced by a critical review of Southworth's (1995) qualitative study into primary headship in England. The author, whose main purpose was to investigate and produce a grounded picture about what a non-randomly sample of ten experienced primary school headteachers had to say about headship, used semi-structured interviews in collecting data for his work<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup>Southworth himself individually interviewed each of the ten sampled headteachers. He prepared a schedule of questions to guide the interviews and also allowed the headteachers to amplify points they made during the interview sessions. Thus, the semi-structured approach to interviewing was found to have the strength of providing the interviewee with the chance of answering questions in his/her own words while the interviewer responds using prompts, probes and follow-up questions to get the interviewee to clarify or expand on answers given (Drever, 1995:1&8). 'Prompts' are directed towards what individuals know but have not yet mentioned while 'Probes' are directed at what people have already said, asking them to clarify and explain (ibid. pp. 23 &24). Furthermore, I had used the same strategy in previous research leading to the award of the Phil. degree (Oduro, 1998:21-25). The results of the research, which sought to explore classroom practitioners' perception of formative assessment in 13 English schools, strongly confirmed that the semi-structured interview was the best technique for opinion-focused studies. Unlike questionnaires that tend to limit the scope of responses to questions



## Supporting instruments

Although the headteacher's perspective of the nature of my study should not, normally, require any validation of opinions, some of the research questions necessitated the use of other data collection instruments. These were the focus group discussions, visits/observation and documentary analysis. The questionnaire was also used to collect profiles on headteachers: this served as the basis for selecting the sample for my study. This approach was employed because the literature I had reviewed on research methodology suggested that data collected solely through interview methods may not always reflect the realities of what prevails on the ground, and may not therefore provide the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied<sup>45</sup>. As Drever (1995:8) explains,

Simply interviewing teachers about their teaching methods was not better. Teachers tended to talk about general notions of good practice as about what actually happened in classroom. However, by using classroom observation as the focus for a semi-structured interview soon after, researchers have gained rich information about how teachers think as well as about what they do.

and also create artificial conditions that often prevent respondents from reacting to issues, as they would have done in a natural setting, the semi-structured interview was found to have the greatest advantage of creating an atmosphere for a lively conversation between the headteachers and me. It allowed most of the headteachers to talk about their experiences in detail and to support their expressed opinions with illustrative examples.

<sup>45</sup> In 1983, for example, Morgan, Hall and Mackay of the Open University combined interviews, observations, questionnaires and the collection of documents in their project on the Selection of Secondary School Headteachers (Saran and Trafford 1990:29). Similarly, Daddey (cited by Harber and Davies, 1997:66-67) combined interviews and observation in an ethnographic study of the work of three headteachers in Ghana. In the study, the researcher shadowed each head for three weeks of intensive observation and interviewing. Harber (1989) also relied principally on interviews, the collection of documents and short periods of observation while studying the work of headteachers in Botswana. An interpretive study conducted by Coulson (1986:4-6) which aimed at investigating the managerial work of primary school headteachers, also combined both observation and interviews.

### *Visits/observation*

A semi-systematic observation tool informed by variables identified during the preliminary studies was used to get a broader view of the school-specific activities of individual headteachers. This was to help me to authenticate the observable aspects of what emerged from the individual and group discussion sessions.

The semi-systematic approach was adopted for the observation because the 'varied and fragmented' nature of the headteachers' tasks (Acker, cited by Southworth, 1995) would have made it impossible for me to capture the totality of what constitutes school headship tasks in the schools and render an objective account. Even with the semi-systematic approach, I cannot claim that my observations in the schools captured every activity of the headteachers. As Southworth (1995:1) concludes, 'we still know little about what a headteacher really does'.

### *Focused group discussion*

In all, two *focused group discussions* were held involving headteachers: one before and one after the one-to-one semi-structured interview sessions. My decision to support the one-to-one interviews with the *focused group discussions* stems from May's (1997:113-114) observation that group and individual interviews may produce different perspectives on the same issue. Unlike one-to-one interviews where no one challenges views expressed by the interviewee, individuals in a group tend to be more analytical and thoughtful about what they say, since whatever response(s) they give to a question may be challenged by other group members<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup>As Morgan (1988) explains, by making diversity of opinion more manifest, groups can stimulate new ideas or promote reconsideration. Using *focused group discussion* in his study, Lewis (1992; cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994:287), for example, found that '10- year-olds' understanding of severe learning difficulties was enhanced in group interview situations, the children challenging and extending each other's ideas'. While using the *focused group discussion* technique, I was aware of Watts and Ebbutts' (1987) criticism that because of group dynamics, the method is of little use in allowing personal matters to emerge. It is also not helpful in circumstances where the researcher has to aim a series of follow-up questions at one specific member of the group. I was also aware that it reduces the amount of information that one collects from individual members of the group and has the disadvantage of not encouraging shy individuals to participate actively in the discussions, especially where one individual dominates discussions. These shortcomings, notwithstanding, it was hoped the method would help me

### *The questionnaire*

The questionnaire was primarily used to collect background information on the headteachers prior to the selection of the sample for the main study. It involved twenty closed and open-ended questions, and focused on issues such as: gender, age, academic and professional qualifications, rank and primary school headship experience. These data were particularly needed in order to ensure that headteachers selected for the main study were not biased in terms of gender, age, academic qualification and headship experience.

All the 52 headteachers within the KEEA Educational District responded to the questionnaire. The purpose was to help me select the sample for my interviews. My decision to apply both interviewing techniques and questionnaire administration to these headteachers was informed by Jenkins' (in Saran and Trafford, 1990:28) method for investigating similarities and differences in the perceptions of managers in schools and manufacturing. In the study, fifty managers completed a questionnaire and were then interviewed individually as a means of obtaining objective data.

### *Documentary analysis*

To augment the data collected from the individual and group interviews, selected documents were analysed. Documents, according to Scott (1990, in May, 1997: 160), have the potential to inform and structure the decisions, which people make on a daily and longer-term basis. These may include ministerial records, debates, political speeches, administrative and government committee reports, the mass media, novels, plays, maps, drawings, books, diaries, photographs and oral histories.

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get a group perspective on ideas that emerged from the individual interviews.

Within the context of my study, the documents used were relevant circulars from the MOE and GES, school headship-related content of the national newspapers, training materials used by foreign bodies to support headteacher development, as well as the MOE’s Handbook for primary school headteachers. These sources were used to collect information about the professional development of primary school headteachers in Ghana.

### Summary

Figure 3.1 below sums up the design used in researching the problem:

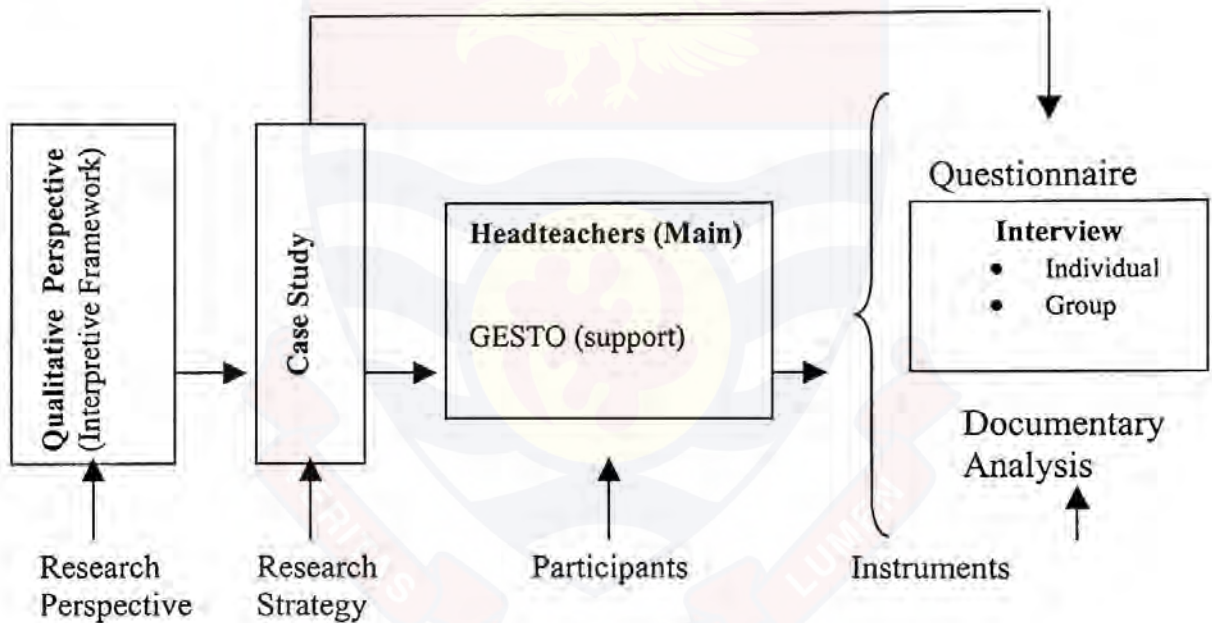


Fig. 3.1: Summary of Research Design

## PART 2

### OPERATIONALISING THE RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS



## CHAPTER 4

### THE CONDUCT OF THE STUDY AND RELATED PROBLEMS/ETHICAL ISSUES

#### Introduction

Implementation of the research, which was carried out between September 2000 and September 2001, was in three major phases: the *preparatory phase* which involved my contact with my fieldwork supervisor, decision on the research site and the negotiation of access to the site; the *pilot study phase* which involved the testing of the research instruments, *the main study phase* which involved the profile survey on the characteristics of primary school headteachers within the KEEA, the sampling of headteachers for the main study and the data collection process.

#### The preparatory phase

I arrived in Ghana on Thursday 7th September 2000 and used the first ten days to settle down. While doing so, I contacted my fieldwork supervisor and had my first meeting with him on Monday the 18th of September 2000 when we discussed my proposed fieldwork activities. Thereafter, I took a decision on the research site and initiated moves towards gaining access to the site.

#### Choosing the research site

The decision on the research site for the study was strongly influenced by the prevailing political environment of the country between September and December

2000. The country was preparing for her Presidential and Parliamentary elections, which had been scheduled for December<sup>47</sup>. A large number of personnel from the Ghana Education Service (mostly teachers and headteachers the main source of my sample for the study) had been recruited for the ‘campaign-for-peace’ exercise. In addition, a number of headteachers were undertaking training as constituency electoral officials, while other individuals were actively involved in campaigning for their political parties. Generally, people had become very suspicious and cautious about discussing national issues and it was difficult to reach people.

Because of this political situation, I foresaw problems in terms of accessing headteachers and getting the necessary co-operation from them if I were to use the two regions, Central and Western, which I had proposed in my end-of-year report. In consultation with my fieldwork supervisor, therefore, I resolved to confine my study to the Central region of Ghana.

The central region was chosen because of its pioneering role in the provision of formal education in the country<sup>48</sup> (McWilliam and Kwamena Poh, 1975:17). In contemporary times, the educational significance of the region is due to its being the location for the only two advanced teacher training institutions in the country: the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and the University College of Education, Winneba (UCEW). It has three initial teacher-training colleges, 35 senior secondary schools and 1,222 basic schools (GES: 1999/2000 statistics). The region is divided into 12

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<sup>47</sup> Tension emanating from political rivalry, especially between supporters of the then ruling political party (the National Democratic Congress – NDC) and the main opposition party (the National Patriotic Party – NPP) was very high. There was increasing fear that the existing peace in the country was going to be threatened so the Electoral Commission had mounted a nationwide campaign to educate people on the need to sustain political stability in the country.

<sup>48</sup> The region was the first settlement of the earliest European slave-trading nation – the Portuguese – who arrived in the then Gold Coast in 1482 and established the ‘first recorded Western-type school’ in the Elmina Fort where children were helped to ‘learn how to read and write’ (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975:17). The first English missionary sent by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) to the Gold Coast settled in the central region and started a school in the Cape Coast Castle in 1751. Furthermore, when the British colonized the country in 1844, “the government’s educational activities were confined to running the school in Cape Coast Castle and paying half the salaries of the schoolmasters at the British settlements at Dixcove, Anomabo [...]” (ibid. p11, 20).

educational districts.<sup>49</sup> Two of the districts were chosen for the study: the Komenda/Edina/Eguafo/Abrem-Agona (KEEA) for the main study, and the Cape Coast<sup>50</sup> district for the pilot study.

The site for the main study was chosen through random sampling. The sampling was done in one of the pilot schools I visited in Cape Coast. This was to ensure that each of the remaining eleven districts had an equal opportunity of participating in the study. To achieve this, I solicited the assistance of six pupils during their break time, after permission had been sought from the headteacher and the class teacher concerned.

The involvement of the pupils in the sampling process was to prevent any of my own personal biases influencing the sampling. While the pupils were still in their classrooms, I wrote the names of the eleven districts on eleven different pieces of paper, put them in a small box and placed the box on a table under a mango tree in the school compound. This was to prevent them from getting any clue whatsoever about what the papers contained. When the pupils were available, I asked each one of them to pick two of the folded papers from the box in turns and read out what was written on each of them. The rationale behind this was to use any of the districts that failed to get a paired choice as my case study sample. The element of reading created a

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activities were confined to running the school in Cape Coast Castle and paying half the salaries of the schoolmasters at the British settlements at Dixcove, Anomabo [...]” (ibid. p11, 20).

<sup>49</sup> The districts are: Assin Foso, Upper Denkyira, Lower Denkyira, Gomoa (Apam), Awutu-Efutu-Senya (Winneba), Ajumako-Enyan Esiam, Mfantiman (Saltpond), Agona Swedru, Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese, Asikuma Odoben-Brakwa, the Cape Coast and the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem-Agona (KEEA) districts.

<sup>50</sup>The Cape Coast district was conveniently chosen for piloting my research instruments, particularly because it was very easy to access in terms of cost and the level of co-operation I required from the headteachers. I have lived in Cape Coast for almost twenty years and therefore knew a number of headteachers with whom I could easily negotiate access without necessarily going through the frustrating bureaucratic procedures for seeking official approval from the district education office. Even though I was aware of the possible biases that my familiarity with the headteachers could have on my study, it was necessary for me to utilise the familiarity advantage in the pilot studies. Since the purpose of the pilot study was just to test my instruments, I did not find the familiarity factor to be a problem.



competitive spirit among the children and sustained their interest throughout the exercise. After all the five pupils had picked their pieces of paper and read out the inscriptions on them, I asked the sixth pupil to pick the single one remaining in the box and that happened to be Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem-Agona district<sup>51</sup>; hence it was chosen as my specific research site.

## Negotiating access to the research site

On Tuesday the 19th of September, I visited the offices of the Central regional branch of the Ghana Education Service (GES) to arrange for an appointment with the Regional Director for the purposes of discussing my study and seeking permission to access the selected districts for the study<sup>52</sup>. After a number of follow up visits, I was granted permission to carry out the pilot study.

## The pilot phase (28th September – 20th November 2000)

In all, twelve headteachers were selected for the pilot study through the convenience sampling technique. This technique was deemed appropriate because my plan was to use headteachers who were readily available and were prepared to participate in the

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<sup>51</sup>The Komenda/Edina/Eguafo/Abrem-Agona District, simply referred to as KEEA, was created in 1988 as part of the Ghana Government's decentralization programme. Information gathered from some chiefs and the KEEA District Planning Officer suggest that it derived its name from a combination of the names of the four traditional areas in the district. It covers an area of 372.49 square kilometers with a population of about 111,985 comprising 53,432 males and 58,553 females (Amoah, 2001:3). The district was the first point of call by the earliest Europeans who explored the coast of Africa in the fifteenth century. Besides, it prides itself as having the oldest castle in Africa south of the Sahara – the Elmina Castle. The major occupation of inhabitants of the district is fishing for those along the coast, Komenda and Edina (Elmina), while those in the interior: Eguafo, Agona-Abrem engage in farming, mostly on peasant basis. It has 74 basic schools, comprising 22 junior secondary and 52 primary schools.

<sup>52</sup> I had to use the informal contact approach, in the first instance, because a number of the schedule officers in the regional office were well-known to me. Moreover, my personal experience had taught me that informal contacts prior to formal requests tend to yield better results when dealing with educational authorities in Ghana. Each time I visited the regional office, I was given a warm reception and almost all those I contacted in the office were prepared to help where possible.

study. As Kane (1990:93) explains, the technique is the 'simplest kind of non-probability sampling, in which one simply asks anyone who happens to be around and available; the people in your office or class, or everyone who happens to pass by a street corner [...]'.<sup>53</sup>

Four of the headteachers, who were members of the Bethel Presbyterian Church, OLA Estates, where I worshipped in Ghana, agreed to take part in the study when I discussed the project with them after a Sunday church service. The remaining eight were chosen after I had visited them in their homes, discussed the study with them and sought their consent.

It must be mentioned that though the convenience sampling approach<sup>53</sup> was adopted for the pilot study, the selection of the headteacher participants was guided by some predetermined criteria such as gender, area of operation (urban or rural) and age.

### *Piloting the individual interviews*

Two headteachers (one urban and one rural) were used in piloting the individual interview. The urban head was visited between 2nd and 6th October 2000 and the rural head visited between 9th and 13th October 2000. The visit was used to get a general view of what the daily activities of the headteachers were and to enable me

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<sup>53</sup>While I reckon that the technique has the greatest weakness of not providing any statistical basis for generalizing claims emerging from the study beyond the participants, the purpose for conducting the pilot study justified my choice of the technique. This is because the pilot study aimed at just testing the adequacy, the reliability and the usability of the data collecting instruments I had proposed for the study. It was to help me find out if the wording of the items in the questionnaire, the clarity of the questions posed, the sequence of the questionnaire and the proposed technique for administering the questionnaire were suitable for the major study. Apart from the questionnaire, the interviews were also piloted to help me to estimate the amount of time I would require for completing each one-to-one interview session. It was also to help me identify aspects of the questions that were likely to pose problems of ambiguity and difficulty in terms of understanding.

identify some criteria to guide the observation of activities of my main sample. After the observational visits each of the headteachers was interviewed.<sup>54</sup>

Both interviews suggested that I needed an average of about 35 minutes to cover each of the major interviews. It also gave me an indication that the personal programmes of my sample in terms of funerals and other social commitments as well as official engagements could interrupt schedules planned for each of the major interview sessions. Consequently, I resolved to be flexible enough regarding time and venues for each interview session. To reduce the rate of possible rescheduling of meeting times, I decided that as far as possible, none of the main interview sessions should be fixed on Fridays.<sup>55</sup>

### *Piloting the focused group discussion*

The choice of participants for the preliminary focused group discussion<sup>56</sup> was methodologically opportunistic. I had to take advantage of the presence of a number of primary school headteachers at a part-time basic education evening course, which was being organized by the Cape Coast University's Institute of Education. I

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<sup>54</sup> The urban head was interviewed on Friday 6th October. In the case of the rural head, however, the date for our interview had to be postponed on two different occasions. The initial date that we had agreed upon had to be rescheduled for Monday the 16th of October because he had to travel outside his station to attend a funeral. When I arrived at the school on the rescheduled date, I was told he had gone to the District Education office. He returned in the afternoon when the school was about to close, apologized for having kept me waiting in the school since morning and requested for a further rescheduling of the date for our meeting. The interview session finally took place in his house on Tuesday the 17th of October after school hours.

<sup>55</sup> In Ghana, and specifically within the Central region, most social programmes, especially funerals, commence on a Friday. Furthermore, the study helped me to reconceptualise some issues for the major interview sessions. For example, the idea was conceived of using inscriptions on rectangular small-sized cards as prompts to aid interviewees to express the latent ideas they had about concepts such as *administration*, *management* and *leadership*. The experience I gathered from the interview sessions increased my confidence level for the conduct of the major interviews and reduced the degree of depression I would have experienced from being let down by headteachers.

contacted seven of the headteachers (three from the rural area and four from the urban area) who agreed to participate in the discussion.

The headteachers did not come from the KEEA educational district (my main research site) but they had similar characteristics to those from the KEEA. Moreover, the purpose of the first focus group discussion was just to enable me to practise the focus group interview technique, and to brainstorm professional development issues that the group members considered relevant and crucial to their headship task accomplishment.

The discussion, which lasted for about one hour, was held in a very congenial atmosphere. Before the discussion, I informed the group of the purpose of the discussions and the topics to be addressed. The discussion began with each participant introducing him/herself. I played a passive role in the discussion and only came in to redirect the discussion when I realized that the group was deviating from the issue at hand.

The discussion informed me of the need to find ways of controlling the main focus group discussion session to ensure that every participant contributed to discussions without intimidation. This was because I noted from the group that one member dominated discussions and always wanted his colleagues to think as he thought. It was also observed that the female members of the group did not talk until I prompted them to do so.

### *Piloting the questionnaire*

Piloting the questionnaire covered almost six weeks. Ten headteachers were involved in the pilot study. The questionnaire was administered to the headteachers by post. By the third week of posting (6th November), those in the urban schools had completed

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<sup>56</sup> By my original schedule, the focus group discussion should have been held in November 2002 but difficulty in getting all the participating groups to assemble at a central point for the discussions compelled me to postpone it to March 2001.

and returned the questionnaire to me. In the case of the rural-based respondents, however, only one of them was able to return her completed questionnaire to me by the third week of postage. This was, perhaps, because she did not live in the village where her school was located.<sup>57</sup>

During the fourth week, I made follow up visits to the remaining schools. Three of the heads explained that they had not received the questionnaires I had posted four weeks earlier. Fortunately, I had brought extra copies of the questionnaire along with me so I left copies with each of them and requested that they complete them for me to collect a week later. The remaining headteacher said he had received the questionnaire but had misplaced it. I gave him another copy to complete. Upon his own request, I went to collect the completed questionnaire from him at home after three days, but he had not completed it<sup>58</sup>. Finally, I had to concentrate on the nine responses I had received because time was running out and I needed to reshape the questionnaire to enable me commence with the profile survey in December.

Analysis of responses to the questionnaire informed me of the problems related to the postal questionnaire technique I had proposed for the major profile survey, specifically in the rural areas. Consequently, the technique for administering the questionnaire to headteachers in the rural areas was reviewed (see p.73-74).

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<sup>57</sup> This headteacher lived in a town, about 12 kilometres away from her school; hence she could get easy access to the post.

<sup>58</sup> Each time I went to the school I was either told he was away or had just left the school. Attempts to get him at home also failed and I suspected he just did not want to complete the questions. I found this situation very frustrating and disappointing because he had, during my familiarization period, co-operated with me and had assured me of his willingness to participate in the pilot study. What was more worrying was the fact that I had given him a Cambridge inscribed wallet souvenir with the implicit aim of inducing him to co-operate with me during the study.

## The main study phase

The conduct of the main study was in three stages. The first stage involved contacting the KEEA District Education Office to officially seek permission to enable me to carry out the study in the district. The second stage focused on the sample survey, while the third stage focused on the data collection. Details of each of the stages have been reported below:

### *Negotiating access to the KEEA Educational District*

Negotiating access to the main study site (see appendix 2 for a map of the main research site) commenced while I was retrieving and analysing the piloted questionnaire. I visited the district office between Monday, 16th October and Friday 27th October 2000 to discuss my project with the District Director. Unfortunately it was not possible for me to meet her because she was either at a meeting or had travelled on official duties. I therefore contacted her Deputy who showed much interest<sup>59</sup> in the research topic. She introduced me to the Public Relations Officer (PRO) and the schedule officer in charge of Training and Manpower Development and directed that they offer me any assistance that I required in carrying out my study. She requested, however, that a copy of my thesis, when completed, should be submitted to the KEEA District Education Office to enable them to assess and improve upon their staff development programmes for headteachers. For record

<sup>59</sup> She became more interested and more willing to offer assistance when she learnt that I was a student of the University of Cambridge. Her interest in my association with Cambridge was apparent in her spontaneous remark in the Akan language, 'Ei! Cambridge? *enne wonye nnipa ketewa. [...]. Cambridge adesua de ewɔ anuonyam paaa. Yere wo ho wate? Na wo wie a, bra beboa Ghana [...].* Literally, this means, 'Ei! Cambridge? Then you aren't a common person. Scholarship obtained from Cambridge is honourable. Work hard and return to help Ghana on completion of your studies'. Akan, in which the Deputy spoke, is the dominant spoken language in Ghana. It comprises various dialects such as the Asante-Twi, Akwapim-Twi, Fante, Bono, Wasa, Akyem, Assin and Kwahu. Kondor (1993:6) explains that even though English is the official language in Ghana, it is only used in government and business circles in the cities and urban areas. Akan is the trade language for most Ghanaians and commonly used in all the ten administrative regions of the country.

purposes, I formalized my application for permission to work in the district by writing to them on Monday 30th October 2000. Formal approval was received from them on Monday 6th November 2000. (See Appendix 2)

## Profile survey

On receipt of the fiat to carry out the study in the district, I contacted the PRO for a list of all the primary schools in the district and their contact addresses. In all, a list of 74 schools was submitted to me. After going through the list critically, I noted that 22 out of the 74 school heads did not strictly fall within the classification of a primary school headteacher since they were heads of both a primary and a junior secondary school. Since my study focuses on primary school headteachers, I concentrated on the 52 schools where the heads were exclusively primary school headteachers. 25 of the schools were based in the urban areas while 27 were located in the rural areas<sup>60</sup>.

Within the context of this study, the GES' criteria were expanded to include lack of modern recreational/entertainment facilities, difficulty in accessing national newspapers and lack of a police station. The expansion became necessary after I had had the opportunity of talking to five teachers<sup>61</sup> from some rural areas, who had come to the KEEA District Education Office. These three factors were therefore considered

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<sup>60</sup> A rural area, in Ghana, is generally considered as an area deprived of basic social amenities. Ghana's Ministry of Local Government (MLG) defines a deprived area as 'a geographically remote area, which is denied of certain vital facilities that make life pleasant'. In all, the MLG has designated 30 districts out of the existing 110 Administrative districts in Ghana, including the KEEA district, as deprived or disadvantaged districts. The GES however considers 'deprivation' at the community level instead of the district level, since 'not all areas of each particular District are deprived' (GES, March 2001:2). The Service defines a deprived community by using nine criteria: lack of motorable access roads, transportation difficulties, lack of electricity, lack of telecommunications and postal facilities, lack of potable water, lack of decent accommodation, lack of health care facilities, poor school infrastructure, and predominantly untrained teachers

<sup>61</sup> The teachers, in addition to some of the GES criteria, identified lack of access to newspapers, lack of cinema and drinking-bars and security threat as some of the difficulties they were encountering. One of them remarked, '*Hwe se basabasa bi si a, gyi se ye nante beye kwansin du ansa na ya nya Opolisini.*'

essential criteria because they constitute a vital influencing factor for attracting people to readily accept postings to work in particular communities.

In this light, twelve criteria as illustrated in **Fig. 4.1** below, were used in distinguishing an urban area from a rural area during the process of sampling headteachers for the study:



**Figure 4.1: Distinguishing features of rural and urban areas**

The technique for administering the profile survey questionnaires was different for the urban and rural-based headteachers. The questionnaires for the 25 urban primary schools were administered through the post. Those of the 27 rural-sited schools were administered personally to the headteachers. The postal questionnaire was limited to urban schools because the technique yielded more encouraging results among the



urban headteachers than the rural heads during the pilot study. To encourage the headteachers to complete and return the questionnaires on time, the questionnaires were posted together with a self-addressed stamped envelope and a pen on Thursday 9th November 2000. By Friday 17th November 2000, I had completed distributing the questionnaires to the 27 rural school headteachers.

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the KEEA District Education Office had sent circulars to all the headteachers in the district, through the circuit officers, informing them about my research and urging them to give me all the support I needed. During the visits to the rural schools, however, I realized that some of the headteachers had misconstrued<sup>62</sup> the reason for which the research was being conducted since the GES circular did not explain in detail the purpose of the study. I therefore had to spend time in convincing them that the study had nothing to do with the GES or the Ministry of Education.

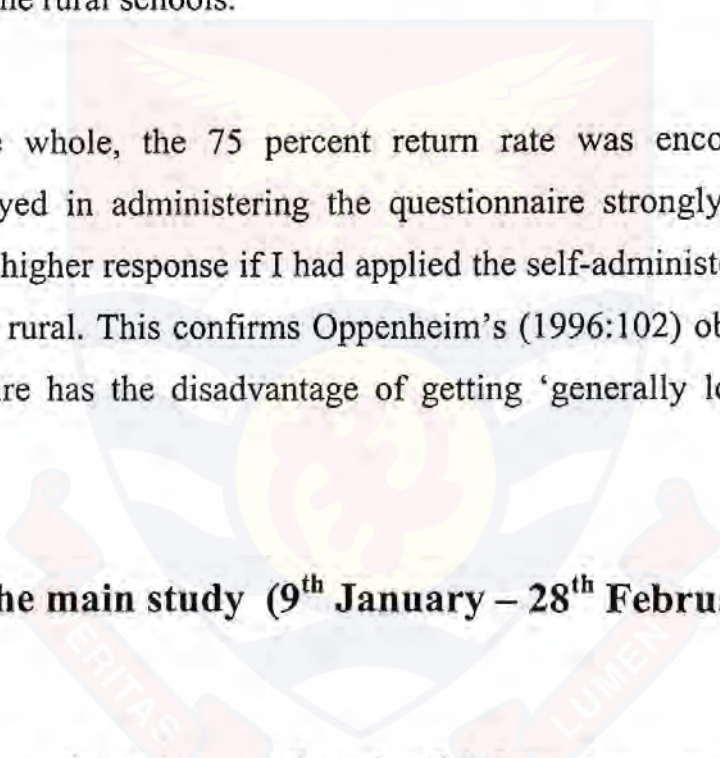
By 10th December 2000, 16 (30 per cent) of the questionnaires administered had been completed and returned to me. Out of these, 11 were from rural heads and five from urban heads. Follow-up letters were written to the remaining 20 urban-based headteachers while the remaining 16 rural based school heads who had not returned their completed questionnaires were visited and reminded about the need for me to get the completed questionnaires back.

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we can get a policeman’.

<sup>62</sup> In one of the schools, for example, I was surprised to learn from the headteacher that the School Management Committee (SMC) Chairman and the Assemblyman in charge of the village had requested that they should be informed whenever I visited the school. With my consent, a message was sent to them and they came to meet me in the school. The countenance of the Assemblyman, in particular, was very unfriendly when he saw me. After I had introduced myself to them by showing a copy of a Cambridge School of Education letter confirming that I was a research student at the University of Cambridge, and further outlined the purpose of my study to them, they showed signs of co-operation. They explained that they would have prevented me from collecting any kind of information from the school if my work were associated with the GES because, according to them, even though their school was located in a very remote and disadvantaged part of the district, teachers in the village were discriminated against in the distribution of government incentives to teachers working in deprived areas. After they had left the school, I explained what the questionnaire sought to do with the headteacher and left it with him for collection after two weeks.

Owing to tension resulting from a second round voting to elect Ghana's fourth Republican President<sup>63</sup>, most of the follow-up visits were fruitless. By the 15th of January, I had been able to retrieve 39 (75 per cent) of the questionnaires. This was made up of 17 (44 per cent) and 22 (56 per cent) responses from the urban and rural school heads respectively. In terms of questionnaires administered to each of the urban and rural categories, the returns constituted 17 out of the 25 mailed questionnaires to the urban schools and 22 out of the 27 self-administered questionnaires to the rural schools.

Although, on the whole, the 75 percent return rate was encouraging, the two techniques employed in administering the questionnaire strongly suggested that I would have had a higher response if I had applied the self-administered questionnaire to both urban and rural. This confirms Oppenheim's (1996:102) observation that the postal questionnaire has the disadvantage of getting 'generally low response rates [...]'.  


### **Sampling for the main study (9<sup>th</sup> January – 28<sup>th</sup> February 2001)**

The sample for the main study was selected and informed consent from the selected headteachers sought. The selection of the participants was based on the results of the profile survey analysis. In all, 20 out of the 39 headteachers, whose completed questionnaires had been analysed, were involved in the study. This comprised 10 headteachers from the urban area and 10 from the rural area. They were selected through the purposive sampling approach<sup>64</sup> described by Tashakkori & Teddlie

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<sup>63</sup> The first round of elections was held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2000 but none of the Presidential candidates was able to get the 51% requirement for winning the Presidential elections. A second vote was therefore scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 2001. The contest was between the flagbearers of the then ruling party-the National Democratic Congress (NDC), and the main opposition party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Headteachers, especially in the rural areas, were actively involved in the electoral process so it was not easy getting them to attend to other activities.

<sup>64</sup> The purposive sampling was deemed most appropriate for the study because I wanted to make sure

(1998:76) as ‘the selection of individuals/groups on specific questions/purposes of the research in lieu of random sampling and on the basis of information available about these individuals/groups’. Kane (1995:83) also explains that in purposive sampling, participants are deliberately chosen because they have some qualities that interest the researcher. It does not involve randomly selected samples and as Marshall (1975:57) puts it, they have the advantage of *‘providing better descriptive data’*.

My intention to obtain a balanced gender representation from each of the urban and rural schools was not possible because of gender imbalance in the distribution of headteachers between the urban and rural schools. On the one hand, the 17 respondents from the urban area were dominated by female headteachers (14), with only three males. On the other hand, the 22 respondents from the rural area were dominated by male headteachers (20), with only two females. Consequently, I selected all three male and the two female headteachers from the urban and rural areas respectively, without considering the other criteria. In selecting the remaining seven headteachers for the urban area (who were all females) and the eight headteachers for the rural area (who were all females), however, I ensured that each of the criteria in footnote numbered 64 above was considered. The four GES officials who took part in the study were also selected through purposive sampling. This was because I needed officials who had taken part in the training of primary school headteachers in Ghana between 1990 and 2000.

Having selected the 20 headteachers, each of them was visited in his/her school to enable me to have a feel of the physical and social conditions under which they were operating and to establish a pre-observation and pre-interview rapport with them.

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that participants, largely, exhibited the following specific characteristics: a female headteacher who was appointed prior to the 1987 Educational Reform programme, a male headteacher who was appointed prior to the 1987 Educational Reform programme, a female headteacher who was appointed after the 1987 Educational Reform programme, a male headteacher who was appointed after the 1987 Educational Reform programme, a female headteacher who had received a pre-service (PRESET) or in-service training (INSET) related to headship tasks and a male headteacher who had received pre-service (PRESET) or in-service training (INSET) related to headship tasks.

Establishing friendly relations with the headteachers was deemed very important because in using interviews as a method of collecting data, the nature of interpersonal relations that exists between the researcher and his subjects tends to affect the quality of the data collected. This is because, as Drever (1995:50) observes, 'people's willingness to talk to you, and what people say to you is influenced by who they think you are'. Southworth's (1995) choice of a sample of headteachers with whom he had already established a rapport, further influenced my efforts to establish friendly relations with the headteachers.

During each of the visits, the purpose of the study was explained to them and confirmation of their willingness to participate in the interviews sought. Following the experience I had with the SMC chairman and the Assemblyman in the rural area during the pilot phase (see p.74, footnote number 62), I endeavoured to visit the SMC chairman or the Assemblyman or the chief of each of the communities where the participating schools were located. This was, however, done with the consent of the headteacher. Where the headteacher did not deem it necessary for me to visit these opinion leaders, I did not do so. The visits to the schools enabled me to create a friendly atmosphere with the heads and also prepared the ground for genuine interaction with them prior to the observation and interview sessions.

### **Operationalizing the individual interviews/observation**

Prior to the commencement of the one-to-one interview sessions, observational visits were made to the schools. Three days were spent in observing what was entailed in the daily school activities of each headteacher, as well as problems associated with their tasks. After the three days' observation, the interviews were conducted. It must be mentioned, however, that in some of the schools two days were used in observing headteacher activities. Issues that guided the observations were: headteacher's time of

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arrival at school, headteacher's pre-class activities, headteacher's during-class activities and headteacher's non-teaching-related activities. Of particular interest in these specifics was the number of movements that the headteacher made each day during school hours. I observed and recorded the frequency of movements that each head made as he or she interacted with teachers, pupils, visitors, food vendors and others during the process of carrying out their tasks.

Interviews with 17 of the headteachers were conducted during school hours. In the urban-based schools, the interviews were conducted in the office of each of the participating headteachers. In the rural based-schools, however, only two of the interviews were conducted in the offices of the headteachers. The remaining ones were conducted either in a classroom or under a mango tree<sup>65</sup> in the compound of the school. Interviews with the remaining three heads were conducted in their homes after school hours because it was difficult to make contact with them during school hours. I resolved to limit the venue for the interviews to areas preferred by the headteachers themselves. This was to avoid creating an artificial setting for the heads by moving them from their working or home environment to a place of my preference. As Drever (1995:44) advises, it is important that interviewers travel to their interviewees because 'people will talk with more confidence in their own territory'.

Before the commencement of each of the interviews, the headteachers were given the chance to decide whether they would permit me to tape record the interviews. All of them granted me the permission to tape record the interviews but on condition that I gave them the assurance of not playing the recorded interview within the hearing of any of the officials of the Ghana Education Service. To this end, I assured them that

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<sup>65</sup> Some of the schools did not have offices. Headteachers of such schools used either their classrooms as offices or placed desks under mango trees in the school compound for clerical assignments. My experience from conducting the interviews in three different contexts, home, office and under a mango tree taught me some lessons, which are worth noting by researchers. In spite of the informal and friendly approaches I adopted in all the interview sessions, I observed that headteachers who were interviewed at home and under the mango trees were more relaxed than those who were interviewed in their offices. Moreover, there was less disruption during the home interviews than there were during the office interviews. This suggests to me that conducting research interviews at venues that are less formal is helpful in interpretive studies.

each of the recordings would be treated with confidentiality and that they would be strictly used in writing my thesis report<sup>66</sup>.

## Operationalizing the focus group discussion

The focus group discussions were not held until Saturday 8th September 2001 when schools were on vacation. This was because it was not possible for me to get all the headteachers I had selected for the discussion to agree on a common date during the school term. In all, 14 headteachers comprising seven rural school and seven urban school heads, out of the 20 who took part in the individual interviews were chosen for the focus group discussion. They were chosen through the quota sampling approach to ensure that males and females as well as experienced and inexperienced headteachers were represented.

With the consent of the participants, the discussion was held in one of the primary schools in Elmina. Two sets of discussions were held: one with the rural-based headteachers and the other with the urban-based headteachers. Each group discussion lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

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<sup>66</sup> On the average, each interview session lasted about 35 minutes with the longest lasting about 55 minutes and the shortest lasting about 25 minutes. The discussions were held in a very friendly and informal atmosphere so that the interviewees became very relaxed in responding to the issues raised. In some cases, I had to use the vernacular and flashcards as prompts to encourage some of them to talk more about issues. In my attempt to explore the most common headship-related working vocabulary among the headteachers, for example, I wrote the terms *administration*, *management* and *leadership* on three separate pocket-sized-rectangular-shaped flashcards, which I kept in my pocket. On occasions where I realized, during the process of the interview, that none of these three terms was mentioned in the expressions of a particular headteacher while talking about how he/she conceptualized headship, I displayed the flashcards to enable me find out if he/she had a latent idea about any of the three terms. The use of the flashcards helped in focusing our discussions and making the interview sessions livelier.

The discussion involving the rural-based headteachers was held in the morning and that of the urban-based schools in the afternoon after we had taken lunch together. In setting the scene for the discussions, the participants were asked to sit in a horseshoe form to make them more relaxed, so that they could see one another's faces and also to ensure that every individual in the group could readily catch the attention of the leader. Initially, I had wanted each of the groups to choose from amongst themselves one person to lead each discussion session but they did not find that arrangement convenient so I played the role of leader myself.

The discussion was preceded by self-introduction of each member after which I outlined the rationale behind the group discussion. Thereafter I informed them about the main issues to be considered, and encouraged each of them to contribute to the discussions.

Since the main topics had already been discussed with the participants during the individual interviews, the discussions were very lively but, in some cases, they were characterized by heated arguments as some individuals tried to defend their views. For example, whereas some of the contributors felt the new educational reform had reduced the authority of the headteacher through the introduction of community participation in school management, others argued strongly in favour of the policy of community involvement. Intermittently, I had to interrupt the discussions to ensure that tension was reduced and that the discussion did not deviate from the issues at stake. While maintaining control of the discussion, I tried as much as possible to maintain my facilitative role so as to avoid limiting the outflow of ideas from the participants.

## Problems encountered and how they were managed

A number of problems were encountered during the process of collecting the data. The major one involved difficulties in accessing the rural-based schools. Some of the schools were located in areas that could not be easily reached by vehicle. What made the situation more problematic was that the roads were not tarred, were very muddy and characterized by trenches and potholes due to erosion, which made it impossible for cars to go through. On one of my rounds, for example, a taxicab I had hired got stuck in the muddy road about eight miles away from the village I was visiting – Saman Abotare. We had to solicit the assistance of some farmers to enable us to push the car out of the mud. My programme for that day was frustrated since the driver decided not to continue with the journey for fear that his car might develop faults on the way<sup>67</sup>.

I also encountered difficulties with the conduct of the focus group discussion. The first problem concerned the failure of three of those I had selected for the group discussion to present themselves on the scheduled date. Although they had assured me of their participation, they asked their deputies to represent them. Since these deputies were not substantive heads themselves and were not part of my sample for the individual interviews, I explained to them that it was not possible for them to take part in the discussion. They became very disappointed and thought I was being unfair to them<sup>68</sup>. This situation placed me in a dilemma. Eventually, I allowed them to sit in

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<sup>67</sup>As a way out I contacted the authorities of the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of the University of Cape Coast, who had shown much interest in my project, for assistance in the form of releasing one of their four-wheel drive vehicles to me since such vehicles could easily drive through the muddy roads without getting stuck. A pick-up was consequently released to me, which I used throughout the individual interview period.

<sup>68</sup>They urged me to consider the fact they had travelled all the way from a disadvantaged distant area, which lacked regular access to transport to Elmina just because of the programme. Moreover, their respective heads had told them that the discussion would be video taped and sent abroad and that they would be paid some honorarium for participating in the discussion. These assurances, according to them, had urged them to volunteer to represent their heads; hence they found my refusal to allow them partake in the discussion very disappointing.



and take part in the discussion but with the understanding that their views would not form part of my thesis report.

## **Ethical issues and how they were handled**

Like any other researcher, I grappled with some ethical issues prior to, and during the conduct of the study. The first issue was unequal power relations that existed between the participants and myself.

One aspect of these unequal power relations emanates from my association with an internationally highly-placed university like Cambridge, which, from the Ghanaian perspective, endows one with what Bourdieu (1994, cited by Weiskorpf & Laske, 1996:128) refers to as 'symbolic capital'. Since the majority of the headteachers had been appointed as heads because of 'long service and experience' without any higher academic qualification, I anticipated that the academic gap between us could negatively affect the genuineness of their responses. Some might assume that, by virtue of my academic status, I already had answers to questions involved in the study. That might induce them to say things that they might assume I would want to hear. Some might not even have wanted to talk in detail about issues, perhaps because of limitations in communicating in the English language.

To address these anticipated problems, I paid a number of visits to the headteachers both at school and home, and occasionally invited some of them to lunch, prior to the actual data collection, to promote a friendly bond between us. I also tried as much as possible to identify myself with the schools' sub-cultures by not dressing in a way that would make me look different from the head and teachers in the schools. Further, I tried to use a mixture of the English and the indigenous Ghanaian languages where feasible. Since I speak three of the most commonly spoken local languages in Ghana,

Twi, Fante and Ewe, it was not a problem for me to communicate with many of the headteachers in their own languages.

This approach was, however, disapproved of by most of the headteachers<sup>69</sup>. Since, according to Abbott and Sapsford (1998:17-19), it is ethically wrong for a researcher not to respect the views of participants, their wish was granted. The result of this situation is that some of them could not talk at length on some of the issues raised during the interview session, which admittedly limits the data collected for the study.

Another aspect of the unequal power relations was how I could make the participants view me as an independent researcher without linking me to the Ghana Education Service (GES). Since the Ghana Education Service (GES) had to approve of my study in the district and wrote to inform the selected schools about my visit, I foresaw the tendency of some heads to associate me with the inspectorate division, which was an anathema to many heads. During the process of administering the profile survey questions, for example, one of the headteachers became very apprehensive on seeing the inscription 'University of Cape Coast IEPA (Ministry of Education), on the pick-up I had used to travel to the school. I had to take time to explain that the vehicle was borrowed from the IEPA to enable me access the roads and that the education sector had nothing to do with the study I was conducting. The puzzling question, therefore, was, 'what strategies could I employ to gain access to and win the confidence of the targeted participants without me being linked to either the Ministry of Education or the GES?'

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<sup>69</sup> My attempt to use the local language during the one-to-one interview sessions, in situations where I sensed that some of the interviewees were finding it difficult to express their opinions on particular issues, was resisted by them. The reaction of some of them strongly suggested that they did not want to be seen as not being able to communicate with me in the English language and therefore imputed rudeness to my attempt to use the vernacular. Others jokingly professed their shortcomings in properly articulating their ideas in the English language but insisted on using the English language because, they claimed, it was against the policy of the Ghana Education Service to use vernacular as medium of communication in the school.

In dealing with the situation, I arranged with the GES authorities to clearly indicate in their circular to the schools that I was a research student from Cambridge University. In addition, I volunteered to distribute the letters to the heads myself instead of the office doing so through the circuit supervisors. I further pleaded that photocopies of the letter for permission to conduct the research in the district, which I had written on Cambridge School of Education letterhead, should be attached to their circular. The PRO consented to my requests and gave the letters to me for distribution<sup>70</sup>.

The second issue was how the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents could be preserved so that none of them experienced any form of intimidation or any unpleasant reactions from authorities of the GES as a result of my research findings. This issue was critical because the GES had developed an interest in my study. One condition that was attached to the GES' approval of my conducting the study within the KEEA educational district was that I should give them a copy of my thesis. Because I was eager to get approval from the GES for the commencement of the study, I consented to this condition. The difficult issue therefore was how I could fulfill the consent I had given to the educational authorities and at the same time ensure that the headteachers, whom I had also given assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, were not put in any disadvantaged situation.

To address this issue, I had to read extensively about strategies for managing ethical issues. Willig's (2001:18); Oppenheim's (1992:83); and Kane's (1990:212-214) passages on *ethical considerations*; Abbott and Sapsford's (1998:17-23) section on *research ethics and research committees*; Mason's (1996:159-163) views on *ethics*

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<sup>70</sup> On receipt of the letters, I engaged the services of one headteacher whom I knew very well to distribute the letters on my behalf. The fact that he was a headteacher himself, and was very influential in the activities of the District Teacher Support Team, helped in gaining the confidence of the headteachers. As regards the pick-up, I decided not to drive it into the compound of the schools I visited. Once I reached the outskirts of the area I was visiting, I alighted and walked to the schools and asked the driver to park the vehicle in an obscure place.

and politics in analysing and presenting qualitative data and Kelly's (in Seale, 1998:118-119) comments on *ethical issues* were reviewed.

Informed by these sources, I resolved not to make a copy of the thesis available to the GES. Instead, a compressed report, prepared in such a way that the anonymity of the headteachers was ensured, would be presented to the GES. This might imply breaking my part of the contract with the GES, but I think that would be better than breaking my promises to the participants. As Kane stresses, a researcher's first responsibility is to the individuals he/she studies; hence 'your research must not interfere with their physical, social or mental welfare' (p.212).

The third ethical issue I grappled with relates to the attitude of three urban headteachers who demanded monetary reward as a condition for granting me the interview. One remarked in the local language, 'Ei, obroni krom, enne ehye wo. Mɛ boa wo, na mmom wo beye biribi' (literally meaning, Ei! From the whiteman's land<sup>71</sup>, then you're loaded with money. I'll help you but you'll do something). The second person readily agreed to participate but also stressed, 'mma wo were mmfi me braon envelop<sup>72</sup>' (literally meaning, *don't forget my brown envelope*). The third person explicitly demanded payment for participating in the interview. Referring to previous university-based research projects he had participated in, he argued that he had resolved never to grant any interview nor respond to any questionnaire related to academic research any longer without demanding payment. This was because such interviews, he claimed, only go to enhance the social status of university lecturers as

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<sup>71</sup> 'Whiteman's land' refers to the developed world. There seems to be a general impression among Ghanaians that once one travels abroad, irrespective of whether one works, one returns to Ghana with much money. Hence, it is common for people to make all sorts of demands from returnees from abroad.

<sup>72</sup> The term '*ye biribi*' is an Akan expression, which literally means '*do something*'. In the normal sense, the term is used to encourage individuals to engage in virtuous activities that will improve their living conditions. In the abnormal sense, however, it is metaphorically used to denote using something (money) to influence the conduct of a person. Similarly, the idea of '*brown envelope*' within this context is a jargon for an act of *bribing*. The two terms are commonly used in Ghana to signify

they ride in posh cars while they (referring to primary school teachers) continue to walk.

Oppenheim (1992:82) underscores the importance of motivating research participants so as to achieve quality responses. Yet, my experience suggests that using incentives to motivate research participants can pose ethical problems, when the incentives are participant-driven. For example, after I had agreed to offer these three headteachers a token in response to their demands, one of them, in the process of the interview, asked me to switch off the tape recorder. He then explained that he wanted to help me so I should tell him the answer that I expected for a question I had posed about the relevance of existing training programmes for headteachers in the country. To him, the monetary demand signified a contract between the two of us. Hence, once I had fulfilled my part of the contract, he felt it was his turn to offer me a satisfactory service by providing the responses I desired. I had to patiently recapitulate the purpose of my study to him and then encourage him to respond to the questions as genuine as possible.

## **Summary**

The chapters in this section have explained that the study was conducted within the interpretive framework. It employed the case study design because of its advantage of permitting the researcher to use varied data collection techniques from a variety of sources. The primary tool used in collecting the data was individual interview, supported by questionnaire, focus group discussion and document analysis. Major problems encountered related to access to the research site and the conduct of the focus group discussion. Ethically, relentless efforts were made to ensure that none of the participants was disadvantaged in any way. The next section presents the analysis of the data collected for the study.

## CHAPTER 5

# TECHNIQUE FOR DATA ANALYSIS: UNDERLYING THEORIES

*Whether it is recognised or not, generating new data is always a theoretically driven activity, it is just that in some cases the theory remains unexamined when it should be subjected to scrutiny. The analysis of data and the use of a theory are not 'add-ons' to the work of empirical research, But a necessary accompaniment to the entire process*  
(Walford 2001:147)

### Introduction

In line with Walford's argument above, my choice of the methodology was informed by literature drawn from three different disciplines: psychology, sociology and education. In an interpretive study, which sought to explore explicitly the psychological processes that determine and maintain the dynamic relationship between the participant's chronic pain, distress and disability, Osborn and Smith (cited in Willig 2001:60-61) analysed their interview transcripts one by one. Each transcript was read and re-read before themes were identified. Each of the emerging theme's relation to other themes was then examined and the interrelationships between them established. Finally, the themes were integrated across transcripts for the purpose of identifying shared themes. From this, the researchers were able to draw their conclusion.

According to Dey, (1993); Smith, (1979) and Tesch (1990:90) (all cited in Maxwell, 1996:78-80), analysis of qualitative data should begin with reading of interview transcripts and observational notes or documents that are to be analysed. Maxwell

also stresses that listening to the tapes should precede transcription. He further recommends that the researcher should, while listening to the tapes or reading the interview transcripts, 'write notes and memos on what you see or hear in your data and develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships'.

Another strand, identified by the writers, for facilitating qualitative data analysis is contextualization, which involves identifying connections between categories and themes (Maxwell, (1996:79). This helps in gaining proper understanding of the data. This puts the main themes in context by going beyond the participants' concepts, looking at patterns deriving from the emerging issues and establishing their relations with available literature, the research questions and the objectives of the study. Above all, the work that influenced me most was Southworth's strategy for analysing his qualitative data.

### *Southworth's model*

His interview data were analysed qualitatively without the support of statistics. As the interviews progressed, the researcher periodically wrote research memos to himself and recorded reflections on the data as they were incrementally being collected. These memos and reflections were used to identify categories and themes in the data at an early stage. I found this strategy very relevant to my work because of its advantage of reducing pressure and bringing to the barest minimum the situation where the researcher might forget important issues he wishes to emphasise in reporting his research findings. Transcription of his tape-recorded data was ongoing. He engaged the services of some secretarial staff at the University of Cambridge Institute of Education (UCIE) to transcribe the tape recordings of the interviews. This was an aspect that I considered at some length as it had implications for my work.

Although adopting the same approach could have saved me time and energy while in the field, more so since I am very slow at typing, critical questions arose.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps the time constraints under which Southworth worked necessitated this approach. In my case, however, I had enough time to transcribe the interviews myself; hence I did not find it appropriate to transfer the task of transcription to someone else, but undertook it myself.

At the end of the interview process, Southworth analysed all the data by searching most closely for views expressed by the headteachers on headship during the recent past and headship in the 1990s since according to him, these proved to be the most noticeable categories across all the accounts. Thereafter, he searched for ideas within the categories and developed headings.

### **Technique for transcribing audio recordings**

Following lessons drawn from literature, predominantly from Southworth's approach, analysis of my data was carried out alongside the conduct of the individual interviews. So I did not wait to complete all interviews with the 20 headteachers before commencing analysing the interviews; it was carried out as the interviews progressed.

The analysis began with a 'listening phase'. I spent time listening to each of the tape recordings over and over again to enable me appreciate the quality of the interviews and to get an idea about the content of what each interviewee was saying. On five

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<sup>73</sup> Was it entirely appropriate for the researcher to ask the secretarial staff to transcribe the interview recordings for him? Since the secretarial staff were not actively involved in the interviews and never had the opportunity of observing the facial expressions and body languages exhibited by the interviewees, could there not be distortions and misrepresentations in the transcripts? Drever (1995) have underscored the importance of transcriptions. Drever has, for instance, stressed that a big advantage of transcription is that most people regard a transcript as providing a 'true' record of the original interview. Consequently, great care ought to be taken by researchers to ensure that transcripts reflect the exact views expressed by interviewees. This, to my mind, could best be ensured when the interviewer him/herself does the transcription because he/she is likely to remember and associate some particular body languages and facial expressions with particular voices on the tape, which will thereby help him/her gain a better understanding of what the interviewee says on the tape.



occasions, I had to play the recorded interviews immediately after the interview sessions, on the request of five of the interviewees, for us to listen together. This gave them the opportunity to provide further information on some of the issues raised in the interview, which I wrote down to serve as supplementary information during the analysis of the data. It also provided me with opportunities to seek clarification on some hazy expressions used by the interviewees<sup>74</sup>.

Having listened to the tape recordings, I proceeded to transcribe the raw data from the recordings one after the other. To ensure that the transcription was carefully done so as to avoid distortion of information and to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, since some of them had unconsciously mentioned their names and schools during the process of recording the interviews, I transcribed the taped interviews myself. Moreover, I felt that by doing so it would draw me closer to the data and help me to reflect on the ideas being expressed in the light of the non-verbal observations I had made during the interview sessions. Strauss and Corbin advice that, 'one should be selective and transcribe only as much as is necessary [...],' perhaps because of the time and cost constraints with which researchers often grapple. In my case, however, I was not constrained by time and money; thus allowing me to make detailed transcriptions of the tapes. This included the words as the interviewees spoke them together with sounds of laughter, pauses, and mannerisms. This was because I felt the nuances in the raw data could not be clearly identified until the transcript had been critically examined alongside the field-notes and the observation data.

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<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, it never occurred to me to make a practice of granting those who did not make any request to listen to the tapes the chance of listening to their voices. It was after the interviews, whilst I was listening to some of the recorded interviews, that it dawned on me that I could have offered every interviewee that opportunity but it was too late. I am aware this omission could be a limitation to my data analysis technique because it denied those who did not make any request to listen to the tape after their individual sessions, the opportunity I had offered their colleagues. The omission, however, offers me the opportunity to improve upon my strategies for creating knowledge. This is because research references always provide learning opportunities.

After the recordings had been transcribed, I studied each of the transcripts critically and once again listened repeatedly to the tape recorded versions of the data to insert omissions identified in the transcripts and also to confirm whether what I had transcribed reflected the recorded voices of the interviewees. I also edited the transcripts to ensure that spellings were correct and sentences well punctuated. The editing, to some extent, blemished the verbatim transcription I made; hence the transcribed data cannot be said to be perfect. It was, for instance very difficult for me to determine specifically where punctuation should be put so as to maintain the real meaning of what the interviewees sought to portray by their expressions.

In some cases, expressions were found to be unclear and I had to reflect on the context in which such hazy expressions were made during the interview interaction. Guided by related notes I had taken, I reframed such expressions to make them decipherable. Admittedly, my action could imply manipulating the data since the perspective from which I reframed the expressions might not always reflect what the interviewees really sought to communicate by the particular incomplete expression.<sup>75</sup> While acknowledging that this could be a limitation to the transcription process, I do not find it unprecedented in interpretive studies, because as Mason (1996:53-54) observes:

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<sup>75</sup> For example, in response to a question as to what vision or expectation RUS5 had for his school, his original response was simply 'My expectations, you know if your school does not achieve your target for the SPAM, you're not respected'. SPAM stands for 'School Performance Appraisal Meeting'. It is a forum where all stakeholders of the school: parents, opinion leaders, teachers, etc. meet to evaluate the school's performance and set fresh targets for the subsequent year. While transcribing, I found this to be a hazy response, but it was not possible for me to hold a follow-up interview. What I did therefore was to rationalise the answer within the context of the question. Knowing that the issue of academic excellence was given a high premium by the SPAM, and that problems related to teaching effectiveness had earlier been highlighted by RUS5, I made the sentence complete as follows: My expectations, you know if your school does not achieve your target for the SPAM, you're not respected so I want my children to pass the exams organised by the district'. I was able to do this because of the 'elaborated code' (Bernstein, 1971) advantage I had over the headteacher which gave me deeper understanding of how he constructed his ideas in the English language. This was however done with caution. Even though, this makes the sentence more meaningful and logically appropriate, I still have

If you wished to derive data in an interpretive sense, then you would be wanting to 'read' the interviews for what you think they mean, or possibly for what you think you can infer about something outside the interview interaction itself. A transcription is always partial because [...] judgements are made (usually by the person doing the transcription) about which verbal utterances to turn into text, and how to do it. Therefore do not assume that a transcription provides an objective record of your interviews, or that you do not need to make a record of your own observations, interpretations and experiences of the interview.

After completing the editing of the transcribed one-to-one interview data, I assigned serial numbers to each of the sentence lines in the transcripts, and thereafter had it bound with a ring binder to ensure that they were properly protected. In addition to the bound document, I made back up copies on diskettes as an alternative source of reference in case I lost the bound hard copy.

### **Selecting the main categories emerging from data**

In identifying the main categories emerging from the data, I painstakingly read through the transcripts of each of the interviewees over and over again alongside the notes I had taken during the fieldwork. Thereafter, I reflected upon the objectives of the study, the research questions that guided the study, as well as the preliminary literature that provided a theoretical frame for the study. I then read through each transcript again and noted down items that were relevant to the research questions. I also took note of items that emerged frequently in the data as a potentially important issue related to the professional development of the headteachers but which the research questions had not addressed. These were issues that I had not anticipated or structured into my interview protocol<sup>76</sup>.

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my doubts as to whether RUS5's emphasis would have been exclusively on his children passing the exams, if he had had the opportunity of clarifying the expression.

<sup>76</sup> Identification of the main categories in the data collected was therefore influenced by four main sources: the research questions, the preliminary literature reviewed, declarations from the interviews, as well as my personal experience. I used the pseudonyms (UBS1, UBS2 ... for urban heads and RUS1,

I read through each of the respondents' data and wrote out views that had been expressed under each of the categories. Colours were used to highlight portions of the transcript that contained data related to each of the categories for easy reference. Thereafter, I read through the listed items and put together statements and ideas that were similar in the responses. The research findings are presented below under each of the categories<sup>77</sup>.

### Technique for presentation of main findings

The presentation will be in a narrative form and will be supported by relevant tables and illustrations where necessary. It does not involve any vigorous discussion of the research findings at this stage since a separate section has been allotted for discussion. The narrative approach was considered most appropriate because experts in the field of educational leadership have commonly used it. MacBeath (cited in MacBeath and Myers 1999:7-15), for example, used the narrative approach with the support of illustrative tables to report on his study of how pupils and teachers view competences. In the same vein, Southworth (1995) adopted the narrative approach in reporting his study on primary headteachers<sup>78</sup>.

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RUS2 for rural heads) as identification symbols to distinguish items attributed to each of the 20 sets of transcripts.

<sup>77</sup> In all, twelve categories of issues emerged: headteacher's understanding of headship; headteachers' vision for their school; headteachers' response to the 1987 Educational Reform; school specific tasks performed by headteachers; pupils' expectations from headteachers; teachers expectations from headteachers; community expectations from headteachers; problems encountered by headteachers; the female factor in primary school headship; headteachers' awareness of the nature of headship tasks prior to assumption of duty; headteachers' views about existing training scheme for heads; headteachers' preferred training scheme: pre-service and/or in-service.

<sup>78</sup> The narrative style of presenting the views of pupils, teachers and headteachers, and especially the verbatim quotations cited in the report of both writers makes it interesting reading. The narrative approach seems appropriate because, as Ewan and Egan observe, narrative language allows us to delve beneath the outward show of human behaviour to explore the thoughts, feelings, and intentions of agents. This notwithstanding, the use of narration in educational research could lead to a situation where the narrator could exaggerate the story he/she tells. The writers have, for example, argued that though the story form of narration contributes to our understanding, it could easily contribute to self-deception. They said, 'the question of narrative content arises as a problematic dimension in any discussion of narrative in education, especially when they are used to distort or conceal other perspectives and to promote or legitimate one point of view to the detriment of others. One exhibits much honesty in admitting that he does not claim typicality for the findings of the study because the

To guard against any form of distortion of information, the narration will concentrate on the contents of the data and I will endeavour as far as possible not to impose any personal ideas on the data.



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ideas were developed from a distinctive set of headteachers rather than all of them'.

## CHAPTER 6

### HEADTEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF HEADSHIP

#### Introduction

The research question that guided my exploration of how the headteachers conceptualise the term 'headship' was: 'how do primary school headteachers within the KEEA Educational district conceptualise headship in Ghana?' To operationalize the research question, each of the interviewees was asked how he/she would describe him/herself as a head to a visitor<sup>79</sup>.

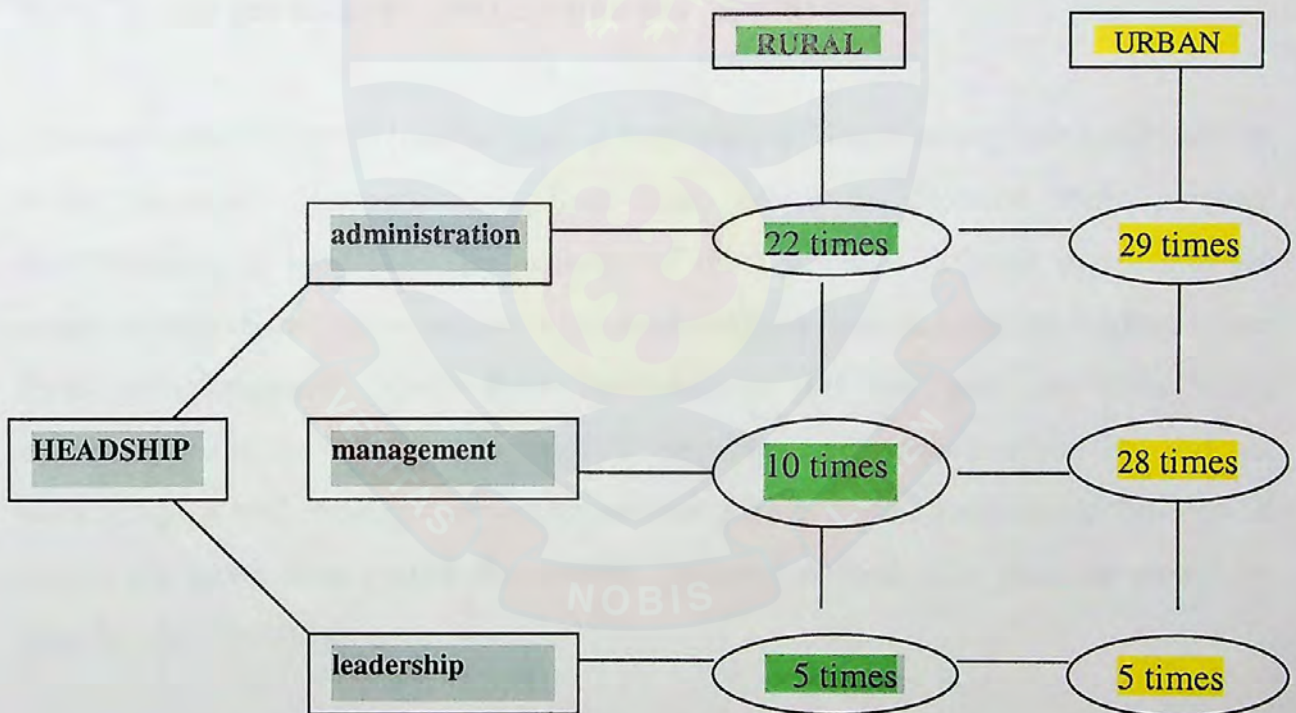
These questions were used to achieve two major purposes. The first was to identify how familiar the interviewees were with the terms: *administration*, *management* and *leadership*. I was particularly interested in knowing which of these terms were commonly used as working vocabulary in their day-to-day activities. The second purpose was to find out the meaning that the headteachers gave to their 'headship'.

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<sup>79</sup>Though the nature of the questions differed from individual to individual depending on the environment in which we were operating, the contents of the questions were the same: the questions provided the same opportunities for each interviewee to talk about how he/she understood 'headship'. Examples of the questions posed were: 'headship means different things to different people. If you were to describe yourself as a head to a visitor, in one word, what would you say?' or 'I've been to some schools and I've realised that every headteacher has his/her own way of thinking about headship. With your experience in headship, if you were asked to use maybe, one word to describe yourself as head, what would you say? These were supported with prompts and probing.

## Respondents' familiarity with the terms administration, management and leadership

In all, the terms *administration*, *management* and *leadership* appeared 99 times in the transcripts. Out of this, *administration* was used 51 times (approximately 52 per cent), *management* was used 38 times (approximately 38 per cent) while *leadership* was used 10 times (approximately 10 per cent). **Figure 6.1** below provides a summary of the frequencies of the usage of the terms by the rural and urban-based headteachers:



**Figure 6.1: Headteachers' working vocabulary for 'headship' and usage frequencies<sup>80</sup>**

<sup>80</sup> As illustrated in Figure 6.1 above, among the rural headteachers these words appeared 37 times, with 'administration' emerging as the most frequently used term (it was used 22 times, representing 59.5 per cent of the total 37 usage frequency). In contrast, the terms appeared 62 times among the urban heads. Like the rural heads, however, the term *administration* was more frequently used by the headteachers (29 times, representing approximately, 47 per cent of the 62-usage frequency. The usage frequency difference between the two terms is just one. The figure further shows that although the term *management* ranked second in the frequency of usage for both the rural and urban heads, with usage frequencies of 10 times (representing approximately 27 per cent) and 28 times, (representing

Comparing the frequencies of the rural-based headteachers to that of the urban-based headteachers, it is clear that the latter used the terms *administration*, *management* and *leadership* more than the former, while talking about their job. Thus, whereas the average of the number of times the urban-based headteachers used the three terms is 6.2, that of the rural-based heads is 3.7. On the whole, however, the results suggest that the term *administration* is more familiar among the headteachers than *management* and *leadership*, with *leadership* being the least used term. These terms are clearly a product of language, current terminology and a wider discourse which people are able to tune into on different basis.

### How the headteachers conceptualised 'headship'

Although *administration* had the highest frequency of usage among the headteachers, varied concepts emerged when they were asked to describe their personal understanding of headship. The majority of them found it difficult to stick to the usage of *administration*, *management* or *leadership* in their description tending to use them interchangeably. Only three headteachers did not use the three terms interchangeably. As an example, RUS10 used the term *administration* but did not interchange it with *management* or *leadership*. He described headship as follows 'If you're the head, then you're the master'. When I probed into what he meant by 'master', he explained:

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frequencies of 10 times (representing approximately 27 percent) and 28 times, (representing approximately 45 percentage), respectively, there was not much difference in the way the urban headteachers used the terms *administration* and *management* in their discussion about their job. They did not show much difference in the way they used *administration* and *management*. The least-used term by both the rural and urban headteachers in their day-to-day discourses about their work was *leadership*, which appeared only 5 times (representing 13.5 percent and 8 percent, respectively).



A master means I'm the administrator. I have control over everything in the school because I have been put here by the GES and the Islamic Education Unit to use the authority they have given me to make sure that the teachers will work well and pupils learn well. When you use authority then teachers will be disciplined, pupils will be disciplined, the school will be disciplined and things will go on well<sup>81</sup>.

The following illustrates the use of the term *leadership* as containing elements of conformity, change, guidance and modelling. RUS9<sup>82</sup>, as an example, remarked:

By being a leader, I mean that I'm supposed to show the way in everything that the school does. I need to provide professional guidance to my teachers. If there are any changes in instructional matters, I need to be abreast with that new change so that I can easily explain things to my teachers when they seek clarification. Again, as a leader, I need to make sure that all rules of the school are first obeyed by me. For example, I need to come to school early so that my teachers will emulate. I must also use my initiative in bringing new ideas and new things to the school. For example, it was through initiative that I was able to get the NGO to agree to put up that classroom block for the school. So, that is what I mean by leadership<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> The use here of the term *administration* is not what an English audience would understand by that term and reflects much of an American usage. It illustrates something of the confusion around terminology and underpinning concepts.

<sup>82</sup> RUS9 was a 35-year-old graduate with a B.Ed degree in Primary Education. She was the District Headteacher Advisor and appeared to be very confident in her thinking about headship. During one of my visits to her school, I found her in a heated argument with a circuit officer over a policy issue. According to her, she opted to head a rural school because she was born and bred in a rural setting. Moreover, the school she was heading was by the main road so she could easily get transport to Elmina, a town 15km away, where she resides.

<sup>83</sup> When I further probed by querying whether she thought her personal understanding of headship differed from what the GES had prescribed for primary school headteachers in the country, she replied, 'Yes, I think so because I feel as a leader, you have to seek to use your authority and discretion to initiate activities that will suit your environmental condition. You do not always have to maintain the status quo. You need to bring in innovations. But the GES expects the headteacher to achieve their set goals by any means. All they want is that the school must have 100 percent results in the district exams without considering the peculiar problems hindering the efforts of particular schools. Though leadership initiatives might add value to the knowledge and performance of pupils, the GES does not recognize that. All they want is, this is what we want so the head must achieve that. Nothing else. This has been the conflict that I have with my circuit officers whenever they come here for supervision. Responding to a further question as to whether her personal understanding of headship differed from what the GES prescribed for headteachers, she responded in the affirmative explaining that even though headteachers were required to ensure discipline in schools to promote quality teaching and learning, 'the GES has now brought some limits to the authority of the headteacher because of this SMC policy. This committee has removed some of the authority that you have and that is what makes the understanding of headship different now'.

In contrast, the remaining 17 headteachers used the three terms interchangeably. Four of them (three urban heads: RUS2, RUS4, RUS7 and one urban head: UBS4) conceptualised headship with reference to *administration*. They explained *administration* with expressions such as 'taking charge of teachers, pupils and all activities in the school', 'corresponding with GES and the community', 'keeping school records', 'taking custody of school property', 'vetting lesson notes', 'caring for the teachers and pupils as a mother' and 'manning the school with authority'.

In the course of explaining what *administration* meant to them, however, they could not avoid using either *management* or *leadership*. I illustrate this with two examples. Firstly, RUS7 described his personal view of headship by remarking, 'you have a lot to do like, in fact, manning the school very well for the improvement of the children and the community'. When I probed into what he meant by 'manning the school', he paused for some time and then remarked in the local language, 'Ei, eyi de woreye me nsɔhwe paaa o'<sup>84</sup>, laughed for a while, and continued, '[...] Hmmm, another word? Emmm, you're to administer the school very well'. The mention of 'administer' gave me an indication that he had a latent idea about the term 'administration'. I therefore posed the question, 'So what is involved in administering?'. In his explanation, the idea of management emerged:

Well, you as the head, you are there to make sure that the GES, what they want you to do, you do it. You have to see to it that teachers come to school and use the time well, you have to see to it that the children they learn well, you have to see to it that the textbooks nobody steal them, you have to manage the school records. In fact, as an administrator, you manage everything in the school. You have plenty duties to perform.

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<sup>84</sup> The expression simply means 'Ei, by this, you're really subjecting me to a test'

Secondly, UBS4 responded that school headship responsibility 'means you're an administrator'. When I probed into what she meant by being an administrator, she used the idea of being a 'leader' and explained that the school, teachers and the pupils were all under her care: 'specifically, you're the leader, you care for the school. You're a mother to the school, to both the teachers and the pupils so the in and out of the school will depend on you the head'.

Similarly, two out of the four headteachers who explained their understanding of headship from the perspective of *leadership*, clarified their views with reference to *administration* or *management*. As one UBS1 observed, 'it's a leadership role', and explained:

A leader because you are working with other people. There should be somebody taking initiatives and co-ordinating activities of the group so you are there to lead them and manage the various activities of the people that you're working with. You don't just work with teachers – you work with pupils and other members who are interested in education

When she introduced the term 'manage', I asked her what exactly she meant by that word and whether she thought there was any difference between 'to manage' and 'to lead', she responded:

Not much. A manager is put at a place to manage resources and if you are looking at the school, you are managing human resources, material resources and financial resources. A leader has those resources to work with. You are working with human beings in the school; that is the teachers and that is your human resource; hence the manager<sup>85</sup>. You've

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<sup>85</sup> In a further discussion, she stressed that every head of a school is a leader, and that in the course of carrying out her *leadership* role, she performs managerial and administrative tasks as well. Pointing to a pile of teachers' lesson plans on her desk, she explained that as a leader she did not only provide professional guidance for her teachers but also had to perform the administrative role of vetting lesson notes and keeping records. Besides, she explained that she had to manage the teaching and learning process by ensuring that materials were always available for the teachers to perform their teaching tasks. Thus to UBS1, one cannot talk about school leadership without making reference to management and administrative duties in the school.

been put there to achieve a goal and you lead people to achieve it.

The same trend emerged from the five headteachers who described their concept of headship from the perspective of *management* (RUS3, RUS6, UBS5, UBS8 and UBS9). Their definition of the term included ideas such as 'doing office work', 'leading the school', 'being at the top of the hierarchy', 'liaison between the school and the GES', 'leading people to do what GES wants', 'managing resources in the school', 'ensuring availability of teaching/learning materials to facilitate academic work', 'ensuring cost recovery' and 'ensuring that teachers do their work well to achieve good academic results'. In their explanations of the term *management* however, they could not exclude the use of *administration* or *leadership*. As an example, RUS6 said, 'I view headship as managing the affairs of an institution. The head is someone who is appointed to be head of the school and to lead it. He is at the top of that hierarchy in the school'. When I probed into what she meant by 'managing the affairs' of the school, she said, 'it involves leading the school'.

Another example is seen in UBS9's response: 'to me, I'm a manager'. Explaining what she meant by being 'a manager', she said:

By that I mean the GES wants me to ensure that every pesewa<sup>86</sup> it spends in training the teacher and in building the classrooms yield the required goals. I have to make sure that the teachers come to school regularly and punctually and also do actual teaching. I have to make sure that the materials<sup>87</sup> that the teachers are given to teach they

<sup>86</sup> Pesewa is the lowest coin in Ghana's currency. One hundred pesewas is equivalent to one cedi.

<sup>87</sup> This point was supported by UBS5. Explaining what it means to view the head as 'manager', he likened the GES to a business form that hoped to yield profit at the end of a specified period of operation, and remarked, '[...] the GES also put you there and expect certain things from you. [...] They have their own objectives and they want these objectives to be achieved. They have laid down some procedures and they have passed these procedures to you that you are there with them so you have to implement them. They bring in the logistics and they want you to put it into good use so that their set goals will be achieved [...]. If you're not able to manage it well their desirable goals may not come. I think you as the head; you have to see to it that all their policies are being implemented. Now those whom you are going to work with, you make sure that you achieve your goal and by this I think you have to manage all the resources available [...]'. When I further queried whether by using the business enterprise analogy, he was suggesting that his school was being managed as a profit making

actually use them in teaching. In short, I'm to lead the school and ensure that anything that the teachers or the pupils or the parents or myself will do which will waste money is not encouraged. That is what I really mean by manager and that is what the GES wants me to be as a headteacher. [...] the GES is very concerned about results.

The remaining six (RUS1, RUS5, RUS8, and UBS2, UBS3 and UBS7) initially expressed their understanding of 'headship' by using varied terms: 'disciplinarian, director, problem solver, master, steering affairs, giving support and controlling affairs'. Yet, after I had probed further, it emerged that they had deeper meaning for these words, which latently related to *administration*, *management* or *leadership*. Their problem, perhaps, was that they could not readily use any of these terms to describe their thinking about headship. They also tended to use the terms interchangeably in their explanations.

RUS1, for instance, described himself by remarking, 'actually, I'm a disciplinarian'. When I asked him to explain what he meant by being a disciplinarian, he explained, 'I don't allow the teachers to do what they like'. After I had probed further, he mentioned 'managerial work', which he explained as 'I do the office administration work. I have to mark registers everyday. I have to go to the classrooms to find out whether teachers are teaching and the children are learning'. To him, 'headship' connotes 'disciplinarian' and 'managerial' tasks. It could be deduced from his explanation that he saw *administration* as a function of 'managerial work'. He also viewed *administration* in terms of office work and supervision of teaching and learning in the school.

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enterprise, he explained that he was not implying that the school was "a profit enterprise per se". He was, however, of the strongest opinion that once the society had invested in the children's education, the head was required to manage the school as a business enterprise to ensure that the cost of educating the child was recovered by the society; hence his reference to headship as management.

Two of them (RUS5 and UBS3) equated 'headship' with being a 'director'. Both of them explained that the headteacher was the leader of the school; hence he/she needs to direct affairs in the school. When I asked whether there was any difference between a 'leader' and a 'director', RUS5 said, 'the leader is an administrator who directs affairs of the school'. UBS3 explained, 'With my little knowledge, I know a head is a director, a manager, an administrator and a leader'<sup>88</sup>.

Another perspective of headship that cut across all the respondents' views, but which was articulated clearly by UBS7 in her description was 'authority and power'. To her, headship:

Involves controlling affairs in the school. It means you have the power to control things so that discipline will be in the school. Because, if you're the head and you don't have the authority and power then you're not a head.

When I probed further by asking her to explain what she meant by the two terms power and *control*, her reaction was, 'Okay, authority, Emmm, power' (smiled and paused a moment and then signalled that I put off the tape for a moment). After a while she continued, 'in fact, are they not the same? Power, nnye tumi? Hmmm, eye tumi. Authority nso ye tumi'<sup>89</sup>. Yes, I think they're the same'. Thus, she found it difficult to get corresponding words in her mother tongue that could clearly

<sup>88</sup> Likening the headteacher to a father in a household, he explained, 'Comparing the school to a small family, you the head, you're the father. The children are your children, the school is your own house and everything in it is under your authority, so you have to direct and manage everything including the administration. You have to support the teachers'.

<sup>89</sup> She tried to conceptualise 'power' and 'authority' in her local language, Akan, by identifying words that could distinguish between the two terms. She identified the word 'tumi' but was confused as to whether the use of 'tumi' could be limited to either 'power' or 'authority'. The expression 'Power nnye tumi? eye tumi' literally means 'Is power not the same as 'tumi'? It is the same'. 'Authority nso ye tumi' meaning 'Authority is also tumi'.

distinguish between the terms 'power' and 'authority'. In response to a further question as to what she actually controls in the school, she said 'I control the management of the school, seeing to it that the teachers are regular and punctual to school, seeing to it that they do their lesson notes and then marking it or vetting it, and doing the administration work at the office'.

### Gender perspective of headship

The data further suggest that the male headteacher respondents voluntarily conceptualized headship in terms of *administration* and *management* more than their female counterparts. Out of the 20 headteachers who took part in the study, five of them readily looked at headship with reference to the term *administration*. These five comprised three male headteachers (RUS2, RUS4 and RUS7) and two female headteachers (RUS8 and UBS4). Similarly, five of them described their views about headship with reference to the term *management*. These were also made up of three male headteachers (RUS1, RUS6 and UBS5) and two females (UBS8 and UBS9). The trend, however, changed when it came to *leadership*. Four of them described their understanding of headship by making reference to *leadership*. Out of these, three were female headteachers (RUS9; UBS1 and UBS6) while the remaining one was male (UBS10). In spite of these gender disparities in the use of the three terms, there was no evidence of gender differences in the way the headteachers understood the terms. As both the male and female headteachers alike showed no indication that they saw any difference in meaning between *administration* and *management*, *administration* and *leadership*, *management* and *leadership*; it would be difficult to clearly identify gender differences through the use of terminology alone.

## Age perspective of headship

Since the participants varied in their ages, I examined the individual responses to find out if age as a factor had any influence on the way the respondents thought about headship. On the whole, the results show that the age factor did not have any distinct effect on the way the headteachers conceptualized headship. Thus it is difficult to classify a particular age group as belonging to any of the three categories: *administrative*; *management* or *leadership*. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that four out of the five participants, who conceptualized headship in terms of administration, were within the age bracket 50 to 58 while the fifth person was 38 years old. With regards to the *management* category, three of them were below 50 years of age while the remaining two fell between the ages of 31 and 46. The result of the *leadership* category, however, shows that none of those headteachers aged above 46 years thought of headship in terms of *leadership*.

## Summary

So far, the descriptive analysis suggests that the headteachers were more familiar with the term *administration* than *management* and *leadership*. The term *leadership* was the least used term in their working vocabulary. This trend did not, however, influence their understanding of school headship. The majority of them used the three terms interchangeably while conceptualising headship. While more male heads explained their understanding of headship with reference to *management* and *administration*, more female heads referred to *leadership* than men. Meanings they attached to the terms, however, overlapped with *authority* and *power* characterising the way each of the terms were explained in the light of headship.



## CHAPTER 7

### HEADTEACHERS' VISION FOR THEIR SCHOOLS

#### Introduction

One other research question that guided my study explored the vision (s) that the headteachers had for their schools. The concept of 'vision' in this context is limited to the personal expectations that the headteachers had for their schools and for their pupils. This was to help me find out if they had any clear vision for their schools, and also to see how their personal visions compared and contrasted with the school's overall mission. Specific questions posed to the interviewees varied in structure but they were all pertinent to the research question and offered each respondent the opportunity to share the vision that he/she had for the school.

#### Rural headteachers' vision (s)

From the data, the following were identified as visions the headteachers had for their schools:

##### *Achieving academic excellence*

All 20 headteachers gave prominence to vision for achieving academic excellence. Their primary desire was to ensure that pupils performed distinctively in the KEEA educational district's school grading exams in mathematics and science. This is reflected in expressions such as 'I'm expecting high grades for my school, high grades

in terms of academic work' (RUS1), 'I want many of my pupils to enter the JSS<sup>90</sup> and finally come out successfully in their BECE<sup>91</sup> exams' (RUS4), and 'Also I want them to pass all examinations they'll be writing in the BECE, SSSCE<sup>92</sup> or any other exams'.

Each of them was of the view that the degree of respect that the communities gave to schools, and for that matter headteachers, depended on their (headteachers) schools' ability to achieve academic excellence. Put in the words of one head (RUS5), 'I want my children to pass the exams organised by the district education office because if your school does not achieve your target for the SPAM<sup>93</sup>, you're not respected'.

Another head (RUS3) said, 'my vision for the school is to try to bring the children up to an academic standard equal to those in the cities'. I probed further into why he had desired raising the standard of pupils to the level of those in the cities. He responded by acknowledging that children in the urban areas were not more intellectually endowed than their colleagues in the rural areas; yet, they (urban school children) were more committed to their studies than rural children. He attributed this to the fact that their (pupils) 'parents understand education' and therefore supported their children' academically. He viewed this parental support as a tool by which urban school pupils' performance in the district exams were better than those in rural schools. His long term vision, therefore, was to educate and encourage parents of his pupils to see the importance of their children's education and thereby grant them the necessary parental support to enable the children to be more committed to their schooling and studies.

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<sup>90</sup> JSS stands for Junior Secondary School. The JSS is a three-year pre-Senior Secondary school programme for children between 12 and 14 years who have gone through a six-year's primary school education. It is a component of Ghana's nine-year basic education programme: six years for primary and three years for junior secondary school education.

<sup>91</sup> At the end of the JSS programme, children are made to write a Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), which becomes the basis for selection to the Senior Secondary School.

<sup>92</sup> SSSCE stands for Senior Secondary School Certificate Exams. The 1987 educational reform introduced this examination to replace the then GCE 'A' level examination. The SSSCE is written after a three-year SSS course and is used as a qualifying certificate for gaining admission into the university.

<sup>93</sup> SPAM stands for School Performance Appraisal and Monitoring. It is an intervention initiated by Ghana's Ministry of Education (MOE) with the aim of improving the quality of pupils' learning in the

Besides the vision for academic excellence, six of them (RUS2, RUS6, RUS7, RUS8, RUS9 and RUS10) mentioned other expectations: character development, creating conditions for attracting trained teachers, gaining laurels in sports, promoting gender balance among teaching staff and infrastructure development.

### *Vision for pupils' good character*

Ensuring that pupils became well-behaved adult citizens was the concern of two of the heads (RUS6 and RUS10). Both of them wished that in addition to their pupils excelling academically, they would also grow to become responsible citizens and behave well in the society. As RUS6 simply put it, 'Well, it's my prayer that they will all complete their school successfully and behave as Christians'<sup>94</sup>.

When I probed to enquire if 'good behaviour' was the preserve of the Christian religion, he responded in the negative but stressed that, as a Christian himself, he could not have used any other religion as the yardstick for determining the good character he desired from his pupils. To achieve this feat, he explained, he had devoted the first two periods on the school's timetable on Fridays to Christian worship. It was compulsory for pupils to attend.

When I asked whether that practice was not an encroachment upon the rights of pupils who were not Christians<sup>95</sup>, he explained that that was not a problem because the

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primary school. It involves the community in the appraisal and monitoring of teaching/learning in the schools.

<sup>94</sup> When he was asked what he meant by desiring that his pupils behaved as Christians on completion of their primary education, the headteacher, who claimed he was a lay preacher for one of the Pentecostal churches in Ghana, explained that Christian behaviour conforms to the virtues that the Ghanaian society upholds such as honesty, humility, respect for old age, good neighbourliness, handwork and many others. These, he argued, are qualities he expected products of his school to exhibit wherever they might find themselves.

<sup>95</sup> Christianity is not the only religion in Ghana. 35 percent of the population are Christians, 31 percent are hold traditional beliefs, 27 percent are Muslims and 10 percent hold other faiths such as Buddhism, Eckanker, the Divine Light Mission, Hare Krishna and other international faiths (U.S. Department of State Annual report on International Religious Freedom for 1999:Ghana). Moreover, Article 21 of

community had approved of the practice. The headteacher appeared not to be aware of the constitutional implications of his practice. Although this might be treated as an isolated case, which cannot in any way represent the thinking of all the 10 headteachers involved in the study, it opens another research interest area in school leadership in Ghana. To what extent are headteachers in Ghana aware of and observe fundamental human rights' provisions in the country's constitution in primary schools in the country?

### *Getting female representation on staff*

The desire for female representation on the schools' teaching staff was the concern of five headteachers. They complained of male domination on their staff, and had high expectations that the situation would improve. The following comment exemplifies this concern. One head, (RUS6) said there were four teachers on his staff but 'we are all males; they're (*referring to the GES*) saying the area is too remote for a female teacher to be brought here so from the records no female teacher has ever been to this place'.

This situation, he thought, was not healthy for the effective development of the girl population of his school. He expressed his vision as follows:

It's really a problem and my prayer is that we would get at least a lady teacher to join our staff in the near future so that we can work towards helping the girls<sup>96</sup> to study hard and pass well in the district exams which they conduct in maths and English for the SPAM

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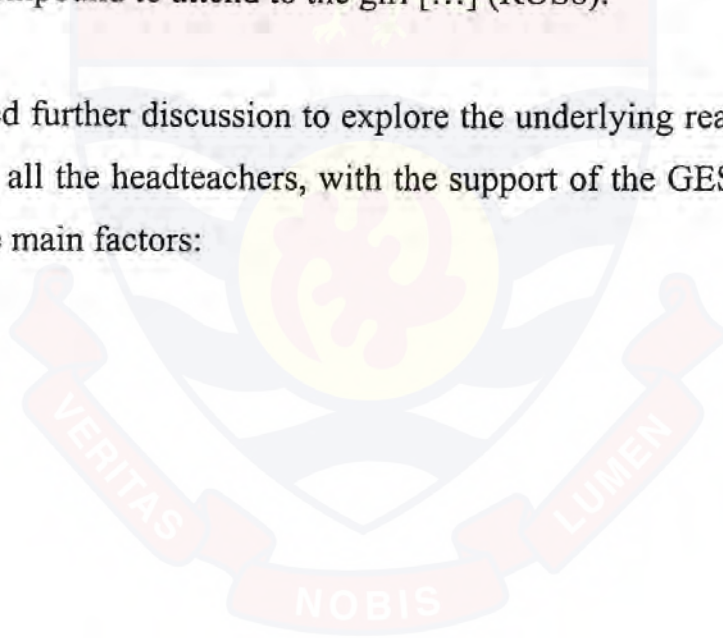
Ghana's Fourth Republican Constitution, among other things, provides that 'All persons shall have the right to 'freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice', 'freedom of thought, conscience and belief, which shall include academic freedom, 'freedom of association'.

<sup>96</sup>Other headteachers supported the idea that the gender imbalance was a disadvantage for rural school girls. One lamented: 'the girls when you tell them to study hard they don't see any example so they don't see what you're talking about. Here in the village, the women are all farmers and seamstresses. They're housewives, and give plenty birth. That is all that the girls know. At times they think it is a waste for them to come to school (RUS7). Another said, 'It's really a problem for us because the girls need models. Female teachers will serve as real models for the young girls. It'll make them think, 'Oh, if I study hard, I'll one day become like my madam [...]' (RUS5). Female teachers really advise the young ones about things affecting women, like menstruation, so without them it is really difficult' (RUS4).

The headteachers' vision of getting female teacher representation on their staff seems to be crucial. This is because female teacher under-representation in rural schools emerged as a problem<sup>97</sup> of great concern for all the male headteachers during the focus group discussion (both rural and urban sessions). This is reflected in the following case presented during the rural session:

In our school, we have girls and female teachers must handle these girls. Without female teachers, it creates problems for me because some problems the girls face are such that females should handle them. There was a case in my school where a girl slipped at a toilet<sup>98</sup> and was pricked by a wood at her private part. It was difficult removing this by the male teachers. I had to call one of the women selling food on the school compound to attend to the girl [...] (RUS8).

When I generated further discussion to explore the underlying reasons for the lack of female teachers, all the headteachers, with the support of the GESTOs, attributed the situation to three main factors:



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<sup>97</sup> I found the problem of gender representation in the schools shocking because I had never thought, prior to my fieldwork, that it was an issue. This is because Ghana has since the mid-1990s embarked upon women empowerment programmes with the aim of ensuring that gender balance is maintained in institutional management at all levels of her economy. The revelation that female teachers were not posted to the rural schools because of the disadvantaged nature of social life there, therefore, raises issues for future research: Firstly, what constitutes women empowerment within school leadership in the rural areas? Secondly, should the Ghanaian cultural practice of assigning *women less difficult tasks* and *men more difficult tasks* be promoted by a democratic school system? Thirdly, to what extent does the professional training given to male headteachers adequately prepare them for handling female related issues in their schools?

<sup>98</sup> The type of toilet being referred to here is a pit latrine. In most rural areas in Ghana, schools construct pit latrines by digging deep rectangular shaped holes, bridging the holes with wood, erecting mud walls or bamboo/palm frond fence and roofing the latrine with thatch. It becomes very dangerous to use when the wood gets rotten. The headteacher explained that rotten wood was the cause of the girl's fall.

### *Deprived conditions in the rural areas*

The headteachers thought factors such as lack of amenities in the rural area was a major cause of the refusal of female teachers to be posted to rural schools. Some argued that Ghanaian women by nature are 'very interested in social things like attending concerts, parties and movies'. The absence of these things therefore discourages them from accepting posting to the rural areas. As one head put it,

Life is very difficult here. Women like watching films and doing other social things. By staying in rural areas, they don't get them. In a situation where you wake up and all that you hear is the sound of birds, they would not want to be here (RUS9).

All the four GESTOs involved in the study confirmed this problem<sup>99</sup>. One cited a case of a female teacher who declined to take up a teaching appointment in a school located in a rural community to illustrate his point:

A newly trained female teacher was posted to Dwabo. Her father, in the company of her mother, drove her to the village. When they arrived, they didn't even step down. They were in their car and simply beckoned somebody to come. "What town is this?" Adom Dwabo. "Do you have electricity here?" No. "Do you have a clinic here?" No. "Do you have pipe-borne water here?" No. Thereafter the 'u-turn' was so sharp that it nearly knocked down a goat and that was the end. They didn't even come back to the office to negotiate for a change. They simply sped off to Accra. Before we were aware, a new station had

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<sup>99</sup> The GESTOS highlighted the problem. One of them (GESTO2) remarked, 'it's a big problem,' and explained that it used to be a tradition of the KEEA education district to post all newly-trained teachers, irrespective of gender, to 'get exposure in some of these remote areas [...] but now [...] when we send them to the rural areas they don't go. They come with all sorts of excuses.' Another (GESTO3) observed, 'As soon as they come, they ask, 'the place we have been posted to, is there any electricity? Is there pipe-borne water? Is there a clinic?' As soon as you shake your head in the negative, then they're not going'.

been given her from the headquarters. [...] So getting female teachers in the rural schools in this district is really a problem [...] (GESTO 1).

### *Marriage*

Problem of choosing suitable men for marriage was also given as a reason for the under-representation of female teachers in rural schools<sup>100</sup>. One head (RUS4) observed, 'from my experience, [...], when they come from the training college and are posted to the rural areas, the people they meet does not help them to get right partners'. One GESTO explained that, in the past the GES posted some female teachers to the rural areas but they hardly stayed in their schools once they got married: 'We get females going to the rural areas only during the initial stages of their appointment. You post ladies there, they get married and apply for a change [...].'<sup>101</sup>

### *Cultural perception of women as weak for difficult tasks.*

The idea, that women are generally weak and should therefore not be assigned difficult tasks, also emerged. This is reflected in an argument advanced by one GES official in support of the MOE's practice of not posting female teachers to rural schools: 'It's wickedness to think of posting young female teachers to remote areas. [...]; they're delicate and weak and sometimes at risk'. A female headteacher<sup>102</sup> also argued:

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<sup>100</sup> One official (GESTO4) assigned the marital factor as a reason for which the MOE had made it an accepted practice not to send female teachers to very remote parts of the country. He commented, 'once we met like this with one of our directors and he said a female teacher was posted to an interior area and this female teacher ended up marrying a hunter over there. Therefore he told us that the Ministry doesn't see it wise to send female teachers to the interior part because they're delicate and weak and sometimes they're at risk [...].'

<sup>101</sup> He explained that it was a serious problem for them as staff resource persons but stressed, 'you can't prevent them from joining their husbands'.

<sup>102</sup> She is herself a headteacher of a rural school. She's a graduate who volunteered to be in a rural school.

If you're a female teacher, you should not be posted to the interior part because there're problems. Sometimes, they may get there and may out of necessity marry to a man who already has two wives; they're compelled to give in because ladies are weak [...] (RUS9).

## Urban headteachers' vision

As with the rural heads, expectations for academic excellence<sup>103</sup> emerged as a common vision for majority of the urban heads. Recounting the primary purpose for which parents within her community sent their children to school, one (UBS1) explained that her vision derived from factors that motivated the parents to send their children to her school: 'To the parents who brought their children to this school what they expect is that their children should be able to emerge first academically'. Following this, she remarked:

My utmost vision is to bring up the school to a level where the stake holders will be interested in the school and to realize that the vision for which they brought their children to the school is being achieved and that is he's been able to do well academically. My vision is to achieve a very high academic standard for the school, have a very good

<sup>103</sup> The vision for academic excellence is also reflected in the following: UBS3 said she wanted her school to become one of the best in the district. She remarked, 'I want my school to be the best always. That is when we go out for quizzes or competition, we know this is our target and we will come out well'. UBS4's expectation was to see all pupils who entered the JSS from her school achieve 100 percent success in their BECE exams. Her views were contained in the following explanation, '[...] I don't know where the fault lies, whether it is from here or there. When they sit for the exams, the results are not all that encouraging but we're trying our best. So for my expectation, I wish that the children learn hard to achieve something in future'. UBS5 also stated that he wanted his pupils to excel in the inter-schools' test competition organised by the District Education Service in mathematics and English. He remarked, 'You know every year, academically, they test these children and I want my school to be one of the best schools in Ghana'. UBS9 also stressed academic excellence. She explained that pupils from her school who had progressed to the JSS level and had taken the Basic Education Certificate Examinations in the previous year performed extremely well. Consequently, her primary goal was to encourage her pupils to maintain and improve upon their academic achievements. In addition, it was her wish that her children behaved well both at school and in the larger society. Lastly, the headteacher explained that she expected an improvement in the numerical strength and commitment level of teaching staff in the school. She stressed, 'I also want that my school gets the best-qualified teachers who will be committed to their work so that the school can achieve its goals well'. On his part, UBS10 wished that many of his pupils 'passed their exams well so that many of them could go to the JSS and finally get admission into the best secondary schools in Ghana such as Achimota, St. Augustine's, Wesley Girls and others'.



environment and give the teachers satisfaction. In other words have motivation for the teachers so that they will be happy when they come to the school to help achieve the goal for which I envisage.

### ***Promoting fluent speaking of English among pupils***

Two headteachers said their vision was to ensure that their pupils improved their proficiency in speaking the English language. One (UBS8) explained that her primary concern was for her pupils to develop the ability to speak the English language fluently. She remarked:

As a headmistress of the school, I expect that by the time these children pass out from the primary to the JSS, they should be able to speak English fluently and then be able to pass their exams and finally go through the BECE exams successfully. Apart from these things, they should be the type of children who will be very useful to the society so far as their social life is concerned, children who will be able to utilize their brains and at least use the little resources that they have at their disposal in times of need.

### ***Getting a new classroom block***

The only headteacher (UBS7), who did not mention academic excellence as a vision that should be pursued, said her major concern was to lobby the authorities to put up a new classroom block and a headteacher's office for the school. She emphasised, '[...], where we are now is temporary so I expect that we would have a proper site for the school so that we move there'.

## **Summary**

The foregoing narrative shows that the headteachers were very clear about expectations they have for their schools, and for that matter for their pupils. The results, however, suggest that they were more concerned with the academic task achievement of their schools; thus confining their vision to the performance and development of their pupils. It also emerges from the analysis that the vision or expectations that the headteachers have for their schools in general, and specifically for their pupils, were driven by the main criterion by which the public in Ghana judged a good school: examination results. Though the smallness of the sample for the study does not warrant a generalised conclusion, I am wondering what the situation would be if the results were true for all schools in Ghana? What happens to the other components of the primary school child's personality development, since intellectual development is just an aspect of what makes the pupil an acceptable and useful member of the society in which he/she finds him/herself after school? How do these expectations affect the tasks performed by the headteachers? These questions will be addressed in the chapter for discussion.

## CHAPTER 8

# TASKS PERFORMED BY THE HEADTEACHERS

### Introduction

Knowing exactly what headteachers do in schools was a key aspect of my study. This was because of my premise that tasks performed by headteachers would have direct bearing on their professional development needs<sup>104</sup>. As a result one of the research questions that guided my study was: 'What specific activities do headteachers perform in primary schools within KEEA?'<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that 'what the headteacher does in the school' has since the mid-1990s featured prominently in school effectiveness and school improvement research. A common view that appears in most of these research findings is that the work of the headteacher is 'varied, fragmented and people-centred'. For example, Saran and Trafford's (1990:103-104) review of Mintzberg's (1973) observational study of managerial work, Thomas, Phillips and Adamson's (1981) investigation of American elementary school principals and Davies' (1987) study of British primary school headteachers, confirm that headteachers' work is characterised by 'a rapid pace of events, with their time typically being fragmented into many varied and short-term activities'. To Fullan (1991:145-146), 'virtually all the time of headteachers is taken up with one-to-one personal encounters, meetings and telephone calls'. He further explained that the workdays of headteachers are sporadic and characterised simultaneously by 'brevity, variety and fragmentation'. They also perform on the average 149 tasks a day with constant interruptions.

<sup>105</sup> I used two techniques in gathering data to answer this research question: *observation* and *semi-structured interviews*. I visited each participating school and spent an average of three days observing what each individual headteacher did and how he/she did it. Things I observed in the schools were: office-related activities, classroom-related activities, relations with pupils, relations with teachers, relations with parents, relations with food vendors, factors that interrupt headteachers' work in school and frequency of individual heads' movement. The interview sessions, which came after the observations, were used to provide the individual headteacher an opportunity to talk more about what he/she did in the school. Guided by the broad research question, I posed specific questions to each of the headteachers.

## Issues emerging from observation

It emerged that headteachers were directly in charge of all administrative duties in the school. Unlike the situation in Ghanaian secondary schools where ‘headmasters’ have the support of administrative assistants and other professional workers, the 20 primary heads were solely responsible for managing affairs of teachers, seeing to the welfare of pupils, receiving visitors, collecting fees, keeping financial records, ensuring that the school compound was kept clean, ensuring that food vendors maintained hygienic preparation of food sold to pupils and supervising school projects.

Though some of these tasks (especially keeping the school compound clean and supervising food vendors) had been delegated to teachers on duty,<sup>106</sup> the heads were directly answerable for whatever happened in the school. In addition, the heads provided instructional leadership to both their teachers and pupils. These involved supervising the teaching of teachers, vetting teachers’ lesson notes, monitoring pupils’ learning, checking pupils’ attendance register, liaising with the district office for supply of teaching equipment, briefing teachers on new pedagogical policies from the Ghana Education Service and classroom teaching. In addition, I observed that the headteachers were involved in co-curricular activities such as inter-schools sports competitions, singing competitions and school worship.

Another observation is that ‘movement’<sup>107</sup> was a major characteristic of activities carried out by the heads. This was an activity I had not considered to be something remarkable in considering headteachers’ tasks; yet in the field, it emerged as a very

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<sup>106</sup> The heads had prepared a duty roster for individual teachers on their staff to carry out some delegated responsibilities. These responsibilities involved the maintenance of clean school environment, checking pupils’ lateness to school and resolving minor disciplinary problems involving pupils. Disciplinary problems that required punishment were handled by the headteacher.

<sup>107</sup> Movement in the context of my study refers to the state where the headteachers changed their positions from one point to the other as they performed their daily activities. Specifically, it involves

time-consuming aspect of the activities in which the headteachers' were engaged. My observation revealed that thirteen headteachers, comprising ten urban and three rural heads, hardly stayed in their offices or continuously remained at one place for more than an hour without moving<sup>108</sup>. The case below exemplifies this trend:

### *The Case of RUS5*

He lived very close to the school. On each of my three visits, he arrived at school before 8.00a.m. Once he had arrived, he went straight to his office<sup>109</sup> and stayed there for about one hour. Thereafter, he moved out of the office to check if the classrooms and the compound had been properly cleaned. He then moved to the assembly ground to give announcements, after which he went back to the office. He sat in the office for sometime, and then moved from classroom to classroom, apparently to ensure that everything was set for the day's work to commence. After that he went to his own classrooms. He handled two classes: primaries one and three. He marked the attendance register in primary one and moved to primary three. His classroom teaching tasks were often interspersed with supervision activities, distribution of logistics to teachers, and receiving and seeing off visitors to the school. **Fig. 8.1** below illustrates the complexity and confusion of activities involved in the headteachers' movements.<sup>110</sup>

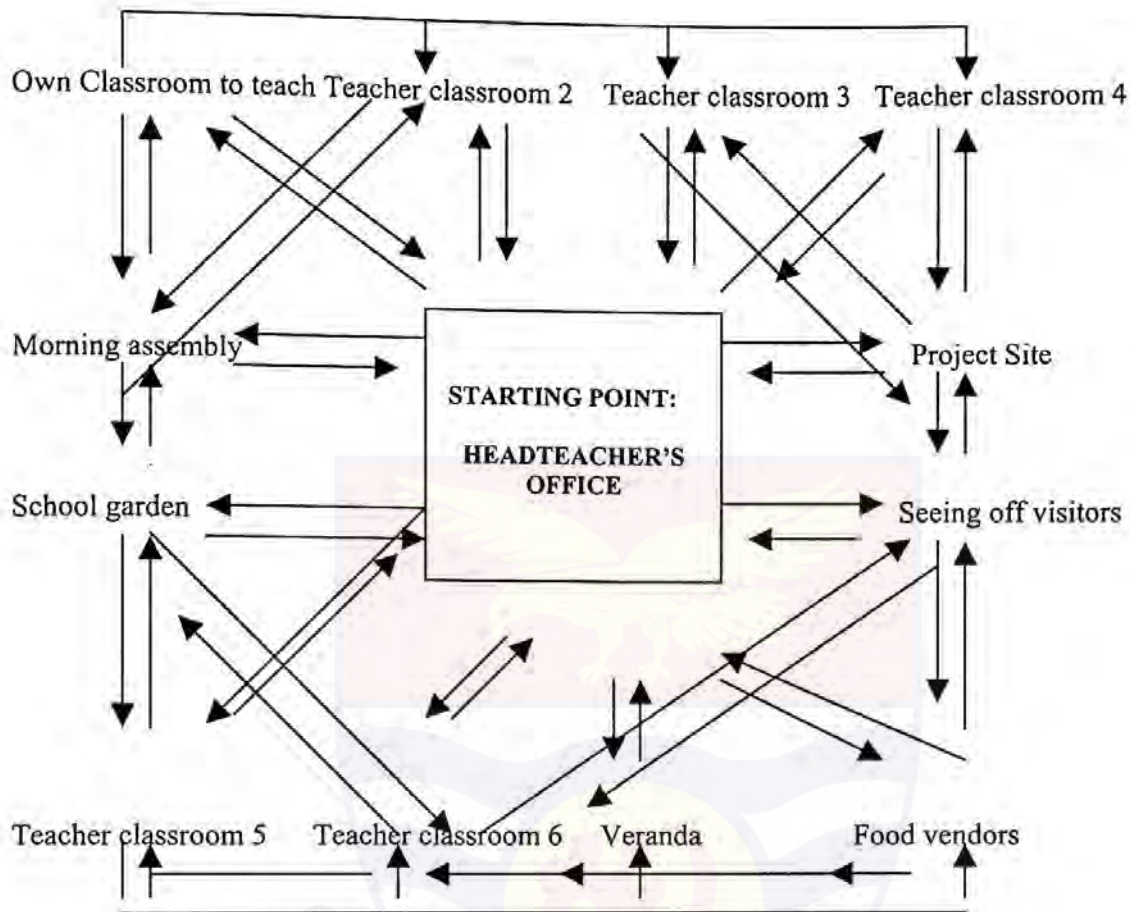
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number of times the headteacher walked to and from his/her desk to other positions to carry out a task within his/her office or in another area within the school during official hours.

<sup>108</sup> Although there was difficulty capturing every movement that the headteachers made, I was able to record a total of 1,170 movements made by the 13 headteachers during my 39 days' observation in the schools. Thus on the average, each of the headteachers made 30 movements a day (a day in this context consisted of eight school hours) while they carried out their headship responsibilities. The movements involved getting up from desk to pick chalk, registers etc from cupboard, walking up and down the veranda for supervision, receiving and seeing visitors off, and other activities.

<sup>109</sup> He had an office. It is worth noting, however, that it was not all the schools that had offices for their headteachers. In such schools, the headteacher operated from home. Those whose bungalows were in the school compound also used their sitting rooms as offices. These are buildings very close to the school. Alternatively, a desk was placed under a mango tree in the school compound where he/she sat and carried out office-related activities. Those whose bungalows were in the school compound also used their sitting rooms as offices.

<sup>110</sup> In comparing the frequency of movements, I saw that headteachers of the urban schools made more movements than their counterparts in the rural schools. Unlike the urban schools where the headteachers showed so much commitment to supervising the teachers' classroom teaching and pupils'



**Figure 8.1: Summary of Movements that Characterised Primary School Headteachers' Activities within KEEA Educational District**

*See Fig. 8.2 inserted overleaf for a graphical representation of these complex movements as I observed in one rural school.*

learning, the majority (seven out of ten) of those in the rural areas confined themselves to the classroom to teach once schoolwork commenced. It was only when visitors came to the school or there was a disciplinary problem or a meeting to attend that movements were recorded. Supervision-based movements occurred only before the day's schoolwork commenced. Once teaching and learning commenced, what went on in the classroom of teachers was left to the particular teacher concerned, unless there was a serious problem. Those who did not have a class to teach were often found sitting under a mango tree vetting lesson notes, responding to correspondence received, or chatting with some of the teachers who had occupied their pupils by giving them exercises.

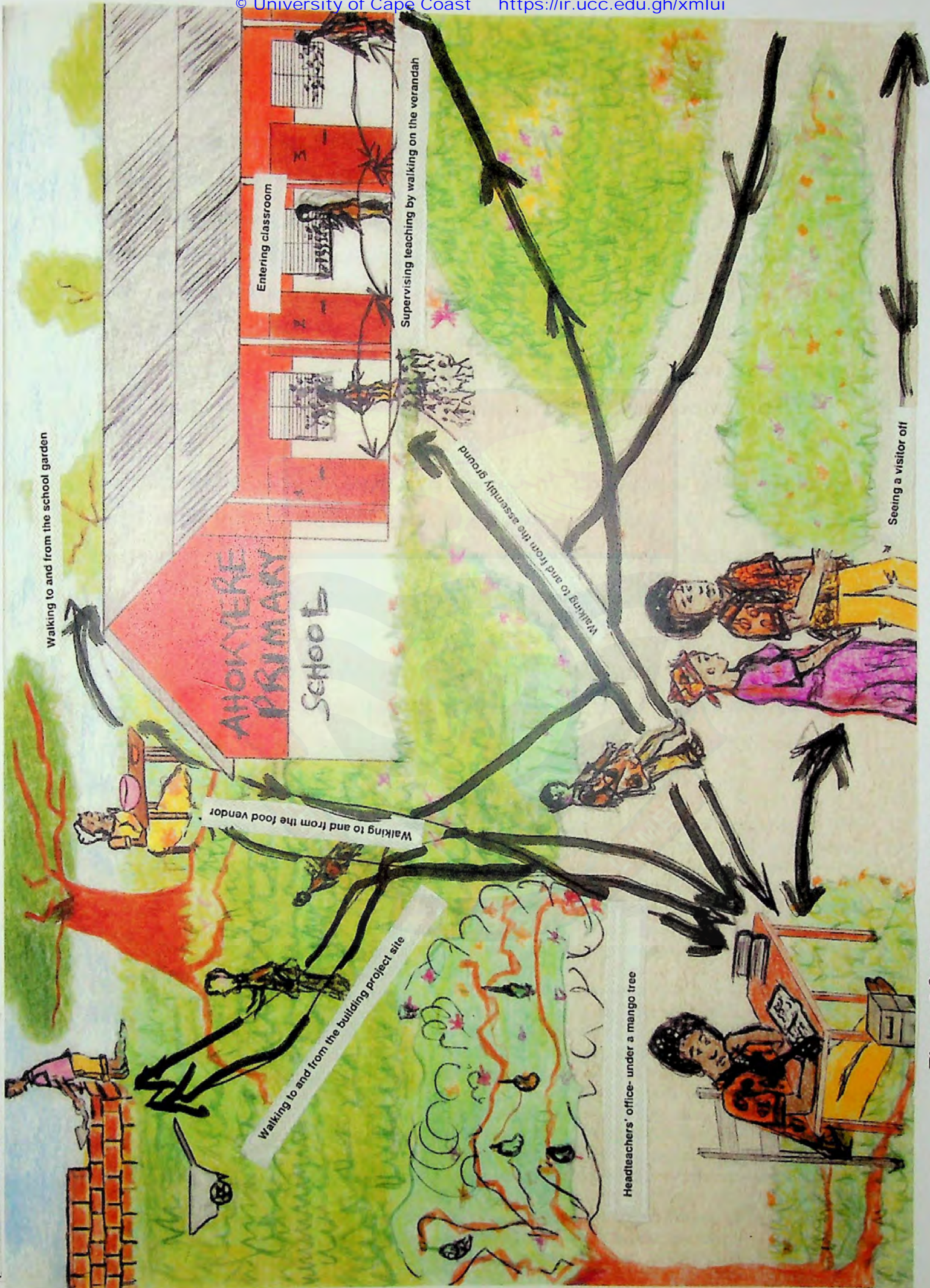


Figure 8.1: Movements that characterised most primary headteachers' activities in rural schools

Some of these movements, however, appeared unnecessary. For example, during the process of interviewing one of the headteachers in her office, I recorded six movements within a period of 40 minutes that disrupted the interview session. In each instance, she intermittently excused herself, got up from her chair, entered the store room, opened a cupboard, picked, at most, two pieces of chalk, returned to the office, handed them to a pupil to be given to a teacher and then returned to her chair for resumption of the interview. Such a trend of movement was witnessed each time a pupil knocked on the office door and informed her that a teacher needed chalk<sup>111</sup>.

Another manifestation of this time wastage is the frequent movements that characterised the headteachers' interaction with visitors, which often occurred at the expense of pupils' learning. I observed, especially in the rural schools, that most of the visits were casual and, although they were necessary, they were not primarily important<sup>112</sup>. Some visited the headteacher with issues that were purely domestic and had nothing to do with school business. For example, there was an instance in one of the schools I visited where the headteacher together with two teachers left their classrooms and spent almost 15 minutes of school time to interact, in the form of

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<sup>111</sup>When I curiously asked why adequate chalk was not supplied to the teachers prior to the commencement of classes to avoid such disruptions in her work within the office, she explained that it was necessary that she regulated the way teachers used chalk in the classroom because 'these days we don't get many supplies from the district office, and chalk is very expensive but the teachers use them anyhow'. Similar views were expressed by other headteachers. They seemed to be so much concerned about controlling the use of chalk and obsessed with mistrust of their teachers, in terms of chalk usage, that they preferred wasting time on frequent movements to judiciously using such time for the purpose for which they had been officially allocated to the school.

<sup>112</sup>This may be attributed to the influence of culture because it is considered rude in Ghana for one to close one's door to a visitor, especially a member of one's family. In rural areas, in particular, where tradition is deeply entrenched and family issues are hardly dissociated from one's official duties, it is expected that the headteacher will place his/her school time second to the needs of a visiting family member. Gardiner's study of managers in some public organisations in the country illuminates this point. While the writer acknowledges the importance of Ghanaians' fervent value for the extended family system, he argues: 'it does have a negative side in that members often come to see the manager in the office asking for all sorts of favours which they fully expect that their uncle or cousin will be capable of carrying out. [...] sometimes members of the public who the manager may not even know [...] come wanting to discuss very personal matters, ranging from marital problems to difficulties at work. The manager is often made out to be wicked and unfeeling when he/she does not or cannot offer them assistance. The collapse of many a business in Ghana has been attributed to the inability to manage 'the family' in relation to the business effectively, with the result that the needs and interests of the organization become secondary to the needs of the family' (in Towers, 1996:495-496).



bargaining, with a cloth hawker who had visited the school. In other instances, some extended relations and friends engaged the attention of the headteacher as well as teachers just to say 'hello' while passing by the school. This is a problem which some of the headteachers themselves acknowledged, yet they found it difficult to say 'no' to such unimportant visits.

### **What headteachers themselves said about their work**

All headteachers underscored the indispensability of their role in the schools' task accomplishment<sup>113</sup>. As regards the specific duties they performed in their respective schools, their responses were as follows:

Firstly, all the 20 headteachers mentioned that it was difficult for one to specify the exact duties performed by a headteacher in the primary school. In addition, they spoke about the demanding nature of the tasks they performed as primary school heads. For example, one head (UBS2) said, 'we can't say the head should perform this or that. [...],' because 'at times the head himself does not know what his task will be the next moment'. She explained that primary school headteachers performed duties beyond what the GES had prescribed for them. Another (RUS9) remarked, 'In fact, what I do in a day cannot be spelt out at one sitting.' One other (UBS1) said, '[...] in a day, you're the headteacher, you're a teacher, you're a messenger and you have other things as well to do'. Another (RUS6) said, 'the tasks are numerous and tedious'

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<sup>113</sup> Likening the school to a ship, which cannot reach its destination unless it sails under the leadership of a captain, one of them (RUS1) argued that equipping a school with qualified teachers *per se* did not guarantee its successful functioning. 'Without a headteacher to create the atmosphere needed by teachers and pupils for working towards the schools' goals, the school can hardly meet its target,' he remarked. Another (RUS5) explained, 'the headteacher is like a father in the home. A home is no home unless there is a father. So the school is no school unless there is a headteacher to provide direction and support to the teachers.' One other (UBS2) remarked, 'Without the headteacher's role there'll always be confusion in the school'. In the Ghanaian traditional context, a father is the provider of the survival needs of the nuclear family. A home without a father is therefore frowned upon by the larger society. It is believed that a child in a fatherless home cannot be nurtured towards becoming

while a third (UBS6) explained that her work ‘involves almost all the activities of human beings’.

Secondly, all the headteachers mentioned that they performed supervisory tasks. They supervised the work of their teachers, the learning activities of their pupils as well as non-academic related activities such as supervising building projects. One head (UBS2) said she moved from class to class ‘to check what the teachers are doing to ensure that they’re really doing the work’. One other (UBS8) said she supervised food sold in the school to make sure that ‘the children pick the right food that will not cause them to vomit’. Yet another (UBS1) said she supervised to make sure that ‘teachers are well behaved. They shouldn’t be standing on the veranda wasting instructional time’. One rural head stressed the importance of their supervisory roles by remarking, ‘at times these teachers just relax. They set exercises and they don’t mark and so doing your supervision, you get to know all these things and advise the teachers what to do’ (RUS2).

Thirdly, the headteachers said they carried out administrative tasks<sup>114</sup>, which the majority of them defined with a common expression, ‘I do the office work’. Activities

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useful to him/herself and to the larger society in adulthood. It is within the context of the cultural importance attached to ‘fatherhood’ that RUS5 perceived his role as headteacher in his school.

<sup>114</sup>Two of them (UBS6 and RUS7) referred to all activities that did not involve direct teaching as constituting their administrative task. This view emerged when an injured girl was brought to UBS6 during the process of my interviewing her. We suspended the interview to enable her to attend to the girl. She opened a cabinet, pulled out a first-aid box and started treating the girl. While attending to the girl, she humorously commented, ‘Mr Oduro, you see how demanding my administrative work is? When a pupil is sick I have to attend to her [...], when there’s a problem with the food sellers I have to go and solve it [...].’ When the session resumed, she explained that she did other administrative duties, which included checking lateness among teachers by studying the time book each day. She concluded, ‘After the administrative tasks, I move to the classroom to teach.’ RUS7 also commented ‘I also teach a full class. This is not part of my administration work but I do it together with the administration.’ A remark made by one head (RUS9) could sum up what the heads meant by administrative tasks, ‘I do administrative work. [...] I make announcements [...] I get to the office to read through any correspondence that I’ve got to attend to. If it needs to be replied to, I do so. When I [...] find that a teacher is absent, I have to put it in the logbook. I also file letters that have come from the office.’ (RUS9)

they described under this task included *reading and responding to correspondence from the district office and filing letters* (RUS4, RUS9, UBS3, UBS7, UBS8), *marking the register* (RUS1, RUS5, UBS8), *keeping school records* (RUS7), *attending meetings at the district office* (RUS7, UBS1, UBS5), *making announcements at school assemblies* (RUS9, UBS9), *checking teachers' school attendance book and writing confidential reports* (RUS10).

Fourthly, classroom teaching emerged as a task performed by the headteachers. Nine (comprising eight urban and one rural school) headteachers said they occasionally carried out teaching in situations where a particular classroom teacher was absent from school. One head (UBS1), for example, explained,

When a teacher is not there you're supposed to go and occupy the class. Outside the duties mainly assigned to you, if a teacher has been assigned to a class and she's not there, you can't allow the children to stay idle. You have to go and occupy the class. Today, three teachers are absent so what happens to those classrooms? I don't have standby teachers [...] so I've been teaching as well.

Eleven of them (comprising two urban and nine rural heads), on the other hand, said that teaching was a permanent feature of their duties in the schools. Two of them (UBS2 and UBS5) explained that in schools, especially in the urban areas, where enrolments of pupils were very high, it was not a policy of the GES for headteachers to handle classes permanently. In schools with low pupil enrolment, however, headteachers were obliged to handle classes<sup>115</sup>. It also emerged that lack of teachers<sup>116</sup> in the rural areas compelled some headteachers to handle more than one class. In

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<sup>115</sup> It emerged during the focus group discussion sessions that two categories of primary school headteachers existed in the district: attached headteachers who are obliged to teach and detached headteachers who are not. The size of the school population often determined whether one would be detached or attached to a school. Attached heads handled all subjects on the school timetable.

<sup>116</sup> Most of the headteachers complained about the workload that the lack of adequate staff had placed on them. One (RUS10), for instance, lamented, 'at present, instead of twelve teachers, we have only nine including me making ten so we're having a tough time. In fact, the teachers sometimes after giving work to their own pupils, that's their own class, they also go to the next class, without teaching, to give them work. Sometimes, I have to go and teach the classes in addition to my own class and also supervise the work of the teachers'.

some situations the classes were combined. One head (RUS5), for example, remarked,

I have 231 pupils in my school with only four teachers. I'm controlling P.3 and P.5 (*he was referring to Primary 3 and Primary 5*). Quite recently, one of the teachers fell sick and I had to handle that class too. So one person handling three classes and doing administration at the same time [...] how can I be effective?

All of them said the practice of combining teaching with their leadership task was negatively affecting not only their work as headteachers, but also pupils' learning<sup>117</sup>. In dealing with the problem, they said they had to occupy pupils with class exercises to enable them attend to other responsibilities. This practice was evident during my observations in the schools, as well as in the focus group discussions. One head, for example, said, as a way out, he had chosen to teach pupils in Primary Six (who are aged 11+) because,

They're grown enough so that when I'm not around they can control themselves and do the exercises given them. [...] This is what I've been doing [...]. When I set work for them then I go on my usual rounds and then come back [...]. (UBS5)

Fifthly, eight headteachers said they performed public relations (PR) duties. These, according to them, involved receiving visitors, explaining policies related to the school's activities to the community and projecting the school's image<sup>118</sup>. They

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<sup>117</sup>The heads generally agreed that leaving pupils on their own for a long time in the classroom was not appropriate, yet under the prevailing circumstances, that was the most appropriate strategy they could adopt. One of them (RUS5), who argued strongly against headteachers handling classes as a duty suggested, 'As a head, it is better that you're not attached to teaching so that you can have time to attend to your correspondence and school records [...].'

<sup>118</sup> I observed that the urban headteachers were more engaged in receiving visitors than the rural heads. Since parents in the urban areas were more informed about their rights and the school's obligations to them, their interest in what the schools were doing was higher. A day never passed, during the period of my visit, without a parent visiting each of the schools to see how the teachers were performing. In addition, it appeared that closeness of the schools to the district office coupled with easy access made it possible for officials from the District Education Office and members of the School Management

agreed that 'sometimes, parents come to the school if there's anything that they don't understand or if they want the teachers to help their children and I have to attend to them'. Another head (UBS1) said, 'you have the district office coming to ask for information here and there, and you have to stop whatever you're doing and listen. [...] that takes most of your time if you are not careful.' One female head (UBS8) expounded on her public relations task as follows:

As a headteacher of the school, you receive visitors. Sometimes, some will come and they will be with you most of the time, like your case (*she referred to me and we laughed together*), and you cannot carry out any day's work you have planned. Originally, you have to plan a timetable for yourself so that you will be able to go through your work. So, if on Monday, you're supposed to mark teachers' work and within the course of the day something should set in, it means you have to postpone Monday's work to Tuesday. [...] Parents come to you, the PTA can come to you, and external visitors from Accra and Cape Coast can come to you.

Sixthly, financial administration emerged as another task performed by the headteachers. As a matter of government policy, primary school education is free in Ghana, yet, heads said, pupils were required to pay some form of fees toward sports, PTA operations, District Assembly Educational levy, culture, maintenance and extra classes (in the case of urban schools). They said they were responsible for collecting the fees and keeping records of the amount collected. One head (UBS5) said, 'I have to keep school records such as financial records [...]'. Another (RUS6) said, '[...] you have the challenge of ensuring that the pupils pay their school fees.'<sup>119</sup> In addition,

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of my visit, without a parent visiting each of the schools to see how the teachers were performing. In addition, it appeared that closeness of the schools to the district office coupled with easy access made it possible for officials from the District Education Office and members of the School Management Committees (SMCs) to frequent the schools. In the rural schools, however, parents hardly visited the schools; their visits were often in response to invitations extended to them by the headteachers to discuss disciplinary issues involving their children.

<sup>119</sup> The rural headteachers saw this task to be problematic. They said they were encountering difficulty in getting parents to pay their wards' school fees promptly because the parents were mostly peasant farmers and fishermen whose sources of income were seasonal. Consequently, they wished to be permitted to pay their children's school fees by instalment since they (parents) were unable to meet deadlines set by the GES for paying the fees. This, they explained, placed them in a dilemma since

the government granted them an imprest which they had used in meeting some of the minor needs of the school.

Seventhly, providing welfare services was another common task mentioned by the headteachers. They said they ensured that no pupil was bullied by his/her colleagues or unjustifiably punished by his/her teacher. Three of them (UBS1, RUS8 and UBS4) said that they took care of sick pupils in the school and, in some situations, had to play the role of parents by providing food for some of their needy pupils. In relation to teachers, one head (RUS3) argued, 'If the teacher has a problem, he is not coming to perform anything in the school because he will be thinking about the problem; hence I have to provide welfare service [...].' He said he helped his teachers to secure accommodation. Another head (RUS8) explained, 'in fact, the teachers as I said, they don't stay in this town. [...] so every day they have to take a car and it's not easy for them because the salary is nothing. So when they don't have money, I have to help them.' Two others (RUS1) and (UBS2) mentioned conflict resolution as aspects of the welfare tasks they performed. The former said 'if there is any misunderstanding between the teachers, then of course I have to get in. In the same vein, I intervene when there is misunderstanding between the teachers and the community'<sup>120</sup>.

money with them so it's difficult to get their fees. When you don't collect it too the Ministry thinks that you have collected it and they will lay an embargo on your salary'. Another (RUS10) explained the dilemma by stressing, 'This is a big problem because at times, you the head you see that it is not that the parents do not want to pay the fees; but the money is just not there. When you give them time, they come to pay and it brings friendliness between the school and the community; but the GES won't understand [...]'. To cope with the situation, one (RUS3) explained that the number of pupils listed in the admission register determined how much money the GES expected from headteachers in terms of fees. As a way out of the problem, therefore, he said, 'Most of us don't do that. You write all the names in an exercise book, and then when it is getting to the time for auditing you write the names of only those who have paid in the admissions' register. So when they come and check, they don't say this or that has not paid so you should pay from your salary [...]'. They acknowledged that the practice was against the directives of the GES but argued that it had become necessary because that was the only way they (headteachers) could prevent the GES from tampering with their salaries. Moreover, he said, it was difficult for schools in the rural areas to raise funds for carrying out minor projects; hence the undeclared fees provided some monetary support for them.

<sup>120</sup> In addition to the foregoing tasks, all the 20 headteachers mentioned that they were responsible for collecting stationery required for teaching and learning from the district office. One head (RUS7) explained, 'As a headteacher, you have to go to the district office and see the stores for teaching materials such as chalk, attendance registers, cardboards, teachers lesson notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, exercise books, cumulative assessment forms and others.' These items, they claimed, were under their custody and they had the duty of making them available to teachers each school day. One highlighted (UBS5): 'it's my duty to supply my teachers with all the materials they'll need in a day.'

## Summary

A synthesis of the foregoing descriptive analysis shows that tasks performed by the headteachers could be broadly classified into two: Direct Pedagogical Tasks (DPT) and Non-direct Pedagogical Tasks (NPT). In the former classification, the headteachers carried out tasks such as classroom teaching, supervising teaching and learning and providing teaching learning materials to facilitate the school's work. The geographical location of a headteacher's school (whether rural or urban), the staffing conditions prevailing in the school, as well as, the strength of pupil enrolment in the school determined the degree of a headteacher's involvement in classroom teaching. Headteachers in the rural schools were more involved in classroom teaching than those in the urban schools. In terms of supervision, the analysis suggests that what they really did was to monitor what their teachers did in the classroom. Although the degree of the headteachers' involvement in teaching varied from school to school, the content of the tasks had similarities: all of them operated within the framework of GES directives.

The NPT classification, on the other hand, embodies generic and varied activities carried out by the headteacher indirectly affecting the improvement of teaching and learning in the school. These involved tasks such as making announcements, attending meetings, resolving conflicts, seeking the welfare of teachers, seeking the welfare of pupils, monitoring activities of food vendors, reading and responding to correspondence, supervising building projects, collecting school fees, keeping school finance records, receiving visitors.

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For instance, when they come to work, I have to make sure that chalk is available. When they need any teaching and learning material, I have to provide them. [...] I have to provide the materials they use to carry out their duties to make sure that the day's work is completed successfully'.

## CHAPTER 9

# PUPIL, TEACHER AND PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS: HEADTEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

### Introduction

Of late, community participation in the provision of school education in Ghana has generated much community interest in what the school does. As a result of this interest, the community (which comprises parents, opinion leaders and other stakeholders) expects the headteacher to behave in a particular way<sup>121</sup>. For a headteacher to succeed as a leader, therefore, it seems necessary that he/she know what all those concerned with the school's activities expect from him/her. In this light, my study sought to find out from the headteachers what, from their experience, they thought pupils, teachers and the community in which they operated expected from them.

### Pupils' expectations

One comment that ran across the responses of the majority of headteachers (17)<sup>122</sup> was that a pupil expected his/her headteacher to be a model for him/her. Put in the

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<sup>121</sup> Southworth's (1995:13) study of primary school heads, for instance, echoes the crucial role parental expectations play in the headteacher's work by reporting, 'For one head, dealing with the expectations and demands of individual parents was a challenge and a pressure [...].'

<sup>122</sup> Contrasting opinions emerged when I posed the question as to what the headteachers perceived to be their pupils' expectations for them. On the one hand, three headteachers argued that primary school pupils were ignorant about the role of the headteacher and too young to know what they expected their headteacher to do in the school. On the other hand, seventeen of them argued that pupils in their schools knew what they wanted from them (headteachers) and how they (pupils) wanted their headteachers to behave towards them (pupils). One (RUS7) remarked, 'You see, these children when you're good they know, when you're bad they know so they tell their parents and they too tell the PTA executives.' One other (UBS1) commented, 'I remember one girl telling the parent that our school is good; now the headteacher says we should speak English.'



words of one (RUS1), 'They look to you as a role model'. They 'expect the headteacher to be punctual to school so that they will also emulate what he or she does' (RUS8). Another head (RUS1), said, 'If you are the headteacher, they look at the way you dress, the way you talk, the way you handle their issues, the way you solve their problems [...]'. Illustrating this expectation, one other (UBS4) explained, 'We've told them that everybody should speak English, so if I am speaking with the teachers, the pupils are there to see to it that our headteacher is speaking with the teacher in that language'. Thus, as illuminated by one other (UBS9), 'they expect their headteacher to live exemplary lives. They want you to lead a life that they will be proud to say you are their headteacher; they want to see you speak English to them.'

Promoting quality teaching in the school is another pupil expectation identified by the headteachers. Two (RUS2 and RUS10 respectively) said their pupils expected them to be regular and punctual at school 'to ensure that their teachers teach them well' and 'to see that their teachers are punctual and teach them the right thing'. One (UBS5) stressed that, primarily, pupils were in school to acquire knowledge; hence 'they expect that from the head [...]', while one other (UBS1) stressed, 'They want you to show interest in their academic work; you should be the type who will care if teachers are not working.' One other (UBS9) said, 'They also want you to make sure that they always get teachers to teach them [...]' Another (UBS10) said pupils 'want you to check the teachers to teach well'.

Furthermore, others mentioned that their pupils expected them to be friendly with them, treat them as their own children and ensure their security in the school<sup>123</sup>. For example, one commented:

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<sup>123</sup> One of the headteachers (RUS10) cited a personal experience to support the idea that pupils expect their headteachers to be surrogate parents: 'My house is just here (*he pointed to the site of his bungalow*) so they always rush to my house when it is break time for water and they want me to allow them. At the back of my bungalow, there is a garden and they'll always go and plug the pawpaw and they expect that I allow them to do that. In fact they want that I treat them as my own children; [...] they want me to be their father and I do that so they really like me. They tell their parents and their parents sometimes come to the school or to my house to thank me for taking care of their children. I always allow them to come and plug pawpaw from my garden and also drink water from my house'.

Pupils expect you to like them, to be interested in them to show that you care and are concerned about their welfare. [...] When you're interested in them they are happy with you: they always want to be around you. (UBS1)

In addition, some heads mentioned that their pupils expected them to create conditions for them (pupils) to develop confidence in them (headteachers). For example, one elaborated:

They want to have confidence; they want to trust us. You see, the pupils should trust the head teacher. When maybe they have some problems outside, because they trust they confide in you, they will come and tell you. [...] You always have to encourage them, you have to talk to them, you see you have to know their problems. When you do this, the children will have confidence in you will tell you and tell you all their problems' (UBS2)

Two others (RUS3) and (RUS7) mentioned that their pupils expected them to ensure environmental beauty and cleanliness. To RUS3, 'Pupils want to see improvement in the school environment', while RUS7 argued that children appreciate a clean school environment:

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Two others mentioned that pupils expected headteachers to grant recognition. One (UBS9) remarked, '[...] they are happy when you call them by their names instead of saying 'Hei, hei!' Another (UBS3) stressed, 'Sometimes these little ones [...] want recognition. Sometimes they come to school forgetting their pencils. [...] They leave their teachers and come to the office to collect pencils for their work. I feel they want you to recognize them and help them learn.'

From my experience, I think children see the beauty of the school so like class one child coming to the school, if the school is not beautified it will shy the child not to come to school. But when the school is decorated, from bed, go to bath, come to school. The child will concentrate on the school environment. Ah! The school is very beautiful I have to go and also be with the people so you see that sort of thing is also good.

A synthesis of the responses from the 17 headteachers suggests that primary school children, though young and comparatively inexperienced, have a clear knowledge about what a headteacher should do to support their learning<sup>124</sup>. Their expectations of headteachers may be classified into three types: *serving as model*, *promoting quality academic work* and *ensuring security*. The table below provides details of each category:



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<sup>124</sup> This view reflects the outcome of MacBeath and Myers' (1999:137:141) exploration of insiders' views about effective school leadership. In their study pupils were able to sketch activities performed by their headteachers and also prioritised given statements about 'the role or possible functions of the headteacher.' The writers, for example, commented on pupils' viewpoint in their study as follows, 'This produced a range of colourful and sometimes idiosyncratic views of headteachers.' Even among the three heads who felt that their pupils were too young to know what to expect from their heads, it was at least acknowledged that pupils expect their heads to be less strict towards them. This is evident in UBS7's observation, '[...] one thing I know is that, left to them, everyday I must not come to school so that they fool.' Acknowledging this fact, in itself, strongly suggests that pupils have expectations of their headteachers. Although, on the surface, this statement implies a negative expectation from pupils, it raises questions that have a bearing on the headteachers' leadership styles in the school. If the pupils think that the absence of their headteachers could grant them some level of freedom, then this raises the question: Is it that the headteachers' leadership style is so autocratic that his/her absence from the school brought relief to the pupils? Or is it that the headteachers did not delegate part of their authority to teachers to the extent that their (headteachers') absence from the school could make pupils 'fool' even under their teachers' supervision?

**Table 9.1: Classification of pupils' expectations of primary heads: headteachers' perspective**

<b>Classification</b>		
<i>Model</i>	<i>Academic</i>	<i>Security</i>
Children expect heads to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Be punctual and regular at school</li> <li>. Speak English to them</li> <li>. Dress neatly at school</li> </ul>	Children expect heads to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Cancel or discourage activities that do not directly promote teaching and learning in the school</li> <li>. Grant them academic counselling</li> <li>. Supervise teachers to teach them well</li> <li>. Show personal interest in their academic work</li> <li>. Teach them when their class teachers are not in school</li> <li>. To ensure that school compound is kept clean to promote an atmosphere for learning</li> </ul>	Children expect heads to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Love and take care of them</li> <li>. Treat them as their own children</li> <li>. Listen to them</li> <li>. Grant them confidentiality</li> <li>. Call them by their names</li> <li>. Grant them recognition</li> <li>. Protect them from physical attacks</li> </ul>

Although, the seventeen headteachers were confident about what pupils' expected of them, a question arose as to whether their views reflected what pupils themselves had to say about what they expected of their headteachers. In this light, I took advantage of an opportunity I had to interact with a group of pupils during an inter-schools' sporting competition, in order to elicit from them what they wanted their headteachers to do at school<sup>125</sup>.

<sup>125</sup> My sample for the study did not originally include pupils. During the recess of the sporting activities, I engaged the pupils in an informal conversation on things they liked or disliked about their schools. The confidence with which some of them talked about their school showed that they had views about what they wanted their schools to be like. Their contributions gave me the impression that I could derive some relevant information from them regarding their expectations of their headteachers. So I asked if they would be willing to write a short composition for me on the topic 'What I want my headteacher to do in the school,' which many of them enthusiastically agreed to do. I took down their names and their schools, and then sought permission from their teachers to allow them to write the essay for me. In all, 25 of them whose ages ranged between nine and eleven gave me their names. With the support of their teachers, I gave them the topic to write about on their own at home.

## An opportunistic data: what pupils themselves say

The essays revealed that the pupils had very high expectations of their headteachers (see appendix 4). They also viewed the headteacher as someone who had the power and authority to make things to happen in their schools. All of them used statements that showed that they expected the headteacher to promote *quality teaching and learning*. One of them wrote, 'I want my headteacher to go round every classroom to make sure that the classroom is neat and there is a teacher in the classroom', while another stated, 'I wish my headteacher to see that the teachers teach well and the pupils also study well'. Another wrote, 'I want the headteacher to give teachers teaching aid to enable them teach well.' Another expressed the need for the headteacher to ensure that teachers taught all subjects on the teaching timetable by stating,

I want the headteacher to talk to teachers who use more periods than they must use in teaching one subject or teach another subject even though it's not supposed to be taught, because we have timetable in the school that guide teaching or learning.'

The pupils also wanted their headteachers to provide for their health, welfare and entertainment needs in the school. One wrote, 'I want my headteacher to bring medicine to school so that when somebody is ill then he give him or her some,' and another, 'I want my headteacher to get us a first-aid box,' and yet another, 'Our headteacher is to make us keep the environment clean so that we do not become ill<sup>126</sup>.' The various views expressed by the pupils have been summed up below:

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<sup>126</sup>Six of them stated that they expected their heads to *maintain and make the school environment beautiful*. This expectation was evident in statements such as 'I want the headteacher to provide green grass and many flowers for the school,' 'I want my headteacher to tell the school pupils to plant more flowers around the school,' and 'I want my headteacher to inform the Education Officer to make our school fine as our school is flooded every year.' Another expectation highlighted by the pupils was the promotion of discipline. This was reflected in statements such as 'I want her [*referring to the headteacher*] to make sure that there is strict discipline in the school and cane when a pupil goes wrong,' 'Our headteacher should see to it that the school children keep quiet in the school and punish anyone who goes out of school compound with no permission, while classes are in session,' and 'I want my headteacher to come to school everyday and control the teachers'. Other pupils mentioned

### *Promotion of quality teaching/ learning*

They wanted their headteachers to:

- Establish a library for the school.
- Buy more library books for the school.
- Provide more blackboards and buy chalk for the school.
- Buy computers for the school.
- Buy more textbooks and exercise books for the school;
- Provide storybooks for them.
- Supply teachers with teaching aids to enable them teach well
- Recruit more French teachers
- Stop people from speaking Fante<sup>127</sup> and Pidgin English at school.
- Make sure there are good teachers in the school.
- Provide desks for them in classrooms.
- See to it that teachers prepared their lesson notes.
- Organize quiz competitions in the school.
- Supervise teachers' work.
- Control teachers.
- Organize monthly reading competition them.
- Ensure that teachers teach all subjects on the school's timetable.
- See to it that they (pupils) study hard.

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that they expected their headteachers to promote good human relations in the school. One said, 'I want my headteacher to see to it that parents do not come to the school and quarrel with the teachers.' Others expected their heads to involve them in the school's decision-making process. One of them commented, 'I want the headteacher to provide suggestion boxes for the school because many pupils in the school will like to suggest to the headteacher, but feel shy to talk in front of the headteacher.' One pupil expected his headteacher to play the role of a spiritual advocate by stating, 'I want her [headteacher] to continue praying hard for us'; while six of them expected their headteachers to counsel them.

<sup>127</sup> Fante is the main language spoken by people who live along the coast of the Central Region of Ghana. In the KEEA district where I conducted my study, it is the dominant language. The Government of Ghana has banned the speaking of vernacular in schools.

### ***Maintenance and beautification of the school***

They wanted their headteachers to:

- Plant more flowers around the school compound.
- Buy carpets for the school.
- Build cement block classrooms in the school.
- Make sure that damaged properties of the school were repaired.
- Prevent flooding in the school every year.
- Build a toilet for the school.
- Build a junior secondary school (JSS) for the primary school.
- Build a nursery for the school.
- Encourage their parents to take good care of the school.
- Check flooding in the school.

### ***Health, welfare and entertainment***

The pupils wanted their headteachers to:

- Ensure that the school environment was kept clean.
- Buy a television set for the school.
- Provide storybooks for them to read at home.
- Stop people from selling ice creams and toffees to them at school.
- Buy sports items like footballs, jerseys, football boots etc. for the school.
- Talk to school authorities to provide a canteen in the school.
- Provide a first-aid box for the school.
- Buy a bus for the school.
- Pray for them.
- Provide counselling services for them.

### ***Maintaining discipline***

They expected the headteacher to:

- Be punctual and regular at school.
- Control teacher and pupils' lateness to school.
- Punish them when they did the wrong things.

- Make rules and regulations to govern the behaviour of people in the school.
- Make sure all children obeyed rules and regulations of the school.
- Make sure there is strict discipline in the school.
- Make sure that every classroom was silent during school hours.
- See to it that everybody attended club meetings.
- See to it that children respected their teachers.

### ***Communication and human relations***

They wanted the headteacher to:

- Always make announcements.
- Provide suggestion boxes for them (pupils) to express their views on issues decisions that affect them in the school.
- Ensure that parents did not quarrel with teachers at school.
- Be loving, caring and kind towards them (pupils).
- Have confidence in them.
- Advise teachers to deal with them (pupils) patiently, especially when teaching.

### ***Personal neatness***

Two of the pupils said they wanted their headteachers to:

- Ensure that all teachers dress decently to school
- To allow girls to plait their hair.

Comparing the opportunistic views collected from the pupils themselves to what the headteachers perceived to be pupils' expectations of them, it is clear that most of the expectations of the pupils were idealistic.<sup>128</sup> Yet, I find some of the views expressed

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<sup>128</sup> They assumed that the head controlled everything in the school and had the means of providing all that their schools needed to function well. Hence, they expected the headteacher to buy a school bus, to buy computers, to put up cement block classrooms, and so on, without thinking about the source of funding for the acquisition of such items. A parallel of these utopian expectations is seen in MacBeath's (1998:73-76) study involving Scottish, English and Danish pupils, where English pupils suggested among other things that a good head 'buys things for the school'.



by the pupils very relevant to headteachers' professional development matters in Ghana. For example, the fact that a pupil of eleven years could believe that his/her teacher did not teach all subjects on the timetable, and thereby expected his/her headteacher to ensure that teachers did not neglect the teaching of some subjects, has implications for professional development issues. It raises issues about teaching time utilization. Thus, contrary to the thinking of the three headteachers (*earlier referred to on p.132*) that pupils could not conceive of expectations for their headteachers, ideas emerging from the views of the 25 pupils suggest that pupils have their own way of looking at what the headteacher is expected to do.

### **Teachers' expectations**

All the 20 headteachers agreed that their teachers expected them to lead exemplary lives in school. They highlighted the fact that the headteacher's exemplary life was important in the school. One (UBS7) stated, 'They expect that I will set good examples for them to emulate,' while another (RUS2) remarked,

My teachers expect that I lead an exemplary life so that they follow. As a headteacher and a classroom teacher, [...] I'm bound to prepare lesson notes and so it's better I prepare mine to set an example so that if they fail to prepare theirs I can give them a query.

In other issues, however, the emphasis differed between the rural and urban heads.

#### ***What rural headteachers say***

Teacher expectations, as perceived by the rural heads, were simple and focused more on welfare matters. Five rural heads explained the welfare expectations in terms of providing financial assistance to needy teachers. RUS7, for example, observed, 'As for the teachers, they expect that you think about their welfare always. When they

broke, they expect that you give them money. If you don't give them then you're bad.' From another perspective, three others (RUS1, RUS8 and RUS10) explained that their teachers' welfare expectations were protective by nature. Teachers expected headteachers to collude with, and protect them (teachers) from being disciplined by educational authorities, when they (teachers) flouted the professional code of ethics and conducts. RUS1 remarked, 'As teachers, they expect me to be very lenient with them pertaining to writing of lesson notes, absenteeism and lateness by not querying them.' RUS8 also commented, '[...] what they [*teachers*] expect from the head is always covering them.'<sup>129</sup>

Another commonly raised issue was the provision of accommodation for teachers. They said that newly posted teachers expected that once the headteacher received notice from the District Education Office about their (teachers) posting to the school, he/she (headteacher) should arrange accommodation for them. 'They want me to think about their money and accommodation,' RUS10 declared and then added, 'In fact, I now have one teacher staying with me in the bungalow because he does not have accommodation, and he always tell people that my headteacher is very good.'<sup>130</sup>

In addition, two heads (RUS3 and RUS10) mentioned that their teachers expected them to grant them professional autonomy. Whereas the latter remarked, '[...], my teachers want me to allow them chance to do anything they want freely,' the former said his teachers expected him to co-operate with them by not 'imposing things on them.' He explained that even though the GES required that he rated the performance

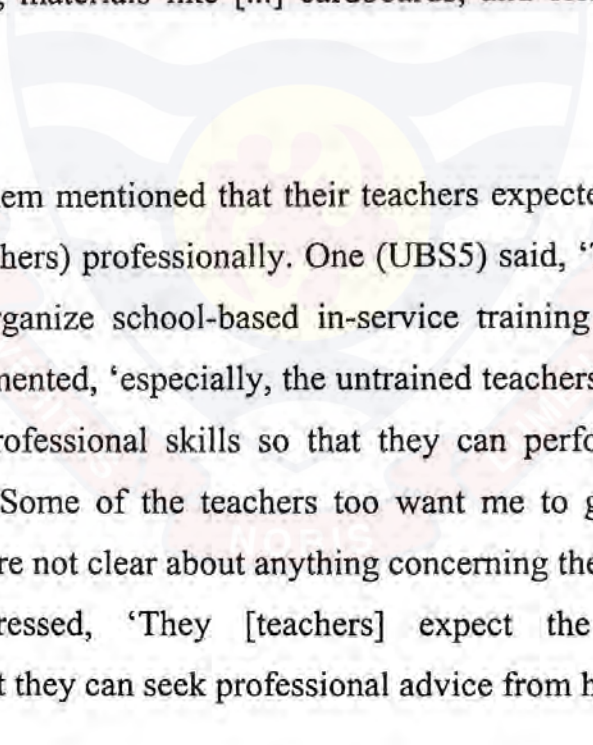
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<sup>129</sup> She explained, 'If they don't come to school early and any officer comes, they expected me to say, O! Yesterday, he told me that he wasn't well so he is going to the hospital'. She concluded, 'If you don't say it and anything happens you become a very bad head. So they want that you always tell lies to protect them.' RUS10 also commented, 'When the CS [*Circuit Supervisor*] comes here they want me to say good things about them.'

<sup>130</sup> Another (RUS3) said in view of the welfare expectations that his teachers had for him, he was compelled to share his one-bed room flat bungalow with four teachers on his staff because that was the only way he could fulfil the teachers' expectations.

of the teachers through monitoring, some of his teachers took offence whenever 'I stand at the window or get to the table of the teacher to look at how he is teaching.'<sup>131</sup>

### *What urban headteachers say*

Teachers' expectations, from the urban headteachers' perspective, focused more on professional development and appeared to be more complex. All the ten headteachers mentioned that their teachers expected them (headteachers) to provide them (teachers) with the requisite support for improving quality teaching in the school. One (UBS3) said, 'They always wish that I would give them the needed support [...] they want me to help them to improve upon their work.' When I probed into what constituted the support she had mentioned, she remarked, 'if they should need some equipment or teaching and learning materials like [...] cardboards, and felt pens to put up some drawings [...]'.

In addition, five of them mentioned that their teachers expected them (headteachers) to develop them (teachers) professionally. One (UBS5) said, 'They [*teachers*] expect you to sometimes organize school-based in-service training for them [...]', while another (UBS7) commented, 'especially, the untrained teachers want me to help them learn some of the professional skills so that they can perform well.' One other (UBS9) remarked, 'Some of the teachers too want me to give them professional guidance when they are not clear about anything concerning the teaching work,' while another (UBS1) stressed, 'They [*teachers*] expect the headteacher to be knowledgeable so that they can seek professional advice from him or her.'

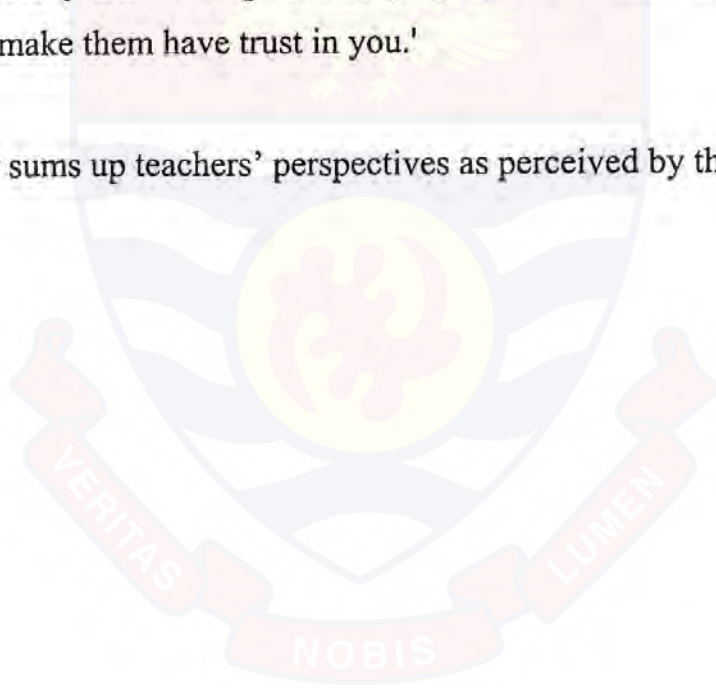
Furthermore, three heads mentioned that their teachers expected that they (heads) respected and treated them (teachers) as human beings and as friends. One (UBS1)

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<sup>131</sup>When I probed for a clearer picture of reasons why his teachers resisted his supervisory role, I noted from his response that his approach was very threatening to teachers. When I further asked if he thought adopting a less threatening approach to his monitoring role could reduce the tension between him and his teachers, he responded in the affirmative but quickly explained that that was not what the GES wanted him to do.

said her teachers expected her to be nice to them and also identify herself with their problems. They wanted her to respect them by 'sharing responsibilities with them to involve them in my administration'. She was also expected to appreciate the efforts of her teachers, 'If you let them know that you're interested in what they're doing or if you commend them, they're happy about it; they know you appreciate what they're doing [...]'. One other (UBS4) said his teachers expected him to relax the enforcement of school rules, 'Sometimes they say my rules are Hei! Hei!<sup>132</sup> They expect me to be flexible with them.' He however argued, 'But the moment you relax, discipline will go down so I need to be firm.'<sup>133</sup> The response of one head (UBS10) could sum up these expectations, 'Teachers want to see that they can get your support professionally, socially and even spiritually [...] Teachers also want you to behave in the way that will make them have trust in you.'

**Figure 9.1** below sums up teachers' perspectives as perceived by the headteachers:

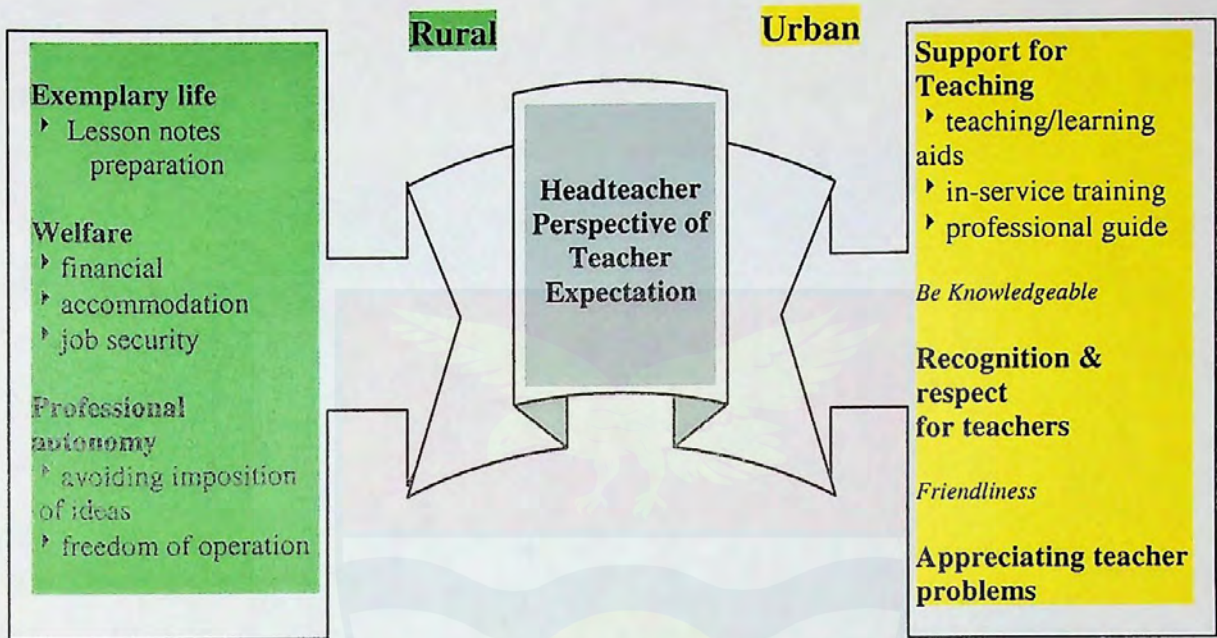


<sup>132</sup> 'Hei! Hei!' is a jargon commonly used by some people of Akan origin to describe an individual whose behaviour is aggressively uncompromising on issues. The expression 'sometimes they say my rules are Hei! Hei!' therefore implies that the teachers saw the headteacher's rules as too rigid.

<sup>133</sup> Other supporting comments made by the remaining two were as follows,

'The teachers expect many things from me [...] they expect that I will respect them and talk to them as human beings. Especially the women, they expect that I understand them when they are late to school and also when they're not teaching but selling things in the school. They expect that I understand them because they think I'm also a woman and I know the problems of women.' (UBS9).

'Teachers expect you to know their problems. Some teachers have problems that disturb them [...] they want you to call them and talk to them. Teachers want to see the headteacher as a friend and as somebody who has interest in their life [...].' (UBS2).



**Figure 9.1: Summary of headteachers' perspectives of teacher expectations**

## Parents' expectations

### *What rural headteachers say*

Parental desire for headteachers' promotion of academic excellence was commonly mentioned by the headteachers. All of them held the view that most parents sent their children to the school to learn and pass exams. One (RUS1) remarked, 'Parents? Hmm, since they have brought their children to you so that you will train physically and teach them mentally, they expect their children to get the requisite training for passing exams.' Another (RUS3) said that parents, as members of the community, had contributed to the establishment of his school with the hope of gaining positive

results; hence, 'they expect that at the end of it all, the children perform and come out with flying colours.' One other (RUS10) stressed, 'They want the children to speak good English and pass their exams well.'

Five heads mentioned that parents expected them to maintain discipline in the school. In general, they argued that parents expected them to discipline their (parents') children for them because most parents were so occupied with farming activities that they did not have time to monitor and control their children's behaviour at home. They explained that parents had confidence that the school would be able to mould the behaviour of their children; hence they sent their children to school. One (RUS4) cited a case where a father of one of his pupils, at a Parent-Teacher Association meeting, accused the school, and particularly him, of having relaxed the disciplining of children in the school. He remarked, 'The community wants us to discipline the children as we experienced in our school days, but the GES does not want us to use the cane now [...]'<sup>134</sup>.

Four heads said parents expected them to behave well in the school and in the community. They complained that the parents were expecting too much from them as if they were not human beings. Put in the words of one (RUS6),

You see because we're in a small community, parents expect too much from us. The little mistake you commit, they say look at the headteacher. Even if you go to the drinking bar to drink, they will talk; they expect that you behave like an angel<sup>135</sup>.

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<sup>134</sup> One other (RUS7) said parents were shifting their role of training their children to the school; hence 'they want the headteacher to make sure that every child in the school behaves well [...] when a child does not behave well, they say it is the school's fault,' and concluded 'all the parents want you the head to do is to make sure that the school is able to help the children to become good adults in future.'

<sup>135</sup> Another (RUS8) illuminated this issue by saying, 'The parents looks at the character of the head. As I'm staying here, how I interact with them they look at all these things.' He explained that when parents found that a particular headteacher had a questionable character they would not send their children to his/her school. When I probed to find out what he meant by a *questionable character*, he mentioned practices such as embezzling school fees, having sexual intercourse with school girls, fighting, drinking too much alcohol and flirting with other people's wives in the community.

Furthermore, four of them said parents of their children expected them to respond positively to every request they made, whether such requests were in the interest of the school's work or not. They explained that some parents wanted them to release their children during teaching/learning periods to undertake domestic or commercial duties at home, as and when they (parents) required such services. One (RUS2) said that on Tuesdays, which are market days in his community, some parents often went to seek permission from him so that their children could be allowed to go and sell their harvested food items in the market. When such requests were declined, he became an enemy. He remarked, 'Some of them come to the school to insult me for not allowing their children to stop studies to go and help them to sell things on the market day.' RUS9 also remarked, 'They expect that when they want their children to go to farm you will allow them. If not then you're a bad person.' In the same vein, RUS10, who heads an English & Arabic school said, 'Some of the parents who are Moslems also want me to close the school very early on Fridays so that their children could go to the mosque and pray [...]. This, at times, becomes a problem for me.'

### ***What urban headteachers say***

All the ten urban headteachers mentioned that parents expected them to ensure their (headteachers) schools achieved high academic results. One head (UBS1) explained, 'For this community, if parents know your results are not good they will remove their children to private schools.<sup>136</sup> We've been having those experiences in the past but now it's improving. [...] That's their priority.' One other (UBS9) said that the main objective of parents was to see their children learning and passing examinations and entering the JSS. She explained further:

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<sup>136</sup> Private schools in Ghana refer to schools that are not established nor owned by the State. They are either established by individuals, churches or corporate bodies and are run as business enterprises with the ultimate goal of achieving monetary profits. These are generally considered schools for the rich and high government officials in the country because their fees are very high. In addition, their academic results are often far better than that of the public schools.

In fact, they're always prepared to pay for extra classes so that teachers will teach their children so if there's no improvement in the children's performance then there's a problem. So, as the head, I have to make sure that I meet this parental expectation.

Furthermore, two heads (UBS2 and UBS3) said parents expected them to perform parental roles in the school. UBS2 said, 'Parents send their children to school because they have trust that they have somebody, like the headteacher, there who will care for them (*children*) as a parent [...].' UBS3 supported this with an illustration:

One time I had a child here who was suffering from the eye. The parents even didn't know. Her class teacher saw that even when the girl sat in front, she couldn't see anything. When I was told, I called the parent and asked her to send the child to the eye clinic, where it was found that the girl had a problem with her eye. [...] Her parents became so happy that we were able to notice the eye problem of the girl [...].

Others said parents expected them to lead exemplary lives for children to emulate. One UBS10 said that parents see the headteacher as a person who should live differently in the school and outside. She lamented, 'They forget that you're also human' and continued,

Even outside school, let's say you're at home, and someone provokes you and you become angry, people will ask, 'ah, is she not the headteacher? They behave as if, you the headteacher, you don't have feelings.

It was further explained that parents wanted headteachers to project every aspect of the Ghanaian cultural value through their behaviour: they were to create cultural awareness in their children. One (UBS5) remarked, 'Parents have their cultural values and they want you to inculcate into the children their cultural values; they want you to



show cultural example to children and train up the children so that they will fit into the society.' Two others (UBS6 and UBS8) respectively) corroborated, 'Parents expect you to train the school child to respect their parents and other elderly people in their community,' and, 'they expect the headteacher to teach their children to speak politely to people and know how to respond to traditional greetings correctly.' The table below sums up parental expectations as perceived by the heads:

**Table 9.2: Summary of headteachers' perspectives of parental expectations**

Rural	Urban
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ academic excellence: good exams results</li> <li>▸ pupils ability to speak English fluently</li> <li>▸ maintaining discipline</li> <li>▸ good behaviour : honesty, decency</li> <li>▸ compromising parental use of pupil labour during school hours</li> <li>▸ relaxing rules for school fees payment</li> <li>▸ playing parental role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▸ achieving academic excellence</li> <li>▸ playing parental role</li> <li>▸ promoting cultural awareness among pupils</li> <li>▸ relaxing rules for the collection of fees</li> <li>▸ excelling in sporting activities</li> <li>▸ trustworthiness, e.g. not embezzling school funds</li> </ul>

## Summary

A synthesis of the foregoing descriptive analysis seems to suggest that headteachers' exemplary life and their ability to promote academic excellence in schools are of importance to pupils, teachers and parents. In both rural and urban communities heads were expected to ensure that pupils performed distinctively in the annual inter-school performance exams the KEEA district conducts for pupils in English and mathematics.

## CHAPTER 10

# COMPETENCES FOR HEADSHIP TASK ACCOMPLISHMENT: WHAT THE HEADTEACHERS SAY

### Introduction

My analysis has so far shown that headteachers performed numerous duties. It has also emerged that the GES, pupils, parents and teachers expect the headteachers to lead their schools to achieve varied goals. For the headteacher to successfully perform these tasks and meet the expectations of the aforementioned groups, he/she requires some competences<sup>137</sup>. In this light, one research question that guided my study was: 'how do primary school headteachers within KEEA perceive competences they require for carrying out their daily headship tasks? This chapter presents my findings to this question. .

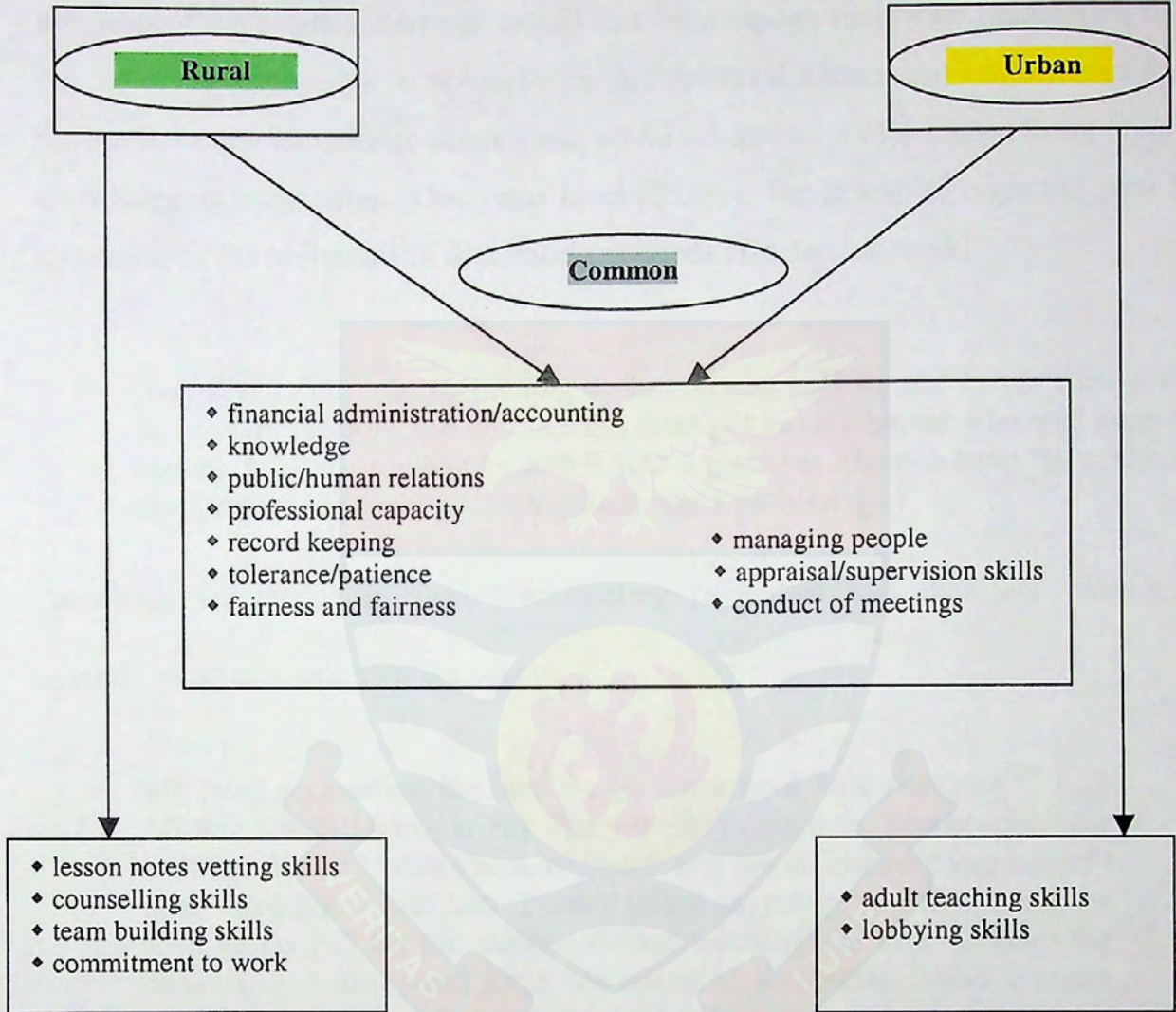
### Competences common to both rural and urban headteachers

In all, the 20 headteachers mentioned 16 competences that, in their opinion, a headteacher would require to make him/her succeed as a primary school head within the KEEA Educational District. Ten of them were common to both the rural and urban headteachers; four were specific to the rural headteachers and two were specific

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<sup>137</sup> The phenomenon of 'competence' has been discussed in detail in chapters two and 14. . Within the context of my study, the term is used to mean *personal, professional and academic qualities that, in the view of headteachers, they required for accomplishing their headship tasks at the primary school level.* In the education enterprise, the issue of *competence* has increasingly become crucial. At all levels of professional development in education, emphasis has been placed on the provision of competency-based training with the aim of equipping individuals with 'a set of behaviour patterns' that are necessary for accomplishing 'tasks and functions with competence' (Woodruffe, 1992).

to the urban headteachers. **Fig. 10.1** below illustrates the competences they mentioned:



**Figure 10.1: Headteachers' perspectives of competences required for task accomplishment in KEEA primary schools**

As shown in **Figure 10.1**, both rural and urban heads mentioned ten common competences.

### *Financial administration/accounting competence*

Fourteen of the headteachers mentioned that even though they were performing tasks that involved knowledge in accountancy and financial administration, some of them did not have any knowledge about these, while others had a very insignificant level of knowledge in accounting. One rural head (RUS7), for example, regretted how his ignorance of the rudiments of accounting methods affected his work,

You see, I didn't do accounting at the training college and I didn't know that in primary schools, the headteacher does not have a bursar who will keep the money for him so when I came it was a problem. How to keep the cashbook and prepare the accounts for auditing was a problem [...].

Acquiring knowledge in simple accounting principles was therefore considered crucial. As an example UBS8 argued:

We need accounting because we go for school fees checking<sup>138</sup> [...]. All this, I didn't know so my first year they called the headteachers for auditing. When I went I took my book and the officer said you haven't done anything. I told him, I don't know anything, you didn't tell me what to do [...] So the auditor started teaching me how to keep the books [...]. I also went for a workshop at Koforidua where I learnt something about how to keep the cashbook [...].

### *Knowledge competence*

Nine of the headteachers mentioned *knowledge* as another competence primary school heads need for accomplishing their tasks. One rural head, RUS3, said those who want to become headteachers 'have to acquire academic knowledge<sup>139</sup>.' He explained,

<sup>138</sup> 'School fees checking' refers to a practice in Ghana where headteachers, are required to submit their cashbooks and all other related documents to a team of auditors from the district education office for auditing.

<sup>139</sup> The need for the headteacher to acquire academic knowledge was justified: 'the head has to be very learned [...]. He has to be academically sound. Now we have many teachers who have GCE 'O' and 'A' levels so if the headteacher is not also somebody who has 'O' level or 'A' level it will be difficult for him. How can he supervise the teachers? So he must be academically sound' (RUS7).

As a head, you're working with different teachers [...] some might be talented and very knowledgeable about current affairs and if you, the head, you're not well equipped with knowledge, in fact you'll make a mess of yourself [...], you can't control them.

Being knowledgeable about headship and teaching/learning were also mentioned. As an example, RUS8 remarked, 'As a headteacher, you must know how to do your assessment, mark the register, keep records in addition to your administrative work.' Another (RUS9) said,

If you're a leader, you have to be knowledgeable [...]. You must get knowledge about headship. Especially, now that the Ministry is deciding to make headteachers mentors for teacher-trainees, the head requires much knowledge not only in educational leadership but also in the actual act of teaching.

One other (UBS2) stressed the importance of knowledge for the headteacher by remarking, 'As for knowledge, it's the power.' She recounted how her commitment to reading had helped in broadening her scope of knowledge, which she considered had been very helpful to her job. She explained, 'I'm just a form four leaver. I didn't go to any secondary school so the only thing I did to improve my knowledge was to read. [...] I also attended courses and seminars to improve my knowledge [...]. Another (UBS5) supported this by expressing the need for the headteacher to 'be current about new educational policies [...]'<sup>140</sup>.

### ***Public/human relations competence***

In addition to the aforementioned competences, eight headteachers suggested that they required competence in the establishment of good human relations within the

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<sup>140</sup> He illuminated the issue by saying, 'the headteacher must be very knowledgeable. For, instance, in the school here, the teachers when they come across any problem as far as teaching and learning is concerned, they fall on you the headteacher. They don't want the situation whereby they will come and you the head will tell them that you don't know. They have been facing such problems. Sometimes, I

school and with outsiders. One (RUS1) commented, 'you have to relate well with the community because the schools are community-based. You have to deal with the SMC, the PTA, [...] so that they can help in terms of need.' One other illustrated the need for skills in PR with his personal experience:

I'm an Ewe posted to this place, which is a Fante<sup>141</sup> dominated school. My first problem was how to get the support of the teachers. Once there was a case. One of the teachers is also an Ewe so I used to converse with him in the Ewe language and the other teachers became annoyed because they thought that teacher was giving me information about them. When this happened, I called a meeting and apologised and explained things to them that we should be one so that we can achieve the school's aims. I stopped speaking the Ewe language when they were around because they could not understand it. Since then we're fine and the work is going on well. So human relations is very necessary.

### *Record keeping competence*

Three of the headteachers mentioned the ability to keep proper records in the school as an essential competence. The said headteachers need it because they receive many circulars from the District Education Office, the District Assembly and other vital correspondence, which they needed to keep for future reference. One (RUS1) said that any teacher who intended to become a headteacher must first become familiar with the various records kept in the school, and then learn how to keep proper records. He remarked:

He should let somebody teach him how to fill the admission register and then how to use the logbook. There are certain records that he has to get in place and ensure that what he puts down tallies with the actual thing. You must know because nobody will prepare it for you. [...] Records such as visitors' book, how to close the register and how to use the cashbook.

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will be in the classroom and a teacher will come and say "Please, help me with this or that, I don't understand it." If I'm not able to help, the teacher will think I am not a competent headteacher [...]

<sup>141</sup> Ewes and Fantes are two minority tribes in Ghana. The Ewes are located in the Volta Region of the country while the Fantes are located in the Central Region.

### ***Tolerance and patience competence***

Five heads said tolerance and patience constituted a major competence that a headteacher needed in the course of performing his/her leadership tasks in the school. One (RUS4) said that, if a headteacher wanted to succeed as a head, then he/she 'must be tactful' in dealing with both teachers and the community. He remarked, 'You have to be tolerant in dealing with your teachers and the community if you want to succeed'. Another (RUS7) commented, 'At least, to become a headteacher, one has to be at least tolerant, else he cannot.' One other (RUS8) remarked, 'If you're going to be a head, you should have patience [...]' Yet one other (RUS9) said the work of headship involved a lot of internal and external pressure; hence as a headteacher 'you have to be tactful and patient [...].'<sup>142</sup>

### ***Fairness and firmness competence***

Three heads mentioned *fairness and firmness* as qualities headteachers needed in order that they could perform their leadership task competently. One (RUS4) remarked, 'I think you must be a disciplined, fair and firm person. With your teachers, the sellers and the pupils, I think you have to be fair and firm in dealing with them if you want to succeed as a headteacher.' UBS7 stressed that headship in the primary school required an individual who would not discriminate or show favouritism while dealing with people<sup>143</sup>.

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<sup>142</sup> She supported her view with a personal experience she had gained: 'I was with the teachers, we were all teaching in this school before I left for the university and returned as head. Some of them didn't take it lightly when they heard that I was coming back to the school as a headteacher. They were some sorts of jealous, I may say so some were initially not co-operating. They still wanted to maintain the same old relationship that they had with me when I was a teacher [...]. Some wouldn't take simple instructions from me. At times you hear some of them casting insinuations, which were very provocative [...]. In all this, I remained patient and tolerated everything. When they did all these and realised that I wasn't minding them, they stopped and now they're cooperating with me [...]'.

<sup>143</sup> She explained, 'to be a good head, when you get to the school, all the teachers should be your friends. Don't always call one teacher and always converse with him. If you do that, the others will say you are talking about them. If there's anything you want to talk about or laugh at, if you see that they are grouped, you go there and talk to them as a group [...] and laugh together.'

### *Professional capacity as competence*

Seven of the headteachers were of the opinion that any individual who aspired to become a headteacher must have received professional training in teaching. The person should be equipped with the skills of teaching, must be conversant with the school curriculum and must be equipped with the technique of managing pupil assessment in the school. One (RUS2) talked about the need for professional competence in terms of professional qualification and seniority in rank. He remarked:

He should have a professional capacity such as he should acquire at least Cert 'A',<sup>144</sup> and he should rise up to the rank of a senior officer let's say senior superintendent or principal superintendent because when you're a junior staff you can't get an insight of what you'll be doing when you become head [...]

Two others perceived headteachers' professional competence in terms of managing assessment. One (RUS1) said teachers who want to become headteachers must be trained in the management of pupil assessment before they assumed duty as heads. He explained,

They must know how to manage assessment, especially continuous assessment. It's very difficult. If you don't understand, you'll be writing figures that the children don't have. If the headteacher has competence in this, then he will be able to control and direct teachers when they have problems in their continuous assessment.

Supporting this, the other (UBS3) recounted some assessment-related difficulties she encountered when she first assumed duty as headteacher,

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<sup>144</sup> 'Cert 'A'' refers to an accredited Professional Teachers' Certificate awarded to individuals who have successfully graduated from an initial Post-Middle (*now phased out*) or an initial Post-Secondary Teacher Training College. The certificate is issued by the National Teacher Training Council (Ghana).



I lacked competence in managing pupils' assessment records when I became a head. By then I didn't know much about it. Though it's the work of the teachers, you as head must be skilled in it before you can supervise somebody in doing that.

Another perspective of the professional capacity mentioned was competence in techniques of pedagogy. As an example, one (UBS1) remarked:

You must be conversant with the curriculum yourself and know exactly what goes on in each classroom, what the teachers are expected to teach. Teachers can prepare the notes all right but if you don't know what goes into it they can put in anything for you [...] so you must know the curriculum yourself. [...] You must also know something about the teaching methods that is good for primary school teaching [...].

### ***Competence in managing people***

Three of the headteachers mentioned *ability to manage people* as one other competence headteachers must have. One (RUS3) said one has to be well versed in the psychology of human behaviour because 'as a human institution, we have about say six or thirteen teachers in the school, with different interests. You need to understand each of them so that you can work with them [...]. One other (UBS9) highlighted the fact that,

You must know how to manage people so that you achieve the aim of the school. [...] you have to have the right attitude for dealing with people: parents, teachers, the SMC and the pupils. If the headteacher knows how to handle his teachers, how to handle his pupils, how to handle the parents so that they will cooperate with him, then he will succeed. If not, there will always be confusion and the work cannot go on [...].

### *Competence in appraising teachers*

Two heads (RUS8 and UBS10) said techniques for appraising their teachers competently were a quality every headteacher must have. They said, as headteachers, they were required to appraise their teachers but the technique often brought conflicts between some headteachers and their teachers. RUS8 explained,

Now that we're doing this appraisal thing, it means that I should go to every class. [...] You go and sit down there and see the teacher teaching. Sometimes the GES send us some forms to fill on the teachers. If you don't know how to go about it well, it can lead to misunderstanding. So the headteacher must know how to administer appraisal [...]

### *Competence in conducting staff meetings*

Two of them identified *skills for conducting meetings* as a competence that headteachers must have. One (RUS1) said,

As a headteacher, I have to arrange meetings with the SMC, the PTA and also chair meetings of the teachers. At times when the PTA chairman is not around, I'm asked to chair the meeting. At first, it was very difficult for me. But now, because of the Headteachers' Handbook, I'm a bit okay [...]. So if any one wants to become head, then the person must have the ability of chairing meetings. In fact, he must be taught how to do it<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> The other (UBS4) supported the above view by stressing, 'How to hold meetings with the teachers on your staff successfully is a skill every headteacher must have.' She explained further, 'If you don't have the skills, you will not be happy at meetings especially when you have these too known young teachers attending the meeting. They will make things difficult for you. But if you have the competence, you can handle them well [...]'.

## Competences that were specific to rural headteachers

In addition to the common competences described above, the rural headteachers mentioned specific competences: *lesson notes vetting skills, counselling skills, team building skills and commitment to work.*

### *Competence in vetting lesson notes*

Two headteachers mentioned that there had been changes in the way lesson notes were prepared. One (RUS3) explained that headteachers required competence in vetting lesson notes so that the vetted notes could become helpful to both the teacher and the pupils. He illustrated this view with his personal experience as follows:

When I was first made headteacher, I vetted teachers' lesson notes by just going through them and marking. When I finished, I just gave it to the teacher. That's all. And some of the headteachers used to complain about the red marks in their books. I thought that was the right thing to do. I didn't know I had to get an exercise book or notebook and record the name of the teacher whose lesson notes I was vetting and write down all mistakes and suggestions down for us to discuss together after the vetting. It was after the WSD course in Koforidua that I got to know my mistakes. Since then, I changed my approach and I see that the teachers submit their lesson notes to me by themselves without me chasing them as I used to.

The other (RUS7) identified the vetting of lesson notes as the most challenging professional duty headteachers undertook as a primary school head. He remarked:

I'm expected to supervise the lesson notes preparation of my teachers and vet them but at the training college, we were not taught how to vet lesson notes. It's through experience that I'm now able to vet notes

confidently. I think people need to be taught how to do it so that they do it well.

### ***Competence in counselling***

One (RUS1) said, 'Here, people think the headteacher is full of wisdom so little thing they will call you to advise and counsel. If you don't know how to counsel, you will not be respected.' Another (RUS6) said that everybody in the village where his school is situated looked up to him for counselling when there was the need to make crucial decisions. He remarked,

Before I came here, I was a lay-preacher for my church and I had the chance of attending a lay-preachers' course in counselling. This training is what has helped me because the people here, both pupils and teachers, and the parents always come to me for counselling. At times, I take the initiative of counselling some of the parents, especially about the need to support their girls' education [...]. Some teachers too have problems with women, money, drinking and others, all of them I counsel. Just imagine what would have been my position, if I hadn't training in counselling [...] so every headteacher must be competent in counselling.

### ***Competence in team building***

One (RUS2) said what the community expects the school to do was so numerous and time-consuming that the headteacher alone could not meet those expectations. The head had to depend on the support of his/her teachers, pupils, parents as well as the SMCs. This situation, according to him, called for team-building. He remarked,

In fact, in the school you're doing teamwork and you the headteacher you have to build it. You have to co-operate with the teachers so that, together, you can achieve the school's goals.' Without teamwork, your work will be difficult that's why you need skills for building a team in the school.

### ***Competence of commitment***

Two of them identified *commitment* as another competence that a headteacher required for achieving the school's goals. One (RUS3) said that if someone wants to become a successful headteacher, then 'that person should be committed. If you're not committed, you can make a mess of the whole school system.' One other (RUS6) said, 'Another competence you need is commitment because without commitment, you can't do the work [...] there are some things in the school you cannot do if you're not committed.'

### **Competences that were specific to urban headteachers**

The urban headteachers mentioned specific competences such as: *lobbying for funds and techniques for teaching adults*. One (UBS1) said the school needed many things, which required a great deal of money, but the grant voted to the school was not sufficient. It was therefore essential that headteachers explored other sources for funding. She explained,

You need to know how to raise funds to support your school because everything that you do will depend on money. Even in relating well with the staff. Sometimes, it's possible for you have a staff meeting and give them some snack so that when you call for the meeting again they will be happy to attend. [...] You cannot depend on government for everything you need for your school. You need a skill in fundraising [...].

### ***Competence in teaching adults***

Three head teachers said they were required to organise school-based in-service training for their teachers. In addition, their schools had been selected as mentoring centres for practising student teachers. Consequently, they were of the view that there was the need for headteachers to have competence in the teaching of adults. One

(UBS1) said, ‘you must know how to teach adults because it’s part of your job as a headteacher. For in-service training, for example, the teaching method is different from the teaching of pupils. So headteachers have to be trained so that they acquire the skills of teaching experienced people, like teachers. Another (UBS5) corroborated this by stressing,

People think, once you have been trained as a teacher and you have experience in teaching, you must be able to teach everybody, children, adults but it’s not true. You need special skills for handling adults. Without the correct skills, your teachers will always laugh at you when you teach them [...].

## Summary

A synthesis of the responses shows that the headteachers had varied opinions on the degree of importance they attached to the competences they mentioned. All of them, however, identified financial administration. The table below illustrates the degree of importance:

**Table 10.1: Frequency of competences mentioned by headteachers**

Competences mentioned	No. of headteachers
➤ Financial administration	14
➤ Knowledge	9
➤ Public/human relations*	8
➤ Professional capacity	7
➤ Record keeping	6
➤ Tolerance/patience*	5
➤ Fairness/firmness*	3
➤ Managing people*	3
➤ Skills for vetting lesson notes	3
➤ Skills for teaching adults	3
➤ Appraising teachers*	2
➤ Conduct of staff meetings	2
➤ Commitment to work	2
➤ Team building	1
➤ Counselling skills	1

\* *Public/human relations, tolerance/patience, fairness/firmness, managing people and, appraising teachers seem to deal directly with handling people. I have therefore used **managing people** to cover all these in chapter 19.*

## CHAPTER 11

# HEADTEACHERS' VIEWS ABOUT THE EXISTING HEADTEACHER TRAINING SCHEME IN GHANA

### Introduction

Training has been identified as the major tool used in achieving professional development; (Torrington and Hall, 1998:433; Clift, in Staffing.IT, Sept. 2001:6). Hence one cannot talk about professional development without mentioning training. In this light, I explored how the headteachers themselves viewed the state of the professional development training programmes the MOE had designed for them. The exploration was guided by a research question: What do KEEA headteachers perceive to be the ideal professional training programme for primary school headteachers in Ghana?<sup>146</sup> This chapter provides a descriptive analysis of the headteachers' responses.

### The significance of training for primary headship practice

All of the 20 KEEA headteachers acknowledged that training was indispensable in the process of developing primary school headteachers in Ghana. One (RUS1) commented, 'If you don't have any training, you'll be found wanting.' One other (RUS2) argued, 'Education has no end and, in fact, always you have to be current with issues [...]; you have to be abreast with new ideas. It's training that will help you.' Another [RUS4] dilated on the dynamism of society and, further, explained that

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<sup>146</sup> Specific questions I used in exploring the research question focused on the significance of training for primary school headship, the number of headship training courses the headteachers had received, how helpful the contents of the training were to their work, limitations of the training programmes, if any, and what should be done to improve the professional development of primary heads.



changes that occur in the society affect the school. 'As a result', he argued, 'the school's administration keeps changing, it's refresher courses: the short, short training, that helps you to cope with the new changes [...].' Another (RUS5) stressed, 'In fact, those who argue that one doesn't need training to become a primary school head are lying. Everybody needs training.'<sup>147</sup> He illustrated his view with the following argument:

Assuming you're appointed headteacher today, if you haven't headed a school before, there're certain difficulties you're going to face. But at least, if you studied under someone who is a headteacher or you consulted someone who is a headteacher to coach you, you'll gain some form of training to reduce the difficulties. So it means, training is important and, as headteachers, we need it [...].

In the opinion of the headteachers interviewed, training plays a major role in their task accomplishment. Hence, training of headteachers should not be taken for granted if they are expected to achieve the goals of the schools they lead. Given this consensus among the headteachers regarding the relevance of training for their professional practice, I explored further their perceptions about the existing headteacher training schemes in Ghana.

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<sup>147</sup> UBS1 elaborated, 'It's true some people think, as for primary school, you don't need to train people in leadership before they succeed as heads. But let me tell you, Mr. Oduro, they're not aware that much is done in the primary before he enters the tertiary institution; primary school alone takes six years. Any mistake at the primary school, will affect him at the JSS and the SSS level. [...] How on earth can you make the difference when you don't attach importance to the training of the headteacher at the primary level? The primary school is the foundation. Out of the 12 years that the child spends in school [...]. You need the cream of professionals to be in the primary school to manage it. So training of the primary head is very important [...]'.

## Perceptions about existing training schemes

In all, 18 headteachers (ten urban and eight rural) said they had received some sort of management-related in-service training (INSET) since they were appointed as heads. Two from the rural schools, however, said they had not received any form of headship-related training since their appointment. One, RUS4, remarked (with a facial expression suggesting regret), 'I've not had any training apart from what I had from the training college. I only attended an interview, which I successfully passed and was made a headteacher, that's all [...].' A second (RUS6) responded, 'Oh, zero, nothing! I've the headteacher's Handbook but no training.' He further remarked:

It is the handbook that has been helping me. If you look into it, you get guidelines on how to collect school fees, how to relate to the SMC/PTA, how to chair PTA meetings, how to deal with punishments, a lot of things. So I only study the manual and follow the guidelines for my work [...] no training.

## Views from those who have received headship-related training

Those who said they had received some training explained that the training sessions were in the form of short workshops and seminars, and were organised for them by the MOE in conjunction with foreign bodies such as the World Bank, UNESCO, the ILP and the WSD. All of them said the contents of the training programmes they had received were very relevant to their professional needs.

### *Rural headteachers*

All the eight headteachers said the INSET they had received was very helpful to them. Among other things, they said the training sessions had helped them to know how to use the Headteachers' Handbook, how to keep the cashbook, how to conduct staff meetings, how to manage people and other resources, how to vet teachers'

lesson notes, how to promote school-community relations and how to keep the environment clean. As an example, one (RUS2) remarked:

We were trained in the managerial aspect of the school programme, how to manage a school, how to relate the school and the community, accounting [...]. It has helped me a lot pertaining to how to handle certain things in the school, even the preparation of lesson notes and how to deal with the community and then teachers as well [...].

Some of them, however, complained about the timing of the training programmes, and wished they had been provided for them prior to their assumption of duty. As an example, one head argued (RUS5), 'In fact, if I had the training before I took over as head, my school would have been at the top of the English reading test [...]'. Another (RUS6) explained that receiving the training before assuming duty would have helped him better because:

It was my first appointment so I had little idea about the duties and problems<sup>148</sup> [...]. I didn't have any experience. I just came from the training college and I was told to head this school. I had no idea about how to go about things.

Apart from the problem of timing, some of the heads criticised the duration of the training sessions. They regretted that the periods were rather short. This is reflected in comments such as, 'I wish the training programmes<sup>149</sup> had been regular and longer,

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<sup>148</sup> In all, seven headteachers (four rural and three urban) said they were not aware of the nature of the tasks and challenges involved in school leadership prior to their assumption of duty. They said they found things difficult. One (UBS5), for example, remarked, 'I was appointed all of a sudden to be the head, which I wasn't expecting. I didn't know many things involved in it. For instance, I didn't know keeping financial records or preparing for auditing was part of the headteacher's job'. Some coped with the situation through the strategy of 'trial and error,' while others said they gained awareness by consulting other headteachers. As one put it, 'At times I travel to Kwesi Edum (name of a village) to consult an experienced headteacher friend about things. Sometimes too, I do trial and error'.

<sup>149</sup> He explained 'I've attended many training workshops. One was for World Bank-sponsored schools and I was lucky to have my school as a World Bank sponsored school [...]. The other was an in-service training for all headteachers in the district, which I attended on two occasions. I've also attended in-service training on the teaching of reading skills'. Illuminating the problem, another (RUS8) argued that mistakes were simply perpetuated if there was no opportunity for them to be recognised and addressed before they became habitual. He remarked, 'the training programmes have helped me a lot. I didn't know anything about accounting, how to use the imprest, use the fees, I didn't know anything about it but because my school is a WSD pilot school, I was asked to attend two courses at Koforidua

the training period was too short: ten days, at times two weeks' (RUS3), 'it was good but we didn't have longer time to learn more [...]' (RUS1), and 'if it had been about three or four weeks, it'll have helped me greatly but it was better than none'. Another headteacher, RUS9, who said she had been head for two years and was the leader of the DTST,<sup>150</sup> said she had received four types of in-service headship-related training, each lasting between five and ten days, since her appointment. When I asked if she thought the duration of the training sessions was sufficient enough, she responded in the negative: 'No, I think the WSD should have extended the period to about three weeks. Even that would not be enough. The training needs more time.' When I further asked about the ways in which she thought the INSET<sup>151</sup> she had received had helped in developing in her competences she required for accomplishing her task as a head, she responded:

Even though, the teachers had been preparing lesson notes, there were certain things that I was overlooking in terms of vetting but after the course, I've known the best way of ensuring that my teachers prepare good lesson notes and how to supervise the teachers when they're

and I was taught all these things. [...] also the District Office organised a workshop on appraisal for us. We also have this cluster-based training for heads, and I attend that one too [...]. But the WSD training has really helped me [...]. The only thing is that the training was organized late; it'll have been more helpful if I had it earlier [...] I had made many mistakes before the training [...]

<sup>150</sup> DTST stands for District Teacher Support Team. The team is responsible for organizing cluster school-based training for teachers within the KEEA Educational district.

<sup>151</sup> It emerged from the responses of the headteachers that INSET programmes in which they had participated in were all out-school programmes initiated and controlled by external bodies: GES/GNAT/foreign bodies. None of them was an in-school INSET programme. Moreover, they were more skewed toward pedagogic knowledge as exemplified in the statements 'I attended one on techniques for teaching how to read' (RUS5) and 'I remember attending this trainer of trainer course in Kumasi where we were taught how to teach English as a second language' (UBS4). Although one may wonder what headteachers need pedagogic knowledge for, the practice was found to be very relevant to the tasks performed by the KEEA headteachers because they taught as well. This highlights another perspective of training for headship.

teaching. As I mentioned earlier, I was having problem with filling the cashbook but after the course I think I'm able to do it now [...].

### *Urban headteachers*

The urban headteachers, like their eight rural colleagues, commended the INSET they had received. One (UBS5) emphasised, 'At first, I didn't know anything about how to prepare for auditing so I had to consult someone for help. But when we attended the seminar on how to keep financial records, I think I've gained a lot. Next time there's any auditing, I won't be shivering'. Another remarked, 'We were trained in a lot of helpful things: how to supervise your teachers during teaching hours and supervise their preparation of the expanded scheme of work' (UBS6). Another (UBS1) said that within three years of her appointment, she had attended about seven INSET programmes organised by the USAID and the GES (because her school had been selected for piloting a USAID project) in Ghana. She said, she had received training in the use of the Headteachers' Handbook<sup>152</sup> that was also helpful because, 'I use the Handbook as my Bible. I refer to it often; it has become my guide'. She appreciated the relevance of all the training sessions she had attended.

The urban heads also criticised the duration and timing of the INSET programmes. Two examples of comments that echo this are: 'Everything was in a rush because of time and I didn't follow many of the things they talked about' (UBS3). Differently put, 'The workshops were practical and I learnt many lessons, which are helpful to

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<sup>152</sup> DTST stands for District Teacher Support Team. The team is responsible for organising cluster school-based training for teachers within the KEEA Educational district.

<sup>152</sup> Helping headteachers to know how to use the Headteachers' Handbook seemed to be the main focus of the GES initiated INSET programmes for the headteachers. It was commonly referred to by all the headteachers as one of the benefits they had derived from the INSET programmes. UBS2 for example, said she had, since the introduction of the FCUBE programme, attended many short courses: 'a course at Mfantipim, one at Adisadel, one at KEEA here, and then one at Kumasi on English teaching, so as for the courses, I've been attending and they have upgraded my knowledge.' When I probed into the relevance of the courses she had attended, she responded, 'They focused on school administration, the way the headteacher should interact with the teachers, and how we should use the Headteachers' Handbook. I have gained a lot from them, especially the one on the Handbook [...].'

me, but they were very short: ten days so things were done quick, quick' (UBS10).

Another (UBS5) complained:

I didn't understand why they should wait till there is a change before they train us; they should have given us the training even before we started our work. I was appointed all of a sudden to be had, which I wasn't expecting. I didn't know many things involved in it. For instance, I didn't know keeping financial records or preparing for auditing was part of the headteacher's job. Moreover, the workshops are organised for a period of one day, sometimes two weeks. It's too short; we don't cover a lot of things.

Two others criticised the contents of the INSET programmes they had attended. One (UBS8) did not understand why they should be skewed towards the acquisition of pedagogic knowledge. She remarked 'the training was interesting but it focused on classroom teaching, not the actual administration thing I do [...]' (UBS8). The other (UBS7), queried the many-sided nature of the programmes. She said she had attended a number of training sessions but, 'not specifically on administration':

At times, a matter crops up and they call the headteachers together and they give us training. These do not specifically related to our administration of the school [...]; it covers many things. For example, they have once called us for a short training in finance when many of us found it difficult to prepare for auditing [...]. Also, when there's going to be sports' festival, they call us with our sports secretaries to train us in what we should do [...]. Before they introduced the FCUBE too, they invited us to a short seminar on teaching techniques and lesson notes preparation [...].

## **Ways of improving existing training scheme: what the headteachers Say**

The following suggestions were made by the headteachers:

### ***Duration and regularity of INSET programmes***

Increasing the duration and frequency of the INSET programmes was a common strategy suggested by the headteachers for improving their professional development. One (RUS1) remarked, 'I think if the GES can arrange with the organizers to make the training at least once every term and also increase the time, it'll help us [...].' One other, UBS4, remarked,

You see, if you want people to learn something and practice then you must make sure that they actually understand what you're giving them. This means, it must have time and not that you push everything to them in a very short time. If the course say took about at least three months during the long break, then it'll be more helpful. [...] The GES and the Ministry only think about the money aspect but we need proper training, we primary headteachers [...].

One other, UBS10, said if the GES really wanted primary school heads to develop the leadership skills and the confidence they required for carrying out their headship duties then, 'longer in-service training is really needed because the ones we've had were very short [...].' Another, UBS5, remarked, 'I think when they extend the period for the in-service training we attend, we'll be able to cover a whole lot of things, and it'll help us [...].' Yet another, (RUS7), argued, 'as a headteacher, at least, there should be courses for you at least once every year to improve your knowledge.'

### *Timing of training programmes: A case for PRESET*

Eleven of them thought that the performance of primary heads could improve if they were adequately prepared through training before they were allowed to assume duty in their assigned schools. One, RUS2, remarked, 'it will help if teachers who want to become headteachers are trained before they are made heads. [...] Training before taking up the task of a headteacher will help the headteacher to become more confident' and will make the head 'more competent to handle most affairs in the school' (RUS9)<sup>153</sup>

Two others emphasised the financial aspects of their training. As an example, one (RUS8) attributed the increasing cases of headteachers' embezzlement of school funds to the lack of pre-service training: '

If you're not given any training and they say go and head a school, you don't know anything. That's why the embezzlement of school funds is rampant because we are not taught how to manage the resources before we become heads. It's good that sometimes the headteacher is called to attend workshops but that one you're already in. It's good; but training before you come in will help more.

One other (UBS9), made a strong case for pre-service training in terms of mentoring and skills:

Now, they're saying that we headteachers will be mentors for students in the training colleges in this in-out-in method of training teachers<sup>154</sup>.

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<sup>153</sup> This head supported her argument with her personal experience, 'I'm saying this because [...] I took a course in educational management as part of my B.Ed degree in primary education. This exposed me to so many things the initial teacher-training course did not introduce me to. This has placed me in a more advantageous position ahead of my colleagues because I feel more confidence in handling issues more than many of them. That's why I've been made the DTST leader in the district'.

<sup>154</sup> The 'in-out-in' approach to the initial training of post-secondary teachers in Ghana is a scheme that the MOE introduced in 2000. It seeks to make the training of teachers more practice-oriented than theoretical. Under the scheme, teacher trainees spend the first year of training in residence, the second



If the headteachers are not trained before they take up their posts, how can they make the mentoring work succeed when the student teachers come to their schools? [...] Actually, it'll help if teachers should be given some sort of training in management and leadership before they're appointed heads [...]. The GES should train people for primary school headship just as it is doing for SSS heads. They shouldn't think anybody at all can be a good primary school head just because that person has long teaching experience. [...] they must be trained before they're allowed to head [...].

When I asked if the educational administration course offered at the initial teacher training college could not be considered as a pre-service preparation they had received for their headship responsibilities, all of them responded in the negative<sup>155</sup>.

### A case for INSET

In contrast, four heads argued in favour of INSET. One, RUS10, explained that although he would strongly support pre-service training programmes for those who are appointed headteachers straight from the initial teacher training college, he did not think it should be a precondition for appointing experienced teachers as heads. He explained:

If someone has gained a long experience as a classroom teacher, such as two to five years' experience or more, that person would get knowledge about leadership through classroom management and interaction with his headteacher. What he'll need is refresher course to strengthen the experience he has. The newly trained teachers who are posted straight to the rural schools to head, they need the pre-service training because they don't have any experience<sup>156</sup>.

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year in a school for practical work, and the third year in residence. Headteachers are required to be mentors for the teacher-trainees attached to their schools.

<sup>155</sup> One (UBS7) argued, 'it's true, at the training college we're given some educational administration courses, but that one it is different from when you come to the field. That one, you're only told something about the administration. It is focused on classroom management and how to control the class. Now like I said earlier, the in-service training I received has helped me with basic accounting. The training college didn't teach me this. That's why as for me I think new training should be given to teachers before they become head teachers. It'll help very much'.

<sup>156</sup> I posed another question to probe into his response: 'Don't you think the in-service training you've so far had would have been more beneficial to you if you had received it before your appointment as head?' His response was both in terms of cost efficiency and differentiation by length of experience: 'I agree, pre-service training would have benefited me more. But, if you have pre-service training at all, you still need the in-service. That's why, if you're experienced, you must go straight to in-service training. One it saves cost. Also, I don't think pre-service training or in-service training alone will

Another, RUS10 argued that providing good INSET for heads and paying them better salaries would be a more effective use of finance than spending on pre-service training:

Headteachers already have the professional qualification. Some have the teachers' 'A' 4yr others have the 'A' 3yr Post-Secondary Certificate. I even know some who are first-degree holders and few who hold diploma certificates. What other professional certificate do we need? Once you complete a teacher training college, no matter the level, you have a professional certificate; so as for me, I don't think we should look for pre-service training for another professional certificate [...] for teachers who want to be headteachers. The money for doing that can be used in paying them higher salaries and they'll perform well [...].

Some heads also raised doubts whether pre-service training *per se* could ensure qualitative performance of primary school headteachers. Pointing to the theory and practice gap, one (UBS1) explained:

I've had the experience of acquiring both academic and professional training at the tertiary level, with much emphasis on educational leadership. These have really exposed me to theories about leadership. Yet, when I became a headteacher, I saw that they couldn't help me solve some of the challenges I faced. It was the in-service training, the workshops; I attended that helped me to understand what is really involved in primary headship, and how to handle them. I agree that pre-service training is good, but not in our case. I think pre-service training will be a waste on the already limited funds at the disposal of the GES because every teacher is introduced to some level of educational administration at the initial teacher training college. What

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make the headteacher a good head. I don't think so! What we need most is proper in-service training and good salary. I believe with these two, things will be okay in the management of our primary schools.

we need is in-service training so we could build on what we've already learnt<sup>157</sup>.

## Argument for PRESET-INSET

In spite of the foregoing contrasting argument, majority of them said, given the opportunity, they would have opted for a combination of both pre-service and in-service training. Referring to the school leadership component of his initial teacher training courses, as an example, one (RUS1) remarked:

I won't say it totally equipped me but it gave me the foundation. It was a pre-service training; that's why I don't think we need it again. What we need is proper in-service training. What I learnt from the training college has helped me to know a little bit of what is on the ground, the challenges and problems so I need the in-service training to help me to improve upon what I've learnt. Pre-service training has to go with the in-service.

### *Certificate in educational leadership*

To a question I posed asking what their reaction would be if the Ministry of Education should decide that in future the appointment of primary school heads would be conditional upon acquisition of a certificate in educational leadership, I got mixed responses. On the one hand, six heads thought acquiring a certificate in educational leadership; *administration or management* would be a welcome policy and a way by which headteachers' professional development could be made more meaningful. One,

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<sup>157</sup>One (RUS6), said while he acknowledged the indispensability of training in the professional development of headteachers, he did not think primary school headteachers required pre-service training in order to succeed as heads. He illustrated the point with his personal experience. He said even though he had not received any leadership-related training since his appointment, what he had learnt at the training college and the primary school headteachers' handbook had helped him to tackle some of the leadership problems he had encountered. He further argued, 'from my experience, what will help is in-service training because the basic teachings in administration are already given at the training college. You also have the handbook to guide you. [...]'

UBS4 said, 'if the Ministry could come out with such a policy, it'll make the head proud that he has a certificate to prove his knowledge about headship [...].' She, however, observed:

But I think that alone should not be used to appoint primary school headteachers because, unlike the SSS, in primary school you need someone who has a motherly feeling and have love for children and also patience and at the same time self-discipline. If these are considered in addition with the certificate then it'll be fine [...].

Others stressed that certificates would serve as evidence for a headteachers' intellectual capacity and also enhance confidence. One (UBS6) said, 'A certificate in educational administration will help because it'll help the head to improve intellectually, thus, academically you will be good and administratively too you'll be good. It'll also make you more confident [...].' One other (UBS9) said, 'I'll agree because the certificate will show that the person has really learnt about administration but not that he has only got a long teaching experience.' She was, however, quick to add, 'But the Ministry shouldn't make certificate the only thing because that will not help us much. The experience and character of those who want to be appointed should also be looked at before they're appointed [...]'<sup>158</sup>.

Another (UBS10) supported the view but also advised against the Ministry depending solely on certificates in the appointment of primary heads. He remarked,

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<sup>158</sup>Others did not think certificates were important at all. One (RUS6) argued, 'If it's for the secondary school, I'll agree, but not the primary school. I think primary school headship is not all that involving as compared to the secondary school level. That's why over there they require a high level of academic qualification and other relevant certificates. In the primary school it's not very involving that's why a Cert. 'A' teacher straight from the training college, like my case, can even handle. I don't have any certificate in administration but I see I'm doing well as a headteacher. At the secondary school because you have a lot of people to supervise, teaching and non-teaching staff, and a whole lot of advanced leadership challenges, that's why certificate is necessary, but here our teachers' certificate is alright [...].'

I've no doubt that certificates will help headteachers' performance in school because it'll make the headteacher more confident and, also, it'll serve as a motivation for them. But I'll not wholly agree that certificate becomes the sole yardstick for appointing headteachers, because a professional certificate in educational management will not automatically make the headteacher 100 percent perfect and effective. [...] The experience and the rank of the person as we have it now should be considered in addition to the certificate [...].

### *School leadership practice through attachment*

Observing and learning from what heads do, was also seen as a prerequisite. Two heads thought school leadership could improve if student teachers were offered the opportunity to gain school leadership experience while in the training college. They said that incorporating leadership practice in the normal teaching practice programme of training colleges could do this. One (RUS3) explained:

Getting to a job and you don't know how to start is a problem. [...] I didn't have a problem with classroom teaching as I had with headship because in the college, I had teaching practice and got practical experience of teaching, in addition to what they taught me in the classroom. But I didn't have any practices in school leadership, so there was a problem. Practical experience counts a lot because it helps you to get a first hand experience in the field before you get into it. Those who want to be heads should therefore be given the chance to practice leadership in schools before they start and it'll help [...] <sup>159</sup>.

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<sup>159</sup>The other (RUS5) corroborated this by advocating that teacher-trainees should be attached to schools to enable them to understudy the way headteachers run their schools over a period of time. He commented: 'it'll be good if at the training college, we're made to be in some schools to observe and learn how headteachers do things for about three weeks just as we do in teaching practice. This would make the educational administration the college teaches more practical and meaningful to the teachers. They'll get the actual knowledge and understand things better and they won't find things strange when they finally become heads [...].'

### *Encouraging participants' active involvement in training programmes*

Furthermore one, (UBS3), said if the professional development training programmes the GES organises for headteachers would be more beneficial to them, then:

More opportunities should be given to the headteachers to talk about their experiences to one another and discuss them. This will make the training interesting and one can learn from what the other headteachers say [...]. It should not always be lecture, lecture [...]

### **Summary**

The descriptive analysis shows that more urban headteachers, who participated in my study, had acquired headship-related training than their colleagues in the rural areas, in a ratio of 5:4. Whereas every individual of the 10 urban school headteachers had participated in at least one INSET training session since his/her appointment as head, two (out of the 10 rural headteachers) had not received any training. The training sessions were mainly foreign initiated, and were organised in conjunction with the Ministry of Education (MOE).

On the whole, the 18 heads who had received some sort of training found the contents of the training very relevant and helpful to their headship tasks. The main weaknesses they identified with the training programmes were that:

- ❑ the duration was too short; hence benefits were limited;
- ❑ the training was *ad hoc* by nature; hence it was not a regular feature of their professional development; and
- ❑ the timing of the training programmes was too late; hence they were ignorant about many things they should have known before commencing work as headteachers

On the whole, the headteachers felt that the professional training they receive could be of more benefit to them if the sessions were organized frequently. They also felt the duration of the in-service programmes needed to be longer than the existing maximum of two weeks. They were divided as to whether emphasis should be placed on PRESET or INSET programmes in their professional development, yet the majority of them felt the best approach would be a combination of both PRESET and INSET. Furthermore, the need to grant prospective heads the chance to gain practical experience in leadership through attachment programmes was recommended.



## **PART 3**

### **DISCUSSION: INTERPRETING AND THEORISING ABOUT THE DATA**





## CHAPTER 12

### EMERGING THEMES AND HOW THEY WERE IDENTIFIED

Coffey and Aitkinson (1996:139-141) have argued that 'having ideas and theorising about our data are central to the research endeavour.' They explain that good research does not involve 'rigorous data analysis alone', but also 'their interpretation' which 'goes well beyond the technical categorization and description of the data themselves.' The writers stress:

The real work of analysis and interpretation lies precisely in those intellectual operations that go beyond the data. Our important ideas are not "in" the data, and however hard we work, we will not find those ideas simply by scrutinizing our data ever more obsessively. We need to work at analysis and theorizing, and we need to do the intellectual, imaginative work of ideas in parallel to the other tasks of data management. There is, or should be, a constant interplay between the ideas we work with [...] and the detail of form and content in the data themselves. (p. 154-155)

In view of the foregoing, I went beyond the categories that emerged from the data to identify themes to guide the discussion. Since 'generation of ideas can never be dependent on the data alone' (ibid. p.153), I generated the themes from four main sources: the research questions, the related literature, the interview data and, in some cases, my personal assumptions. I considered my personal ideas relevant to the process of determining the themes because in qualitative research, the researcher is actively involved 'in making decisions', which always 'involve individual choices, and often evolve from previous personal experiences and commitments' (Walford, 2001:99). Hence, it was impossible for me to distance myself totally from the factors

that influenced the process of extrapolating the themes. Cresswell (1994:163) confirms this impossibility by observing that, although every researcher is ethically bound to ensure objectivity, researchers invariably bring into the research process biases, which shape the way they view and understand the data collected and the way experiences are interpreted. Thus the ideal qualitative researcher becomes immersed in the phenomenon of interest (Sherman and Webb, 1995:26), and as Denzin and Lincoln (1994:3) put it, 'there is no value-free science.'<sup>160</sup>

To reduce the degree of my personal influence on the choice of the themes, I ensured that inferences I made from the data were relevant to the objectives of the study by constantly cross-checking them with the literature, research questions and the interview data. **Table 12.1** below shows the themes and their sources:



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<sup>160</sup> It is, perhaps, for this reason that Borg (1993:197) urges researchers to make explicit their personal values or ideas instead of avoiding them. Schoor (1983, cited in Seroka, 1999:113) also stresses that researchers are ethically obliged to disclose to their readers areas of their research that were influenced by personal ideas.

**Table 12.1: Emerging themes and sources that influenced their identification.**

Themes \ Sources	Research Question	Interview Data	Literature	Personal Idea
<b>Cultural and political contexts affecting the concept of school leadership</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Competence and competencies for headship practice</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Determinants of school headship tasks: Interplay of the school's mission, head's vision and internal and external expectations</b>	✓	✓	✓	
<b>The headteacher as a role model</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>The social constructions of gender responsibilities in primary school headship</b>		✓	✓	✓
<b>Recruiting, selecting and the professional development of headteachers: what works?</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓

The boxes ticked in the table shows the sources of the themes. Each theme has been discussed in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER 13

# THE CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS AFFECTING THE CONCEPT OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

### Introduction

One concept that has increasingly emerged in contemporary thinking about quality improvement in school education is 'leadership'. Studies have substantially identified it as a determining factor in the achievement of the school's goals. Beare *et al.* (1989:99), for example, observe that, 'outstanding leadership has invariably emerged as a key characteristic of outstanding schools'; hence, 'those seeking quality in education must ensure its presence.' Gray (1990:206) also emphasises that 'the importance of the headteacher's leadership is one of the clearest of the messages from school effectiveness research'. Southworth (1995:ii) further affirms that studies concerned with school culture (e.g. Nias *et al.*, 1989), instructional leadership (e.g. Beare *et al.*, 1989; Jenkins, 1991), and the management of change (e.g. Fullan, 1991; Nias, *et al.* 1992) consistently stress the central importance of the head's *leadership*. These suggest that no change in schools could be successfully implemented without *leadership*. But, are people's understandings of school leadership the same in different political and cultural contexts?

This chapter discusses some views that the KEEA headteachers held about school leadership in the context of the cultural politics environment in which they operate. Firstly, I compare and contrast the headteachers' views about school leadership with the relevant literature in the light of the terms: *administration, management* and

*leadership*. Specifically, I attempt to theorise about the frequency with which each of these terms was used by the headteachers and in the literature. Secondly, I discuss, with the support of relevant literature, meanings the headteachers attached to the concept of school leadership. Thirdly, I discuss the political and cultural contexts that might have influenced the headteachers' understanding of school leadership with the support of relevant literature. I conclude the chapter with a summary of major issues emerging from the discussion.

### **School headship: is it administration, management or leadership?**

As described in chapter 6, headteachers were more familiar with the term *administration*, followed by *management* with *leadership* being the least used term. Yet, the majority of them tended to use the three terms interchangeably in describing how they understood school leadership. Three of them did not use the terms interchangeably and two did not use the terms *administration* and *management* at all while describing their work. The remaining 15 headteachers either mixed the use of the terms *administration* and *management* in their description, or interchanged the use of *leadership*, *administration* and *management*. Some of them considered *management* and *administration* as functions of *leadership*; while others felt *leadership* was a function of *management*. For instance, one (UBS1) argued that every head of the school is a leader who carries out *leadership* roles involving *management* and *administration* and that one could not talk about school leadership without making reference to *management* and *administrative* duties (p.91). In contrast, others viewed leadership as a function of management. For example, RUS6 who described headship as 'managing affairs of the school,' explained further that, 'as a manager', she was appointed to 'lead the school.'

On the whole, I found a pattern in the headteachers' responses, which took the following form. When a head started explaining headship from the perspective of say *administration*, he/she could not avoid clarifying one's ideas without making

reference to either *management* or *leadership* or both terms. In the same vein, when a head used say *management* as the starting point of his/her discourse about headship, words related to either *administration* or *leadership* or both emerged. The same happened when they talked about 'leadership'. Thus, no matter which term a head preferred using, the discourse tended to encompass the other terms.

This trend is paralleled in Limerick and Anderson's (1999) research-based article on *Female Administrators and School Based Management (SBM)* in the United States. Even though the writers' focus was on educational administration, the term was interchanged with *management* and *leadership* in their discourse. In paragraphs one and two of their section, 'SBM and Challenging Discourse of Educational Administration' (p.403), the writers concentrated on traditional discourses in 'educational administration', with no reference to 'educational management', yet they used the latter to refer to the former in the subsequent paragraph (three). I present the sequence in the table below:

**Table 13.1: Evidence of Limerick and Anderson's use of educational administration and educational management interchangeably.**

Paragraph	Sequence of extracted statements indicating interchange use of terms
One	Traditional discourses in <i>educational administration</i> focus on hierarchical systems of coordination and control. [...]
Two	This discourse of <i>educational administration</i> is under challenge both in rhetoric of SBM and from women leaders
Three	As SBM had become a major context in which they now work we were interested to see if its introduction could provide a means of dismantling the dominant discourse about <i>educational management</i> described above.

Thus, like the headteachers, the writers' use of the terms suggests that *administration* and *management* are conceptually the same.

For their part, Fleet and Peterson (1991:3 & 32), as well as, Nathan (1996:11) consider *administration* as a component of *management*. Consequently, Fleet and Peterson toned down the use of the term (*administration*) in the development of their work by concentrating on *management* and *leadership*. I found the same trend in MacBeath and Myers' (1999:1-159) work, *Effective school leaders: how to evaluate and improve your leadership potential*. Although the writers used the three terms in the process of contextualizing school leadership, *administration* was not used much. I noted, through a word count, that the three words appeared 321 times in their book. Out of this, *leadership* was used 229 times (approximately 71 percent); *management* was used 89 times (approximately 28 percent), and *administration* was used only three times (approximately one percent). I infer from this scenario that the writers either conceive *administration* as a component of *management* or they consider the two terms to be synonymous; hence, perhaps by preference, they concentrated on clarifying the difference between *management* and *leadership*, without bothering themselves about how *administration* differed from either *management* or *leadership*.

This inference notwithstanding, Beare *et al.* (1989:23-25) try to clarify the confusion surrounding the use of the terms. They suggest that the use of the terms *administration* and *management* could be best understood when one locates the cultural context within which related books are written. Whereas British writers employ the term 'educational management' in their literature, those of the US use the term 'educational administration'. Although I understand Beare *et al.*'s clarification, I still do not think it fully resolves the confusion. The fact that US-culture-oriented writers like Limerick and Anderson tend to use *administration* and *management* interchangeably suggests that the confusion surrounding the use of the terms goes

beyond mere Britain-US cultural dichotomy<sup>161</sup>.

If there is some confusion of terminology in the literature, it is perhaps not surprising to find confusion in the use of the terms by the Ghanaian heads. Comparing the use of the terms by these practitioners and the theorists, I found that the term *administration* dominated the terms used by the headteachers as they talked about school headship, while the experts in their write-ups tended to de-emphasise *administration*. Instead, the terms *management* and *leadership* dominated their discourses. If this contrasting situation should hold true for the entire headteacher population within the KEEA district, then, in my opinion, it has implications for the existing professional training programmes designed for headteachers in the district. This is because the dominance of the usage of the term *administration* among the headteachers contrasts with the emphasis in the Headteachers' Handbook. The Handbook, which is an official reference book for headteacher training in Ghana, places more emphasis on the

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<sup>161</sup>My argument is further supported by a case in one of the teacher universities in Ghana: the University of Cape Coast (UCC). In the University's Faculty of Education, three postgraduate programmes are offered: M.Ed (Administration) run by the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), M.Ed (Management) run by the Institute of Education (IE) and PhD (Educational Leadership) run by the Faculty. On the surface, one may be tempted to attribute the M.Ed (Administration) and M.Ed (Management) dichotomy to Beare *et al's* US-UK clarification. My investigation however shows that the division emerged as a result of two factors: politics and economics. In 1998 there were attempts by the GES to remove all matters related to the setting and conduct of post-secondary teacher education from the IE to the newly established University College of Education, Winneba (UCEW). With these attempts, authorities of the IE were faced with the problem of ensuring the continuous existence of the Institute in case the programme was successfully removed. As a result, when the National Teacher Training Council (NTTC) requested that the Faculty of Education mounted a staff development sandwich course for Principals of Teacher Training Colleges in the country, a political decision was taken to give the mandate to the IE even though there was the IEPA, in the same Faculty, that was responsible for running courses for school administrators. The IE adopted the label, 'M.Ed (Management)' to differentiate their programme from the IEPA's 'M.Ed (Administration),' for accreditation purposes. The course contents of both programmes were found to be the same; with little variations in terms of emphasis. Out of interest I sought clarification from some lecturers within the Faculty as to why the two programmes could not merge to avoid the confusion they were creating. The reason that cut across their responses was that the sandwich programme was a source of extra income for individual lecturers and the institutes; hence even though they could not be definite about the differences between the terms *administration* and *management*, the economic benefits associated with the programmes necessitated their separation. Thus even though, UCC's Faculty of Education, by labelling, creates the impression that the two terms are different, in real terms, these have been done primarily for political and economic convenience.



language of *management* as compared to *administration*. Hence, if, in spite of the Handbook's orientation towards the term *management*, the headteachers tended to internalise the language of *administration*, then I wonder how the rationale behind the authority's emphasis on *management* could be achieved.

### **Meanings the headteachers attached to the concept of school leadership**

The headteachers did not clearly show that they understood school leadership from the perspective of differences between the three terms (see chapter 6). The notion of interchangeable use of the three terms, I assume, had an influence on how they conceptualised school leadership. For instance, those who viewed headship from the perspective of *administration* and *management* while they tried to explain how they understood school leadership, commonly used 'taking custody of school property' and record keeping'. Although, those who viewed headship from the perspective of leadership, used some ideas such as 'taking initiatives,' 'changing things in the school,' and 'working with people to achieve your vision,' which differed from the ideas expressed by their colleagues, there was still some evidence of overlap in their understanding of the three terms. The use of 'authority and power,' 'leading people to achieve goals' and 'caring for teachers and pupils,' for example, cut across what all of them said about school leadership.

Thus, as mentioned earlier, the headteachers did not clearly show that they saw any difference in meaning between leadership and any of the other concepts. This may, perhaps, be partly attributed to the fact that those whose responsibility it is to make these conceptual distinctions clear to them, for political and economic purposes, are not doing so. It may be argued that these are simply semantic issues and not of great

consequence, or that the distinctions are significant and have an impact on practice as well as understanding. Fleet and Peterson differentiate between *management* and *leadership*. They define management as ‘an extremely complex process,’ which involves the *efficient* and *effective* utilization of human, physical, financial and informational resources. The emphasis on ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’ in the writers’ definition of management seems to imply that anyone, who considers him/herself as a manager, has the obligation of ensuring that waste is avoided in the process of using resources, and that the right things are done at the right time. In so doing, he/she has to plan, organize, lead and control activities towards the achievement of the organization’s goals (ibid.).

Relating this to the headteachers’ understanding of school leadership, I find that the element of ‘waste avoidance’ cannot be used as an exclusive feature of management. This is because the idea, implicitly or explicitly was reflected in the views expressed by all the headteachers, irrespective of the perspective from which they viewed school leadership. Those who saw themselves as managers expressed the idea of ensuring efficiency through statements such as, ‘the GES wants me to ensure that every pesewa it spends in training the teacher and in building the classrooms yields the required goals’ (UBS9). In the same way some who thought they were administrators expressed views that suggest the pursuit of ‘efficiency’. For example, RUS7, implicitly stressed efficient use of *learning time* by both teachers and pupils Likewise UBS1, who saw herself as a leader, implied by her statement, ‘You’ve been put there to achieve a goal and you lead people to achieve that goal, [...] everything is centred on you,’ that leadership involves efficient use of human resources for achieving the school’s goals.<sup>162</sup>

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Moreover, their reference to *planning, organizing, leading and controlling of activities* towards the achievement of organizational goals cannot be said to be an exclusive feature of *management*. This is because studies in organizational administration have since the days of Fayol (1841-1925, cited in ICS, 1980,1991:9), conceptualised *administration* to include *planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting* (POSDCORB). In the same way, the term *leading* has been used in discourses on *leadership* as well. For example, Hunt (1986, quoted by Nathan, 1996:12), in an

Fleet and Peterson further explain that *leadership* and *management* 'are in some ways similar but in more ways different,' and that 'people can be leaders without being managers, managers without being leaders, or both managers and leaders at the same time' (p.364). MacBeath's (1998) study, *Effective School Leadership* supports this view. The study found that there were some school heads who were inspirational leaders and yet were relatively bad managers, while some effective managers relied on others for leadership. Yet some successful heads exhibited both management and leadership qualities. Using a case study of headteachers to distinguish a leader from a manager, Nathan (1996) came out with the following differences as shown in **table 13.2** below (see p.173).

Even though, the table seems to simplify the difference between *leadership* and *management*, Nathan's demarcation is by itself a problem because the differentiating variables she uses are not exhaustive.<sup>163</sup>

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attempt to summarise how *leadership* differs from *management* observed, 'The major difference between managing and leading is the leader's capacity to lift people up, [...].'

<sup>163</sup>Other writers, such as MacBeath and Myers (1999:18), Fleet and Peterson (1994:365) and Covey and Merrill, (1994:36, cited by MacBeath and Myers, 1999:19) use different variables in distinguishing between the terms. The latter, for example, simply differentiate between the terms by remarking, 'leadership decides what "first things" are, it is management that puts them first – day-by-day: moment-by-moment.' Commenting on this distinction, MacBeath and Myers explained that leadership sifts through and prioritises values and priorities, and then passes the job over to the 'order-loving systematic manager-within-the-leader.'

**Table 13.2: Nathan’s Contrast Between Leadership and Management**

<i>Leader</i>	<i>Manager</i>
Innovates	Administers
Develops	Maintains
Challenges the status quo	Accepts the status quo
Originates	Initiates
Focuses on people	Focuses on systems
Takes the long term-view	Takes the short-term view
Eyes the horizon	Eyes the bottom line
Inspires trust	Relies on control
Asks what and why	Asks how and when
Is his/her own person	Is the classic good soldier
Does the right thing	Does things right (Bennis, 1985)

**Source: Nathan, M (1996:11) ‘Preparing for headship’ Case Study 1.4 for Reflection**

The KEEA headteachers’ understanding of school leadership, which emerged through the way they conceptualised the terms *administration*, *management* and *leadership*, suggests that they were more concerned about two things: *actions they were engaged in* and *the power and authority they required for carrying out those actions*, than the meaning of particular concepts that guided those actions. Hence, although the term ‘leadership’ did not form a dominant feature of their working vocabulary, the idea of the head being a ‘leader’ was evident as they talked about their headship tasks and related problems. Whether the individual head considered him/herself as an ‘administrator’ or ‘a manager,’ the word ‘lead’ or ‘leader’ was used; hence it was

evident that they thought about school leadership in terms of being a 'leader.'<sup>164</sup> They tended to understand leadership, however, in terms of *authority* and *power*.

### **Leadership in the context of *authority* and *power***

In explaining 'leadership', two dominant ideas emerged among the headteachers: *authority* and *power* (see chapter 6). As I explained earlier, power can be summed up as the capacity to cause things to happen or 'the ability to change the behaviour of another' (EssayBank.Co.UK, in UK-Learning 2002:1). It could be legitimate or illegitimate. Authority, on the other hand, implies the use of 'legitimate power' (ibid.) normally derived from law or tradition or conventions.

The idea of *authority* and *power* reflected in statements such as, 'I'm a disciplinarian; I don't allow the teachers to do what they like' (RUS1, p.102); 'If you're the head, then you're the master, so I'm the authority here, and I have to use strong discipline to make teachers and pupils work hard (RUS 10, p.97); 'Headship involves controlling affairs. It means you have the power to control things [...]' (UBS7, p.103).

In addition to these ideas, I noted from their usage of pronouns that there was strong emphasis on the pronouns 'he' instead of 'she' and 'I' instead of 'we' as they talked about issues related to school leadership. Even among the female headteachers, the pronoun 'she' was avoided: they used 'he' when they were talking about themselves as headteachers. This shows the extent to which leadership in the Ghanaian cultural setting is associated with masculinity, which in turn is linked with qualities such as bravery, power and authority.

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<sup>164</sup>This was reflected in such expressions as 'I'm supposed to show the way in everything that the school does,' 'the head is expected to *lead* the school to do well', 'you have to do administration as a

Their emphasis on 'I' also suggests that they did not think about school leadership in terms of collaboration and distributive leadership, an idea which Britain's National College of School Leadership (NCSL) currently upholds (MacBeath, 2003). It further suggests that the headteachers considered themselves first before any other person in the school, and consequently viewed their position as a means of projecting their 'self-image' through the use of *power and authority*. Hence, they did not consider the school as a corporate entity comprising teachers and pupils. They referred to it as 'my school' but not 'our school' with a feeling of what I best describe as 'without me, the school will collapse'. This feeling is, of course, not peculiar to the KEEA headteachers. A similar feeling is found in Myers' (1995-1998, in MacBeath and Myers, 1999:56-57) study of English primary heads, in which one male head argued,

I do not believe in decision-making by consensus but I do believe in listening [...]. I don't think you can have collective responsibility in a school. I lead from the front but my deputy says I am a devious autocrat. When people apply to work in the school I am very clear about my style of leadership. I am the kind of person that, when the director of education says 'jump', I say 'how high?' I respect authority and have the same expectations of everyone else.

Myers explicitly interprets the headteacher's account as 'a clear recognition of the "I" that listens, makes the decisions and takes responsibility'. This account further exemplifies a head who places 'self' above all other things and who 'is unashamed about making clear who is the boss and where responsibility for final decision-making lies'. As Gray and Freeman (1987) suggest, once 'self-image' dominates the way heads think about school leadership, 'it does not permit them to admit weaknesses and they take on all the work' in the school.

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*leader'* and 'the society now demands a lot from the headteacher but the headteacher is not given the

The KEEA headteachers' stress on *authority* and *power* reflects what classical theorists such as Plato, Machiavelli and Pareto advocate. As reviewed on p.23 these theorists conceptualised leadership from an anti-democratic and an authoritarian perspective where *authority* and *power* are vested in one person. Grint (1997:19-20), for example, quotes Plato's *The Republic* as arguing that 'it is evident that the captain of the boat is the only one to be trusted with its control, since only the captain has the necessary knowledge.' Since it has been generally accepted that 'knowledge is power,' and among sailors the captain often appears to have more expert knowledge of navigation than the crew on board the boat, I see the logic in Plato's opinion of vesting authority in the captain alone. But I do not think this principle could be conveniently applied to the school system, as it prevails in Ghana. The principle raises one major questions which need in-depth exploration: what special knowledge can one say a primary school headteacher has or can have over his/her teachers in the school situation?<sup>165</sup>

As presented on p.136, some of the headteachers acknowledged that teachers, who worked under them were, in some cases, more qualified academically and in other cases, more knowledgeable than some of them. Hence, nine of them expressed the need for the primary head to acquire 'knowledge competence'. As one queried, 'How can he supervise the teachers, if the headteacher is not also somebody who has 'O' level or 'A' level?' (RUS7). I think that if the idea of vesting authority in the headteacher as a captain (as implied in Plato's theory) can be applied to the primary school situation, then I think, possession of higher academic and professional

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free hand to plan and *lead* in the school.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Likening the headteacher to the *captain* and the school to the *boat*, as contained in Plato's analogy, one may support the KEEA headteachers' desire for *authority* and *power* over their teachers. However, when I consider that in the schools I visited, especially in the rural areas, some of the headteachers had lower academic and professional qualifications than the teachers who served under them, I do not think the condition, which Plato advocated the vesting of authority in the captain could be justifiably applied to the KEEA school situation. Most of the headteachers were appointed on the basis of long service and seniority in rank, without any higher educational or professional qualification beyond their initial post-middle teacher training. Some honestly acknowledged the problem they were encountering from some of their teachers who did not see why they (teachers) should allow them (headteachers) to vet their lesson notes considering that their (teachers') academic qualifications were higher than them (headteachers).

credentials such as an M.Ed, M.Phil or MBA in educational leadership, management or administration is required. Even with such credentials, I doubt if it could be said definitely that the headteacher would be more knowledgeable in all school matters than his/her teachers.<sup>166</sup>

This, perhaps, explains why Brighouse and Woods (1999) described teachers 'as the real leaders in the everyday business of schooling'. In the case of the KEEA headteachers, for example, some of them had to depend on the knowledge of their teachers in *accounting* because they (headteachers) did not have the requisite knowledge for keeping a cashbook. (see p 135-136). Hence, if by the classical leadership theorists' explanation, 'knowledge' is the basis upon which authority should be vested in the leader, then I argue that, since in the school situation, the headteacher cannot claim to monopolise knowledge in all areas, he/she should not monopolise *authority* and *power* either. As MacBeath and Myers point out:

Schools are not simply planned and ordered places in which the pyramidal hierarchy of power has a one-to-one relationship with the exercise of leadership on a day-to-day basis. [...] acquiescence to, or struggles for, leadership are played out in the classroom, playgrounds, lunch halls, toilets and staff rooms

They argue further that it is deceptive for one to view leadership by reference solely to the hierarchy of position and status and suggest that 'conceptions of leadership which refer to hierarchical authority need to be constantly challenged' (p.17). Likewise, Leithwood (1992:9-10) argues, 'To transform their schools, school leaders must use facilitative rather than authoritarian power'. The writers' view reinforces the

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<sup>166</sup>As a Ghanaian indigenous adage literally puts it, *knowledge is like a baobab tree, no one person can embrace it*. This adage, to me, reduces the strength of any argument that the headteacher, as the leader of the school, no matter how highly educated he or she is, is the only one who has the necessary knowledge required for achieving the schools goals. This is because my personal experience as a primary school teacher suggests strongly that, in some cases, the classroom teacher acquires some knowledge about his pupils' learning, which the headteacher might not be aware of. In such a situation,



contents of Barnard's (1948) definition of leadership as 'the quality of the behaviour of individuals whereby they guide people or their activities in organised efforts'. To him, leadership depends on three things: *the individual*, *the followers* and *the conditions*. It is the integration of these three elements that generates a leader. In the same vein, Gardiner (1990:1) argues that leadership should involve 'the process of persuasion or examples by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers'.

The discussion has so far shown that although the trend of school leadership is fast drifting from exercising hierarchical authority and power to shared authority, the KEEA headteachers strongly held the view that one cannot claim to be a leader without the exercise of power and authority. What is intriguing about this situation is that the contents of the foreign-initiated INSET programmes in which most of them claimed they had participated, stress 'team work' in the school; yet the majority of heads still appeared to uphold strongly the principle of hierarchical *authority* and *power*. The reason for this situation is on the surface difficult to understand upfront. From my experience as a citizen of Ghana and my long association with primary school teaching, however, I assume that the headteachers' stress on *authority* and *power* may be as a result of political and cultural influences. Hence, I continue the discussion by exploring the political and cultural contexts that influence the concept of school leadership in Ghana.

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the headteacher, though a 'captain' of the school, cannot meaningfully make any decision about

## **The cultural politics contexts that influence the concept of school leadership**

Within the context of this discussion, I have treated politics and culture as a complementary concept that, from the Ghanaian leadership perspective, deals with the issue of authority and *power*. So, as the following discussion suggests, it is difficult for one to determine where politics ends and where culture begins when it comes to matters related to traditional leadership in Ghana. Hence, I have adopted Apple's (1996) term 'Cultural politics' in my discussion. Thus whenever the reader finds either 'politics' or 'culture' in my discussion, it should be understood in terms of the other as well.

### ***The notion of 'politics' and 'culture'***

The fact that education has, since the days of Plato, been recognised as a source of political power (Ekuban, 1977:1-6) makes the issue of political influence crucial in my attempt to interpret how the headteachers conceptualised school leadership. Politics, as defined by Wamsley and Zald (1973:18, quoted by Blase, 1991:5) involves the 'structure and processes of the use of authority and power to affect definitions of goals, directions and the major parameters of the organizational economy'. Simply put, 'politics is the conscious exercise of power to achieve goals, expand power or extend its effects' Pfeffer (1981:7). The importance of politics in school leadership research has been shown in the works of Ball, (1990) and Hoyle (1986) and which, according to Greenfield (in Blase, 1991:163), 'focuses on the strategic use of political tactics in the workplace to influence policy and practice, and leadership perspective'.

Like politics, some psychologists of personality have long identified the cultural context of a person's development as the 'most pervasive but least appreciated determinant of an individual's behaviour' (Wiggins *et al*, 1971:119). In the same vein, anthropologists have since the 1930s acknowledged the strong influence of culture on the individual. Benedict (1934,1961:2, quoted in *ibid*: 108), for example, commented:

No man looks at the world with pristine eyes. He sees it edited by a definite set of customs and institutions and ways of thinking. [...] He cannot go behind these stereotypes; his very concepts of the true and the false will have reference to his traditional customs.

Within the context of leadership too, the thinking since the 1950s has not been different. Cross-cultural researchers and comparative management theorists have recognised that environmental influences penetrate organisations and make their character felt in various ways. It has, for example, been argued that the values, beliefs, norms and ideals that are embedded in a culture affect the leadership behaviour, goals and strategies of organizations (Gardiner, in Towers, 1996:489-508). These environmental influences, I think, will not be best understood unless one looks at the cultural politics milieu in which they operate.

As mentioned on p.32 comparative management theorists have long recognised the influence of the social environment on institutions. Some educational researchers emphasise the influence of culture on different issues related to school education. Writing on the essence of evaluating schools, for instance, MacBeath and McGlynn (2002: 6-7) stress the need to consider 'both the local and wider' cultural contexts that influence the school's operations. <sup>167</sup>In educational leadership research, MacBeath's (1998) *Effective School Leadership*, Smith's (1995) *Successful School Management*,

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<sup>167</sup> Forrester's (1996:32) work, *Psychology of Language* also emphasises the indispensability of culture in the analysis of language. Likewise Beck's (1998:13-33) work, *Morality and Citizenship Education* extensively discusses the place of culture in promoting nationalism and in building social cohesion. In terms of planning school curriculum, Lawton's (1975:9-26) review of the works of Bantock (1968) *Culture, Industrialisation and Education*, William (1963) *Culture and Society* and Eliot (1948) *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* also acknowledge the strong influence of culture.

Leithwood, Tomlinson and Genge's (in Leithwood *et al*, 1996) *Transformational School Leadership* and Duke's (in *ibid.*) *Perception, Prescription and the Future of School Leadership* as well as Fullan and Hargreaves' (1992) *What's Worth Fighting For in Your Schools* underscore the influence of culture in their work.

Culture, as I explained in chapter two, generally involves 'a body of learned behaviour, a collection of beliefs, habits and traditions, shared by a group of people and successfully learned by people who enter the society' (Mead, 1951, cited by Darlington, 1996). It 'includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. (Tylor 1871, quoted by Lawton, 1975:11). Hofstede (1984) stresses that culture 'is learned, not inherited'. 'Learned', in this context, denotes change(s) in an individual's behaviour that occur through 'the influence of collective programming (culture) as well as unique personal experiences' (Atitso, 2000). Anthropologists have pointed out that societies and their cultures differ considerably, not only in their technology but also in their attitudes, beliefs and values (*ibid.*). This assertion, I suppose, influences the way individuals in a given society think and feel about phenomena. This is because, the literature suggests that culture's component of 'values' and 'beliefs' tend to provide the basis upon which societies and individuals assign meanings to particular issues.

Moreover, 'systems of meaning, of which language is primary' (Learning Commons, 2002), differ from society to society. Even within a particular society, my experience tells me that the level of social exposure people get in relation to a specific phenomenon tends to create perspective differences among people in terms of meaning. Hence, I agree with MacBeath and Myers' argument that one cannot understand the rationale behind the way school heads think about school leadership

unless one 'examines the range of school and community contexts in which heads are required to lead' (p.3).

## **Ghanaian cultural perception about leadership: its influence on the headteachers' thinking.**

### *The influence of societal orientation towards authority and power*

The result of Debrah's (2000) research into the state of management in Ghana's business organizations provides a parallel for this finding. The writer reports that the management situation in the country was 'characterised by large power distance between management and rank-and-file'. Hofstede defines the term 'power distance' as the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally. My sample size of 20 headteachers is not representative enough for me to make any generalised conclusion. Yet I find the thinking of the headteachers not only supportive of Debrah's finding but also a reflection of the cultural values that Ghanaians generally attach to traditional leadership.

Prior to the advent of formal management concepts during the colonial era, the people of Ghana, like those of other African countries, had their own indigenous administrative systems. These systems, as Kiggundu (1991:3) put it, were 'relatively small in size, homogeneous in terms of membership, used local technology and indigenous knowledge systems, and co-existed in relative harmony with the environment'. Moreover, the administrative system was deeply rooted in African cultural beliefs, values and practices (Kondor, 1993). Because African traditional religion hinges on ancestral worship, it was believed that those who ascended to

leadership positions had special relations with the ancestors. They were considered to be people who had been given divine authority to lead others. Their source of authority was, as Young (cited by Kiggundu, 1991:33) explained, 'due to special relations with the supernatural, conquest and descent from the original occupants of the territory'. The writer further explained that chiefs, and indeed all others in traditional leadership positions, 'were imbued with both secular and divine authority and functioned as absolute rulers'. Even though routine decisions were delegated to 'a well-developed supportive networks of local rulers and village headmen', the chief who occupied the top of the administrative hierarchy controlled key decision-making and implementation processes.

The high degree of authority and power that leaders in the traditional system possessed were reflected, and continue to be reflected in titles that often qualified their stool names. Among the Akans (the dominant ethnic group in Ghana), for example, attributes such as the following are common:

- ☞ 'Ɔdeneho' (which literally means *He who owns himself*);
- ☞ 'Ɔseadeɛyɔ' (*What he commands, happens*),
- ☞ 'Otumfoɔ' (*One who is most powerful and imbued with authority*),
- ☞ 'Ɔkatakɔyɛ' (*One who is mighty and great*),
- ☞ 'Daasebrɛ' (*One whose providence for mankind is so great that one would get tired thanking him*),
- ☞ 'Ɔsagyefo' (*A great war leader who redeems or protects his followers from enemy attacks*),
- ☞ 'Ahunabobirim' (*one whose presence generates sudden overpowering fright in people*).

Each of these attributes denotes an element of either *power* or *authority* or *both*. This authority, which among the Akans is referred to as 'tumi', is a major feature of traditional leadership. In Dunn and Robertson's (1973:201-203) exploratory study

into how chiefs within the Ahafo state of Ghana construed their relationship with central government, for instance, the word ‘tumi’ emerged. They reported, ‘their (*chiefs*) main index of authority (*tumi*) was the extent to which the “young men” showed them respect and obedience’. The importance that the chiefs attached to ‘tumi’, which colonial political leaders tended to entrench is *reflected* in remarks made by some of the chiefs<sup>168</sup>. Thus, possession and exertion of *authority* was what traditional leadership was all about, which the political support they enjoyed during the colonial seemed to have entrenched. Moreover, the attachments of a religious significance to the office of a chief, made people venerate the chief and completely obey his authority (Wiredu 1980:11). From my interpretation, this cultural orientation towards *authority* and *power* that has a latent influence on the way the primary school headteachers understand school leadership.

### *The influence of societal respect for age*

The Ghanaian cultural value of ‘respect for age, which has to some extent become synonymous with status’ (Gardiner, in Towers, 1996:496-497) also contributes to people’s orientation towards authoritarian management. Generally, African culture ‘equates age with wisdom and therefore sees older people as wiser than younger ones who in turn submit to the wisdom of the elders’ (Fashoyin 2000:170). As Wiredu clearly puts it, belief in the wisdom of age is deeply ingrained in the Ghanaian culture. It is therefore culturally unacceptable for a young person or a subordinate to question those in authority (op. cit). In this light, I understand why some of the headteachers, who felt they were older than their teachers, complained bitterly about threats to their authority by some teachers on their staff. As one headteacher commented, ‘these days, the teachers will question everything you the head you tell them. [...] there’s no respect for the headteacher’ (UBS7). Her reaction to the questioning attitude of the teachers could be understood from the fact that, culturally ‘age, to all intent and

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<sup>168</sup> ‘During that time the government (*referring to the years of British colonial rule*) made me a big chief, so that when I talked people trembled. You say something and I challenge you, I send you to the government – then you will not get off lightly. That is why we liked that government. We were sitting

purposes, is synonymous with organizational status'; hence the 'tendency is not to question those in authority' (ibid, p.496 & 500). Another headteacher lamented:

Some of these young teachers are very stubborn [...]. You need the lesson notes of a teacher to vet. You go and ask. And he impolitely tells you 'I haven't finished! Sometimes, there're some things the teacher should come to the head to explain, he will not come. He'll just write and send the note to you as if you're his age mate (RUS8)<sup>169</sup>

In another scenario, this societal respect for age placed some of the younger headteachers at the crossroads, when they had to exert authority in dealing with non-performing but older teachers on their staff. Being in authority, the headteachers expected that they would be accorded all the respect associated with their leadership roles. At the same time, they were influenced by *respect for age* with the effect of, in some situations, compromising disciplinary cases involving older teachers on their staff. One female headteacher, UBS1, for example, who was younger than most of the teachers on her staff, identified the age factor as a problem. She regretted that her attempts to enforce practices such as punctuality and judicious use of instructional time, which Purkey and Smith (1983) have identified as a major task of the school head, were often viewed by the older teachers as she being arrogant and disrespectful. Such complaints were common among the younger headteachers. Although some of them explained that respect for the older teachers had compelled them to adopt a teamwork approach to their leadership, I could deduce from the way they talked that

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on the local court in those days. We had our own policemen, and if you spoke against any chief an order would be given to come arrest you' (Dunn and Robertson, 201-203)

<sup>169</sup> This account illuminates an act that constitutes an affront to *age* in the Ghanaian culture. The teacher annoyed the headteacher, in this scenario, by dropping a note to her, because traditionally, such a practice symbolised the teacher's disrespect for the headteacher's authority. It is culturally considered rude for a young person or a subordinate to drop a note to an older person, especially to one who has a direct authority over him, about an issue for consideration. What is more acceptable, and considered respectful, is when one prostrates him/herself in front of the one in authority to make whatever request he/she has. It is considered even more respectful when the subordinate sends his/her appeal or request through another person, usually an elderly person. That is what makes the traditional leader feel the impact of his authority and power. Thus, the headteacher, who from my observation, could mother most of the teachers on her staff, expected the teacher in question to have accorded her the respect that her age required from a younger person.



they wished such older teachers were not on their staff. Such a wish, I think, illuminates the conceptualisation of leadership in terms of *authority* and *power*. Thus, on the whole, it is within this cultural context of authoritative leadership that the headteachers, from my interpretation, understood the concept of school leadership.

Having said that, I must point out that I do not think the older teachers' attitude towards the headteacher could be attributed exclusively to the age difference between them. This is because firstly even though none of the headteachers mentioned the effect of social background on their understanding of leadership, I observed in two of the rural schools that social background influences school leadership. In one of the schools the headteacher was also sub-chief in the community. Coming from the royal family therefore, the level of authority he had was obviously very high. This was evident from the way he was addressed by the teachers in his school, food vendors in the school compound as well as some parents who visited the school. Contrary to the general label 'Master' by which headteachers were addressed in the other schools I had visited, he was addressed as 'Nana'. This is a title, which among the Akans, one uses to symbolise one's recognition of and respect for a person's authority or superiority<sup>170</sup>.

### *The influence of language*

From the data, language also emerged as a cultural factor that had an influence on the way the headteachers understood school leadership. As Britton (1982:79) observes,

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<sup>170</sup> In another situation, I saw a contrasting situation where the headteacher had to address one teacher on his staff by the title 'Nana' just because he was a sub-chief. During the period of my observation, the teacher, even though a sub-chief was very punctual at school and worked diligently, something I found exceptional. I wonder what the situation would have been if the teacher, by virtue of his institutional authority as a chief, happened to behave in a manner contrary to school regulations by, say, reporting late to school. I guess, that would have placed the headteacher in a dilemma because traditionally it is an acceptable practice for people in authority to arrive late at gatherings; thus they must be the last to arrive at the gathering. Secondly, some of the headteachers had attributed such reactions partly to gender factors. I will be discussing the gender factor in chapter seventeen.

we cannot escape the influence of language when we are dealing with human beings. It has further been claimed that language is fundamental to cultural systems of meaning. Some psychologists of language have theorised that the 'contents of human's semantic representation', the meanings we attach to a phenomenon (Frawley, 1992:25), 'are tied up with our everyday use of language', hence 'linguistic meaning is entirely determined by the cultural context in which language occurs' (Forrester, 1996:43 & 48).<sup>171</sup>

In the context of Britain, Morris and Beard cites Beverley Bernard, acting chairwoman of Britain's Commission for Racial Discrimination (CRE) for acknowledging that 'proficiency in English is a springboard for success in education and in the workplace' (The Independent, Tuesday 17 September, 2002:3). The importance attached to the English language is further evident in the recent call by the Hon. David Blunkett, Britain's Home Secretary, on 'Asian families to speak English at home' (ibid). Contributing to the debate arising out of Mr Blunkett's call, Alibhai-Brown further confirms the significance the British attach to the English language by arguing:

I speak English and four other languages, three of them from the subcontinent and Swahili [...]. In Britain, *where to have only English is considered a badge of honour* (my emphasis), many would argue that I am still the stupider because I have ingested all those lesser, barbaric tongues, which only go to show that I cannot be properly British. (Ibid).

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<sup>171</sup> Put in the words of Wittgenstein (1953, cited by Forrester), 'the limits of my world are the limits of my language'. This statement suggests that one's view of the world is limited by the limit of one's language. It is in this light that language has long been recognised to be 'central to the process of education in British schools' (Biggs and Edwards, in Graddol *et al.*, 1994:83). The Bullock Report (1975), for example, is reputed to have argued that 'language is the most powerful instrument of learning [...]' (ibid).

## English language in the context of KEEA headteachers' thinking

Alibhai-Brown's account reflects the way the KEEA headteachers perceived the English language as compared to their indigenous language, Akan. Since Ghana is a former British colony, and the British were the pioneers in providing sustained school education in the country, the study and speaking of English in the school system and in offices are given the highest premium. Hence, as a matter of policy, English is the approved medium of communication in headteachers' staff development programmes. It is also the approved language for instruction at all levels of the formal educational system. Based on the observations I made during my fieldwork and the interviews I conducted, however, I contend that most of the headteachers were limited in their use of English as a second language (L2) when describing in detail how they understood school leadership. Some honestly confessed their shortcomings in expressing their views adequately in the L2. Yet most of them insisted on communicating in it (see p. 74) during the interview sessions. Some found my attempt to vary the medium for our discussions by using their first language (L1), Akan, demeaning and rude. This, from my personal experience, could be largely attributed to the high prestige that Ghanaians in general attach to the English language<sup>172</sup>.

Some explained that it was against the MOE's policy for schools to speak in the vernacular during school hours. As headteachers, therefore, they thought they had to set examples for the pupils by speaking English themselves. Observance of this policy directive was such that pupils who were heard speaking their local languages in

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<sup>172</sup> It is very common to hear some people judging one's level of intelligence on the basis of one's ability to communicate fluently in English. Even in matters of Christian faith, some people tend to measure the level of a pastor's spirituality by the way he/she is able to rattle off prayers and sermons in the L2. Thus, in the thinking of some Ghanaians, once one can express him/herself fluently in English, one is brilliant, and brilliance is highly respected in Ghanaian communities. Hence, frantic efforts are made by even unschooled people to communicate in the L1 through, what is generally known as, 'broken English' (a self created English, with features similar to Nigeria's pidgin English, which does not follow the standard rules for English grammar). Examples of expressions in 'broken English' are: 'You no go fit do me anything' (meaning *You can't do anything to me*); 'Your mother dey house?' (*Is your mother in the house?*) 'Make we go eat' (*Let's go and eat*)

school were punished. In one of the schools I visited, I was surprised to find a chain of snail shells hung on the neck of a boy as punishment for speaking vernacular at school. It was similar to the situation where, in the past, Welsh children were punished for speaking Welsh at school (Chapman (1986:123). Thus, using Chapman's idea, the policy governing language in the schools I visited denigrated the pupils' and headteachers' indigenous language by requiring them to reason in, and express themselves in the English language<sup>173</sup>.

It became clear that lack of corresponding words in the local language for terms such as *administration*, *management* and *leadership* strongly influenced the meanings the headteachers attached to school leadership. This, perhaps, partly answers their association of leadership with *authority* and *power*. In all, they used two indigenous terms 'tumi', which connotes *authority*, and 'simpa panyin' which describes a *traditional leader without a commensurate authority* to explain their understanding of school leadership. It strongly suggests that the restricted meaning attached to the concept 'tumi' tended to restrict the headteacher's understanding of school leadership. As Bernstein (cited by Chapman, 1986:31) illustrates, people who use restricted codes (meanings, symbols, and relationships expressed through language) tend to assume meanings of phenomena in their language.

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<sup>173</sup> It was intriguing, however, for me to find that the headteachers, some teachers as well as pupils, spontaneously conversed among themselves in their mother tongues once they were outside the school compound. Some of the heads communicated freely and confidently with me in the vernacular once I interacted with them after school hours. Thus, in spite of the policy emphasis on, and the high premium the society attached to the use of the English language, the headteachers' out-of-school interactions with others implicitly suggested that they formed ideas in their L1 and expressed such ideas in the L2 while at school. This observation seems to support the University of London Institute of Education's Linguistics Minorities Project Report's (1983:11) argument that 'the languages or dialects of the home often retain particular emotional weight throughout life'

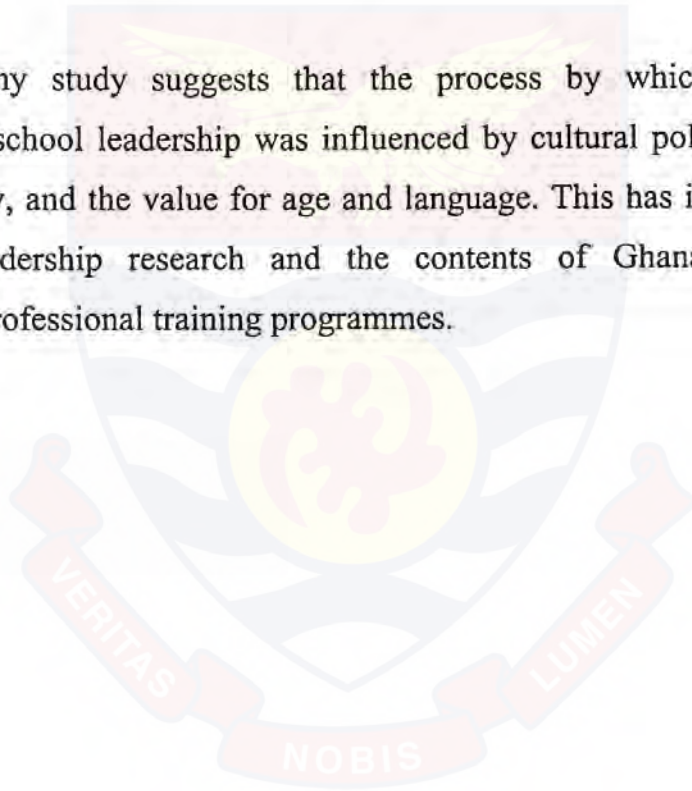
## Summary

I infer from the foregoing discussion that the headteachers' understanding of school leadership is influenced by factors that go beyond the contents of what they are taught during in-service training sessions. They are influenced by factors related to cultural politics. These include the Ghanaian cultural orientation towards *the exercise of authority* and *value and respect for old age*. Further, I infer that language, particularly one's mother tongue, plays a very crucial role in the headteachers' process of conceptualising school leadership. I am particularly concerned about the issue of language because it is a factor I did not consider prior to my data collection. Even though, the headteachers, because of the prestige attached to English and the MOE's policy of compulsory use of the English language in schools, declined to communicate their ideas in their L2, their out-of-school use of their indigenous language and the persistent reference to the term 'tumi' while explaining school leadership suggest that their L2 had a latent influence on their thinking processes about leadership. Quirk (in Open University, 1972:15) has acknowledged that in societies 'where two or more distinct varieties of language for communication are recognised', as in the case of the KEEA district of Ghana, 'the two varieties complement each other; they are used for different purposes'. He further argued that the 'high' language', which in the context of my study I find to be the English language (L1), 'is used as the language of religion, education and other aspects of high culture', while 'the low' vernacular language', which in the context of my study I find to be Akan (L2), 'is used in everyday affairs at home or among friends'.

While I agree with Quirk's dichotomy between the functions of the 'high' and 'low' languages, my data seem to suggest that the functional difference between the L1 and

L2, in terms of conceptualising phenomena in education, is not as simple as Quirk argues. His argument may be true when one considers his ‘high’ and ‘low’ language categorisation in terms of ‘standard English’ and other forms of English ‘such as slang, which are typically used, in smaller networks of interaction’. In the situation of Ghana the English language (‘high’) has been adopted to compete with the indigenous language (‘low’), which I believe governs the process of thinking among people, however, I think it is not easy to draw a functional line between the two.

To sum up, my study suggests that the process by which the headteachers conceptualised school leadership was influenced by cultural politics factors such as power, authority, and the value for age and language. This has implications for both educational leadership research and the contents of Ghana’s primary school headteachers’ professional training programmes.



## CHAPTER 14

# COMPETENCES AND COMPETENCIES FOR LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

*The competent leader provides a positive, supportive environment for pupils and teachers alike. Competent leaders are in the business of ensuring that teachers and pupils have materials and equipment they require; that people are encouraged to give of their best; that personal and professional development is a natural part of school 'climate' and that the work of every individual is valued and nurtured.*  
(Culled and modified from Derek, 1993:2)



### Introduction

Key to the issue of competence, as highlighted in Derek's statement above, is that it is inherent in the individual; hence, as I will argue later, its comprehension is largely influenced by the context in which the individual operates and the language, which often confuses as well as enlightens. At all levels of professional development in education emphasis has been placed on the provision of competency-based training with the aim of equipping individuals with 'a set of behaviour patterns' that are necessary for accomplishing 'tasks and functions with competence' (Woodruffe, 1992, cited in Torrington and Hall, 1998:418). In the professional development of managers or administrators or leaders, in business and learning organisations, 'competency-based training has become the received wisdom on approaches' (Torrington and Hall, 1998:422).

In this chapter, I discuss the main views the headteachers expressed in response to the research question: *How do primary school headteachers within KEEA perceive competences they require for carrying out their daily headship tasks?* I discuss their views in the light of what experts in the field have written about competences. The discussion focuses on three main issues. The first reviews the competence-

competency debate, in order to help me formulate a working definition for competence. It further discusses some indicators of competence in educational leadership. The second concentrates on the context of competence in primary headship. It integrates the KEEA headteachers' perceived competences with literature and training documents, specifically the Primary School Headteachers' Handbook. The third focuses on the summary of the main issues emerging from the discussion.

## Overview of the competence-competency debate

Although the issue of competence has increasingly dominated discourse about professional development in education, 'the language of competence' defies a single definition (see p.31-34). Derek attributes this misunderstanding to 'spelling variations' that are reflected in US-based and UK-based origins of 'competence/y' models. He explains that, whereas the US model speaks of *competency* or *competencies*, the UK model uses *competence* and *competences*. Contrary to Derek's simplified US-UK differentiation of the terms, UK-based writers such as MacBeath and Myers (1999:1-22) and Constable and McCormick (1987, cited by Torrington and Hall, 1998:418) use both *competence(s)* and *competency (competencies)* in their literature with differentiated meanings. Unlike Derek, they differentiate between the words in terms of the meanings they convey, not simply in terms of a US-UK spelling divide.



### *What makes competence different from competency?*

Some experts seem to agree that the two terms are, by definition, not the same.<sup>174</sup> This makes the concept of *competence* more complex and confusing. The confusion emanates from the different use of language and contrasting points of emphasis. For example, while Torrington and Hall locate *competence* within an individual's 'general ability to do something', MacBeath and Myers locate it 'in an organisational context'. Similarly, the former emphasise a 'specific' process towards achieving competence in their definition of *competency*, while the latter emphasise 'individuals personal qualities'<sup>175</sup>. Following these complex definitional contrasts, I have decided to look critically at indicators that have characterised the notion of competence in related literature vis-à-vis views expressed by the KEEA headteachers. This is to help me to understand clearly the differences between the two terms and to enable me formulate a contextual definition for competence<sup>176</sup>.

### **Indicators of competence**

West-Burham and O'Sullivan (1998:9-15) assert that the National Educational Assessment Centre (NEAC), using Hay/McBer's generic competency clusters (see p.

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<sup>174</sup> To Torrington and Hall, *competence* refers to 'the general ability to do something to an acceptable level,' while *competency* refers to a specific way of 'describing a range of things one has to be able to do in order to achieve competence.' While *competence* focuses on issues as to 'whether a person is able to do a job,' *competency* focuses on 'what skills are required in order to do a job' (ibid: 423). Macbeath and Myers (1999:2) also suggest that *competency* focuses on an individuals' personal qualities: 'their driving force, their strengths and frailties,' while *competence* is 'located in an organisational context with a set of preconditions.' Illustrating their point with the *recruitment and selection for school headship*, they said requirements such as 'subject degree qualifications, teaching certificates, experience of classroom teaching, expertise in managing people, organisational and communications skills' exemplify what constitute competences.

<sup>175</sup> Thus, to the former *competence* suggests a 'general' phenomenon and *competency* a 'specific' phenomenon; while the latter sees *competence* as an 'organizational' phenomenon and *competency* a personal phenomenon.

<sup>176</sup> Since the UK's 1988 White Paper's principle on occupational competence was based on standards 'drawn up by industry-led organizations covering every sector and every occupational group, and validated nationally' (Department of Employment, 1988, cited by Derek p.17), I deem it relevant to compare indicators used for determining competence in both business and educational institutions.

28, footnote number 28), has in the context of UK developed a competency framework, under four headings with corresponding competence indicators: *administrative* (problem analysis, judgement, organizational ability and decisiveness); *interpersonal* (leadership, sensitivity, stress tolerance); *communicative* (oral communication and written communication) and *personal breadth* (range of interest, personal motivation and educational values). The NEAC competency framework, according to the writers, has greatly influenced the current national standards set for the professional development of both headteachers and teachers.

Yet can we say that these standards could work in the context of every school? The fact that, even within the business enterprise, there is no agreement as to what constitutes competence suggests that generic indicators of competences can only provide a framework for the determination of specific competences in organisations.<sup>177</sup> Hence Derek cautions, 'It is important however that you do not leap on this bandwagon (*generic competence framework*) and become a disciple of the movement without a proper assessment of organizational and individual management development needs in your school' (p.115).

The work of MacBeath and Myers (1999) in Denmark, England and Scotland in which primary school pupils' and teachers' as well as parents' views were sought about headship 'competences' seem to affirm the fact that although there is nothing wrong in having generic competences for headteachers, the relevance of such 'competences' might differ from school to school and society to society in terms of emphasis. **Table 14.1** below provides an example of competence indicators:

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<sup>177</sup> Derek illuminates this point in his comments about the applicability of the generic management competences developed through the National Forum for Management Education and Development's executive arm, the Management Charter Initiative (MCI) in the early 1990s. He acknowledges the spirit behind the generic competences, which was to ensure that 'a manager attaining accreditation of competence as a

**Table 14.1: MacBeath and Myers (1999): Headteacher competencies – a view from the Industrial Society (extracted from p.22).**

Clusters	Competence Indicators
'The human side'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting other people</li> <li>• Recognising individual effort</li> <li>• Promoting other people's self-esteem</li> <li>• Developing other people</li> <li>• Minimising anxiety</li> </ul>
Leader as reflective and empathic listener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking to understand before making judgements</li> <li>• Listening to individual ideas and problems</li> <li>• Actively encouraging feedback</li> </ul>
Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving those doing the work the power to make decisions</li> </ul>
Personal modelling of behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrating personal integrity</li> <li>• Practicing what they preach</li> <li>• Showing enthusiasm</li> </ul>
Directive category	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing direction</li> <li>• Taking decisions</li> <li>• Agreeing targets</li> <li>• Promoting understanding of the key issues</li> </ul>
Managing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking at possible future challenges</li> <li>• Encouraging new ways of doing things</li> <li>• Treating mistakes as learning opportunities</li> </ul>
Teamworking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging teamwork</li> </ul>

They cite the industrial society (see Fig. 14.1 above) as an example of such a generic list, which may have wider relevance but requires, nonetheless, to be critically assessed in any given context<sup>178</sup>.

manager in a school will automatically meet the requirements for a manager in any other occupation at the same level' (p.31).

<sup>178</sup>The writers listed 20 headteacher 'competences' (they use the 'competences' guardedly), which they categorise into seven clusters. Although these competences, as illustrated in Fig.14.1, appear to be general, my comparison of the country-to-country specific competences given by pupils in their study (see MacBeath and Myers, p.10-11) gives a different picture. Differences emerge in terms of emphasis. For instance, while 'kindness' was a top headteacher competence identified by both Danish and Scottish pupils, it was not the same for English pupils. In the English schools, what appears to be the top indicator of headteacher competence is his/her ability to tell 'children off if they're naughty'. These differences underscore the suggestion that generic competences, which policy makers prescribe for headteachers, do not always reflect, in practical terms, the competencies that the headteachers require for meeting the challenges and tasks they perform at the school level.

The discussion so far suggests that people hold divergent opinions on the concept of competence. Attempts by some writers to resolve the problem by distinguishing between *competency* and *competence* still show divergence in opinion. This seems to suggest that in practice the concepts are embedded in an individual. Hence, it may be argued that the dichotomy, which writers have supported with convincing arguments in the literature, constitutes a theoretical abstraction more than something that is distinguishable in day-to-day practice. Views expressed by the KEEA headteachers support this view. As they talked about the skills, knowledge and abilities they considered necessary for efficiently performing their professional task, none of them gave an indication that their personal qualities operated differently from their abilities to perform. Following this observation, I have, through a synthesis of the various ideas emerging from the discussion on the competency-competence debate, as well as the different meanings writers have given to competence, formulated the following definition which I find more appropriate in the context of my study:

Competence may be referred to as an all-embracing concept that describes the knowledge, understanding, skills and/or attitudes that headteachers require for successfully coping with, and accomplishing the challenging tasks they have to fulfil in the primary school<sup>179</sup>

#### ***Indicators of competence: the headteachers' perspective***

The headteachers mentioned 16 competences, which they thought they needed for accomplishing their leadership tasks (see Figure 10.1, p.135). In table 14.2 below, I have categorised these competences under four main clusters for the purpose of facilitating discussion. In the categorisation, I have referred to a word, 'capacity', that one head (RUS2) used, in place of 'competence' (see p.139). HarperCollins (1991,1995) defines 'capacity', among other things, as 'character'; 'ability' 'power of

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<sup>179</sup> I have no doubt that the reader may find my definition imperfect. I must, however, explain that my intention is not to prescribe the appropriate definition for *competence* but to provide a working definition that clarifies rather than confuses and perhaps provokes further debate on the subject.

mind'. In this light, the head's association of capacity with professional certification and experience through rank may imply that he viewed 'capacity' as an embodiment of all relevant personal characters, abilities and knowledge that give the headteacher the confidence to perform.

**Table 14.2: KEEA headteachers' perspectives of primary heads' competences**

Clusters	Competence indicators
<i>Administrative capacity</i>	Ability to keep school records e.g. filing documents, maintaining school finance records, keeping admission records, the log book etc.,
<i>Professional capacity</i>	Ability to manage pupil assessment, knowledge of teacher appraisal techniques, knowledge of pupil teaching techniques, knowledge of techniques for teaching adults, ability to vet teachers' lesson notes, knowledge about leadership, acquisition of higher academic knowledge, ability to counsel.
<i>Personal capacity</i>	Fairness and firmness, tolerance, patience, commitment to work
<i>Interpersonal capacity</i>	Ability to relate well with staff, pupils, parents, the SMC, circuit officers. Ability to promote teamwork, ability to conduct successful staff meetings, and possession of lobbying skills.

It further implies that, although the word 'capacity' is often used to describe the capability of organizations to satisfy the needs and demands of consumers, it may also be used to describe competences and competencies or either of the two terms. In the subsequent section, therefore, the reader should understand 'capacity' either as an embodiment of both *competence* and *competency* or as synonymous with either *competence* or *competency*.

A critical consideration of the clusters and indicators of competence, as I have listed in table 14.2 above, shows some differences. The contents of the first two, *administrative* and *professional capacities* (category A), seem to have direct focus on task-related knowledge, abilities and skills that, from the headteachers perspective, were important in primary school leadership. The third and the fourth, *personal* and

*interpersonal capacities* (category B), on the other hand, focus on human qualities that, in their opinion, could influence their ability to succeed as headteachers.

### *Administrative capacity*

The term *administrative capacity* within this context is limited to competences related to the keeping and maintenance of records and towards the achievement of the school's goals. An important competence that was mentioned by the headteachers is the ability to properly manage records in their schools. Two types of records emerged from their presentation: financial and non-financial records.

#### The management of financial records

As described on p.148, fourteen of the headteachers expressed great concern about their incompetence in handling the financial records of the school. They considered issues related to school funds<sup>180</sup> crucial because, as one of them put it, 'it's a major task' performed by the primary school headteacher.

The GES' job description for primary heads confirms the centrality of the headteachers' financial task by emphasising: 'remember that the collection of and accounting for textbook fees are your duty. If you delegate the collection to a class teacher or any person, you do so at your own risk' (Ministry of Education, p.113). The document further elaborates, 'as a headteacher you need to be able to manage

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<sup>180</sup>*School funds*, in the context of primary schools in Ghana, involves approved fees that the school collects on behalf of the GES, PTAs, the District Assembly, School Committees as well as monies the school gets through various fund-raising activities and donations (Ministry of Education, 1994; 113-114). Keeping financial records, according to the GES, enables the headteacher to, among other things, know the exact amount of money at hand as well as any profit or loss made; the exact value of goods or materials purchased at a particular time; the total donations acquired from the public or from committees; and how much to spend and save for future use

primary school funds using modern financial techniques. This means that you should develop the habit of keeping simple books of account in an acceptable way' (p.112). This implies that a headteacher requires skills and knowledge that would enable him/her to keep proper records of monies they receive and/or spend in order that they would be able to account for them<sup>181</sup>. It is the skills and knowledge required for keeping these records properly that the headteachers said they lacked

### The management of non-financial school records

Skills and knowledge for managing non-financial records constituted competence that six of the headteachers said they needed in order to enable them to carry out tasks related to filing circulars and other correspondence, filing pupils' admission registers and recording events in the logbook.

The Headteachers' Handbook also identifies *keeping admission records* as an important task the GES requires of primary school headteachers in Ghana<sup>182</sup>. The GES expects headteachers to record data on pupils they admit *promptly* and *accurately*.<sup>183</sup> To be able to exhibit the competence of 'promptness' and 'accuracy' in

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<sup>181</sup>The GES expects headteachers to keep three main financial records (MOE, p. 114-118): *Receipts* for recording payment of GES approved fees and other incomes from donations or other school initiated income generation programmes. *Cash Book* for recording all monies the headteachers receive and all monies; *Cash Analysis Book* in which headteachers are required to keep a record of all GES approved fees collected against the names of each pupil in the school. Such records are to be kept for separate classes showing the amounts paid as textbook user, culture, sports and PTA fees (see appendix ....).

<sup>182</sup>Heads are required to provide accurate information about pupils in the RA because it is 'the document which proves that a pupil has been admitted to your school'. Specific indicators of competence that the GES expects headteachers to exhibit in keeping admission records are contained in 'special rules',

<sup>183</sup> The GES' special rules for keeping admission records are as follows: (1) 'an entry should be made in the Admission Register for each pupil on the first day on which he/she attends the school. No name should be removed while the child is under the legal obligation to attend school, unless it has been ascertained that he or she is dead, is attending another school, or has left the neighbourhood. If no information is obtainable the name may be removed after a continuous absence of four weeks (2) Successive numbers must be allotted to the pupils on their admission so that each may have his or her own number. This should be retained throughout their career in the school or department. This number will then serve to identify the pupil. (3) This register must show distinctly for each pupil who has actually been present in the school: his or her number on the Register; the date of admission: day,

recording the expected information on pupils, the headteacher needs *competency* which Trotter and Ellison defines as ‘underlying characteristics which allow a person to perform well’ (p.3). I find these ‘underlying characteristics’ implicit in the statement, ‘an entry should be made in the register for each pupil on the first day on which s/he attends the school’. In my opinion, the headteachers’ ability to fulfil this rule would largely depend on inherent personal qualities such as ‘honesty’, ‘fairness’ and ‘commitment’. MacBeath and Myers’ suggestion that *competence* and *competency* ‘may be characterised as the who and what’ and may respectively answer questions such as ‘who make good leaders?’ and ‘What kind of leaders do we want?’ are exemplified here.<sup>184</sup>

### *Professional capacity*

Prior to the discussion of the views expressed by the headteachers, I find it necessary to place in context what I mean by the term *professional capacity* because in Ghana, there are some people who do not consider *teaching* as a profession<sup>185</sup>. The debate

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month and year; name in full; the name and address of the parent or guardian; the exact date – day, month and year of birth; the last school attended before entering this school; if s/he has left, the date of last attendance at this school and the cause of leaving, and (4) This Register should have an alphabetical index’.

<sup>184</sup> When I reframe these questions to reflect the *competences* and *competencies* enshrined in the ‘special rules’, the questions would be as follows: i. who make good admission record keepers? The answer to this may be, ‘those who make prompt and accurate entry for each pupil who is present in the school. ii. What kind of admission record keepers do we want? To this, one may answer: ‘those who exhibit honesty, commitment and/or fairness in making entries in the admission registrar’. These are underlying characteristics the headteacher requires in order that the accurate information of pupils would be provided in the register promptly. The absence of competencies such as *honesty* and *commitment* may lead to the situation where some heads, to prevent the GES from laying an embargo on their salaries for failing to collect school fees from pupils, violated the rules governing entries in the. It is essential, therefore, that those in charge of recruitment and development of headteachers pay particular attention to both competences and competencies necessary for helping individual headteachers to perform their tasks with efficiency and integrity.

<sup>185</sup>Such people argue, among other things, that one’s ability to teach does not depend on any unique skills or knowledge; hence it does not qualify as a profession. To some, the term ‘profession’ can be used exclusively to describe jobs such as medicine, law, accountancy, engineering and other related ones, but not teaching. West-Burnham and O’Sullivan’s (1998:47) passage on *the components of professional learning* illuminates the problem of using the term ‘professional’ in the context of teachers. They explain, ‘although widely used by teachers as both a description and an aspiration in



surrounding the professional status of teachers is apparently a widespread phenomenon and if it is the case that teachers do not 'meet all the criteria for professional status', then the notion of 'professional capacity' for primary school headteachers is problematic. Hence, the need to justify the use of the term, 'professional capacity'.

Merriam-Webster Incorporated (1999:416) defines a *profession* as 'a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long academic preparation', and a *professional* as 'one that engages in an activity professionally'. To Bottery (1994:116-17), a job qualifies as a *profession* if it exhibits the characteristics listed in **table 14.3** below:

**Table 14.3: Characteristics of Professional Jobs**

1. Existence of a body of unique and systematic knowledge.
2. Requirement for considerable technical skill.
3. A lengthy period of training.
4. The need to reflect on and improve practice.
5. Ability to respond to complex situations.
6. Existence of a high degree of personal autonomy.
7. Selection, training, and qualification are controlled by the profession.
8. There is one authoritative professional body.
9. There is a monopoly of provision by this body.
10. Discipline is exercised by the profession.
11. A crucial social service is provided.
12. The occupation enjoys high social prestige.
13. There is a high level of remuneration.
14. The profession is highly involved in policy making.
15. There is an ethic of service.
16. There is a code of ethics.
17. Training involves socialisation into the ethics.

**Source:** Bottery (1994, cited in West-Burnham and O' Sullivan, 1998:49).

West-Burnham and O'Sullivan assert that applying Bottery's criteria in its entirety to teachers is problematic. They however identify the first criteria, *existence of a body of*

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strict sociological terms, the teaching force probably does not meet all the criteria for professional status'

*unique and systematic knowledge*, to be directly applicable to the work of teachers. They define a *professional* as ‘someone who seeks to apply the principles of professionalism to the way they work’. They further explain that professionalism as used in their definition ‘is not concerned with social status, governance or remuneration but rather with the morality which determines how the work is done’.

### *The ability to manage pupil assessment*

Although, in practice, it is the classroom teacher who is directly involved in assessing pupils, some of the headteachers thought it was essential for them, as leaders, to acquire the skills of assessment. This, they said, would help them provide the necessary school-based guidance to teachers on their staff in terms of conducting pupils’ continuous assessment<sup>186</sup>. As one (UBS3) argued, ‘though it’s the work of teachers, you as head must be skilled in it before you can supervise somebody in doing that’ (see p.152-153).

The headteacher’s role in managing pupil assessment in the school is illuminated in the extract below:

As a headteacher you will need to train your teachers on some of the informal and formal assessment methods. They will also need to be informed on the continuous assessment record keeping system. The example you set and your own attitude in this respect will influence them greatly. Remember that well-conducted pupils’ assessment motivates pupils and teachers. It also has a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning (MOE, 1994:182, 184)

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<sup>186</sup>The system of continuous assessment constitutes a major part of the overall assessment of pupils’ academic progress in Ghana’s basic school system. Continuous assessment takes 40 percent, while formal tests take 60 percent of the total marks a pupil has to score at the end-of- term. It is a form of teacher-centred assessment that requires the teacher to ‘record marks earned by pupils from time to time in class exercises, assignments, projects, quizzes and quick and easy-to-set formal tests such as short –answer and true-false tests’ (MOE, p.181). Teachers are required to make prompt recording of marks obtained by pupils in a continuous assessment record sheets. Headteachers, on the other hand, are required by the MOE/GES to ensure that teachers followed a ‘systematic plan of continuous assessment’ by monitoring how they handle the assessment.

A parallel of this is found in England. As Dean (1995: 127-128) explains, the demands of the National Curriculum's assessment have made it obligatory for every school and every teacher to keep records of each child's progress. This obligation, she further suggests, places much responsibility on the headteacher: 'it is the responsibility of the headteacher to see that adequate records are kept, that appropriate records are passed on to the next stage of education and that parents are informed of their children's progress'.<sup>187</sup>

### *Pedagogical and andragogical skills*

Beare *et al.* (1989:151; 153)) have stressed that 'excellent schools require excellent teachers'; hence 'learning and teaching must be the focus of leadership acts in a school'. It is perhaps in this regard, that *competence in teaching skills* emerged as another important need of some of the headteachers. This was evident in comments such as 'you need to know more about teaching methods' and 'you must be conversant with the curriculum yourself and know exactly what goes on in each classroom' (see p.147). Justifying the need for heads to acquire pedagogical competence, one referred to a decision of the MOE to make 'headteachers mentors for

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<sup>187</sup>Moreover, writers like Black and William (1998), Gipps (1990), Murphy and Torrance (1988) and Stobart and Gipps (1997) have written extensively on problems related to assessment in schools and the need to enhance learning through assessment. Black and James have, for example, identified *formative assessment* as an effective means by which learning could be improved in schools. Yet, Black suggests that teachers do not have an in-depth understanding of what formative assessment is. Bennett also observes that teachers do not use assessment for diagnosis. Similar assessment related problems, which require headteachers' competence to manage, were identified at a workshop organised by the Catholic Education Unit at Abura-Pedu in the Central region of Ghana in August 2000. Among other things, they mentioned that some of their teachers lacked skills in constructing test items, lacked knowledge in keeping continuous assessment records and often made errors in the calculation of test scores. In such a situation, I am tempted to agree with the KEEA headteachers that they need competence in the management of assessment. Without this, it may not be possible for them to successfully carry out their responsibility of organising school-based in-service training on assessment for their teachers. To ensure that this responsibility is fulfilled satisfactorily, I assume, is the reason behind the headteachers' mentioning acquisition of teaching skills as another aspect of professional competence, which they required.

teacher trainees' in its proposed school-based initial teacher training policy<sup>188</sup> and stressed that they needed relevant knowledge and skills 'in the actual act of teaching'<sup>189</sup>.

One thing that intrigues me is the headteachers' emphasis on the idea of gaining competence in 'teaching leadership' instead of 'learning leadership', when the current thinking about developing school leaders emphasize *Leadership for learning*<sup>190</sup>. Their stress on 'teaching' raises two other issues: *political* and *conceptual*. Politically, it seems the headteachers' quest for competence in teaching both pupils and adults was not only to enable them to perform roles as instructional leaders and mentors efficiently but, more importantly, to enable them entrench their authority in the school. My interpretation is based on the fact they had, as I explained in chapter 6, demonstrated a strong inclination towards conceptualising school leadership in terms of the exercise of *power* and *authority*. Hence, by implication, I argue that the headteachers were worried about the possible threat to their authority through their inability to demonstrate more knowledge about teaching than their teachers and also to handle school-based INSET programmes competently.

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<sup>188</sup> This policy, according to my enquiry from the office of the KEEA district directorate of the GES, is aimed at increasing the length of practical teaching experiences student-teachers acquire, during their 3-years' period of training, from an average of eight weeks to one academic year. Hence, by the programme, student teachers are to spend the second year of their training in schools for practice under the mentorship of headteachers. The programme is dubbed 'In-Out-In' (One year in residence, one year out of residence and one year back to residence).

<sup>189</sup> Another head argued that once classroom teachers were being given in-service training on new trends in teaching and strategies for improving the quality of teaching; it was necessary that they (*headteachers*) as supervisors also gained competence in such issues. She explained that, unlike some heads who, by virtue of their involvement in direct classroom teaching, had acquired knowledge in new developments regarding teaching she was handicapped. She said she was often embarrassed by her ignorance when in her attempt to correct a teacher's practice, the teacher retorted 'this is what I learnt from the course', and produced documents to prove her (headteacher's) ignorance.

<sup>190</sup> The creation of a Leadership for Learning (LfL) network at Cambridge University's Faculty of Education, coupled with learning focused themes such as Senge's (2002) paper on *Leading Learning Organizations: the Bold, the Powerful and the invisible*, Fink's (2002) workshop title *Learning leaders* and others that have, in recent times, characterised school leadership conference and seminar presentations testify to this changed trend. Further, school leadership book and chapter titles such as Bowring-Carr and West-Burnham's (1999) *Managing Learning for Achievement*, Senge's (1990) *The fifth discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*, Cousins' (1996, in Leithwood et. al.) *Understanding organizational learning for leadership and school improvement* give credence to learning in school leadership discourse.

Conceptually, I interpret their emphasis on 'teaching' as a reflection of the thinking among some people that learning is always the product of teaching. In this light, the headteachers, I assume, saw learning embedded in teaching; hence, they did not see the need for referring to it as a separate phenomenon. Constraints, in time and distance did not permit me to make a follow-up interview to confirm or disprove this assumption<sup>191</sup>.

### **Competences for promoting quality teaching and learning in school: what primary heads need.**

From the foregoing, I adduce that the headteachers' main concern was to gain confidence in tackling two main tasks. Firstly, the ability to promote quality teaching of pupils in the classroom, which West-Burnham and O'Sullivan (1998:49) refer to as *pedagogy*. They define *pedagogy* to encompass all 'theories of teaching applied to children'. Secondly, the ability to teach teachers as adults, which the writers refer to as *andragogy* - 'the theory of learning as applied to adults'.

This differentiation seems to suggest that the competences one requires for teaching children is different from those one requires for teaching adults. Yet, it is explained that the pedagogy-andragogy distinction 'is highly contentious and in the context of schools may actually be counter-productive' (ibid.). They argue that the distinction 'creates a hierarchy of meaning with regards to learning' and 'serves to reinforce the notion of children being dependent learners and thereby diminish their potential for

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<sup>191</sup>However, West-Burnham and O'Sullivan's comment, 'for many learning is the result of teaching' (p.21) strengthens my assumption. Besides, Hirst (1974) and Fenstermacher (1986, cited by Tomlinson, 1995:10) view teaching 'as a purposeful interaction to promote learning'. The question then is 'does teaching necessarily result in learning?' Bowring-Carr and West-Burnham seem to answer this question by their observation that 'learning is an individual and subjective process' and 'is the result of the interaction of a range of variables, most of which are personal rather than generic and teaching is only one of these variables' (p.23). Hence, while agreeing with the headteachers that it is essential for them to acquire competence in teaching, I think it is more important that they are helped to understand the nature of learning and its approaches as well.

achievement'. It is assumed that children do not have experience; hence learning cannot take place in children unless they are taught.

Adults, on the other hand, have experience; hence learning takes place, whether or not they are taught. To this extent, some writers tend to limit the term 'experiential learning' to 'adult learning' (see Bra and Hoy, in Weil and McGill, 1989:73). Humanistic psychologists have, however, proved through the use of child-centred approach to teaching in the primary school that 'experiential learning' is not the preserve of adult learners. Bra and Hoy (in Weil and McGill, 1989:73) explain that the approach which is based on the principle of learning from the 'known to the unknown' and on active child 'participation and emotive involvement' (Javis, 1987:164) in the teaching-learning situation 'has long been associated with many possible outcomes'. Javis' observation that 'learning always commences with experience' (ibid.) as well as Bowring-Carr and West-Burnham's call on teachers not to limit their criterion for 'deciding on a learning plan for the individual child' to previous learning but also take into account 'other issues, such as areas of *experience* (my emphasis) interests, areas about which the child is curious etc.' (p.9), further illuminates the point that experiential learning is applicable to both pupil and adult learning<sup>192</sup>.

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<sup>192</sup> My personal experiences as a primary school teacher for three years in Takoradi (Ghana) and as a tutor of an initial teacher training college at Bimbilla (Ghana), respectively, support the idea that all learning begins with experience. In teaching my 9+ year old pupils (Primary 4), I developed my lessons from their previous knowledge just as I did at the teacher training college even though, they were adults with an average age of 25. In each case, I witnessed the positive impact of their previous related experience on their comprehension of issues. Nevertheless, I do not wholly agree with any argument that seems to suggest that approaches to teaching or learning for pupils must in all cases be the same for adults. This is because children differ from adults in several ways.

### Ways of promoting learning in children

Since 'pupil learning is unarguably the most central and significant purpose of school education' (MacBeath and McGlynn, 2002:6), the headteacher needs to be knowledgeable in principles and conditions that facilitate pupils' learning in the classroom. Gaining awareness of these principles would enable the headteacher to, effectively monitor the progress of each child to ensure that 'each child is considered as a developing individual' and that teachers are really promoting learning through their teaching.

Dean (1995:42) suggests that one way by which the headteacher can effectively 'monitor the progress of each child is by looking at records and reports and at teachers' notes and at the work of children'. Dean's mention of the need for headteachers to look at teachers' notes strengthens the KEEA headteachers desire for appropriate knowledge and skills in vetting teachers' lesson notebooks. It is essential that the headteacher ensures that teachers' lesson plans clearly state objectives that reflect the learning needs of the child as well as the topic and must clearly spell out the learning processes pupils would be going through. Dean further suggests that teaching plans should demonstrate how the following elements interact in promoting learning: 'the teacher, the pupil (learner), the set of intended learning outcomes (concepts, understanding, skill and attitudes to be learnt by pupils), the learning/teaching process (activities to be performed by pupils) and context (including resources which may offer as well as limit possibilities for learning and its promotion). In addition, the head needs to ensure that classroom teaching is not carried out merely for its own sake, but for the sake of enhancing learning. This point is crucial to the headteachers' monitoring task because, as Tomlinson (1995:9) observes, 'an activity isn't a case of teaching just because it's done in a classroom or by a teacher – it's whether or not the action is in the service of learning [...]'. He/she needs to be guided by the basic fact that 'teaching is activity designed to promote learning' (ibid.).

Another strategy, identified by Harrison (in Bowring-Carr and West-Burnham, 1999), is the headteacher's ability to inform his/her work with research findings. This is an issue that I find very relevant to the KEEA headteachers' desire to increase their professional knowledge. Even though, the headteachers did not make any reference to research in their responses, my fieldwork observation coupled with my personal experience in primary school teaching shows that the habit of grounding tasks in research is not a practice among primary school teachers and headteachers in the country. In addition, it was evident from some responses to the question regarding their awareness of the nature of headship tasks prior to their assumption of duty that they had not formed the habit of retrieving information through reading.

Lessons from Queen Elizabeth Grammar School<sup>193</sup> suggest that research methodology is a course that those concerned with the professional development of headteachers should not neglect (Harrison). This is because, in my opinion, pedagogical decisions that are informed by research findings, especially the school's own research, are more likely to address real pedagogical issues on the ground. Moreover, developing skills in research may help to create an investigative spirit in the headteachers and thereby improve their information retrieval skills. Once such a competence is built into the headteacher, I foresee that there would be an improvement in their reading habits that will in turn help them to acquire knowledge about other strategies necessary for improving teaching/learning, such as appraisal and counselling.

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<sup>193</sup> Queen Elizabeth's Grammar school in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, (UK), used an action research project as the basis for improving good teaching and learning. The school's research initiative aimed to investigate teaching and learning 'from a practical viewpoint, with reference to the relevant theories, and to use the findings to inform future improvement and planning strategies'. What I find most remarkable in this school-based research initiative is how pupils were actively involved in the data collection process. Through simple questions such as 'at school, what type of work do you enjoy/dislike? Why is this?' 'What type of lessons do you find rewarding? Why?' 'When do you work best?' 'How would you improve your learning?' and 'Could you think of one special learning moment when you really felt that you had suddenly really understood something or that you became really interested by a subject? Why, in your opinion, was this so?' the school was able to identify certain priority areas. Two such priority areas were 'the need for staff to become aware of individual learning styles and the need to encourage 'an increased emphasis on practical learning strategies' (p.54).



### Ways of assisting teachers to learn

'The choice of appropriate techniques to facilitate and support learning' is a major issue in managing professional learning (West-Burnham and O'Sullivan, 1998:65). Since primary school teachers within the KEEA district fall within the category of adults, it implies that they have some experiences that the headteachers need to help them to develop. In this context, the headteachers' ability to promote experiential learning is important because 'student experience has always been central to adult education' (Bra and Hoy, 1989, in Weil and McGill, p.71). What the headteachers need in order to facilitate their handling of teacher learning is, therefore, a clear understanding of what constitutes experiential learning.

According to Henry (in Weil and McGill, p.27), experiential learning is viewed differently by different people because the term 'experience' is so broad that it becomes difficult to associate the phrase 'experiential learning' with any particular type of learning. Hence, while Gibbs (1987) looks at experiential learning in terms of four types of activities: planning for experience, increasing awareness, reviewing and reflecting on experience and providing substitute experiences, Boud and Pascoe (1978, *ibid.*) stress the centrality of autonomy, learner control and relevance to activities in the 'real world'. Nevertheless, Henry explains that experiential theorists and educational practitioners seem to agree that experiential learning 'is definitely not the mere memorizing of abstract theoretical knowledge, especially if taught by traditional formal methods of instruction such as lecturing and reading from books'. She further suggests that people seem to agree that experiential learning seeks to ensure that individuals can 'do' rather than merely 'know', but 'differ in their emphasis on what skills enable the desired quality of 'do-ability''<sup>194</sup>.

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<sup>194</sup> Others look at the term from the perspective of *personal involvement* while others stress *practical involvement* or both. The writer explains that personal involvement is intended to make the learning experience meaningful to the learner's personal development. This involves making the individual conscious of his/her own needs and desires so that he/she would, ultimately, develop the capacity for making informed and constructive choices. It may also involve the personal development of 'higher cognitive goals like analytical, evaluative and synthesizing skills. Practical involvement, on the other

In the light of the problem of definition, I have specifically limited the concept of experiential learning within the context of this work *to the type of learning that one acquires as a result of one's active involvement in a given activity and utilization of related previously acquired knowledge through a minimal external influence*. I must acknowledge that the idea of *minimal* as it appears in my definition is relative because what may seem to be a minimal external influence to teacher 'A' may not be the same for teacher 'B'.

Just as getting a universally acceptable definition for experiential learning is problematic, it is equally difficult to prescribe a particular approach to it. In a qualitative study conducted by Henry to explore meanings that a sample of people engaged in experiential learning attached to the term, eight categories of learning experiences emerged with about 50 suggested approaches (Henry, p.31). West-Burnham and O'Sullivan, like Harrison, identify action research as one strategy by which the headteacher could improve their teachers' learning. Hitchcock and Hughes (1987) explain that the purpose of an action research project is to improve a situation through active intervention and in collaboration with the parties involved. It does not simply contribute to knowledge, but provides practitioner-relevant information. West-Burnham and O'Sullivan also explain that action research provides a professionally valid technique<sup>195</sup>, which enhances the actual process of work. It does

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hand, stresses three things: application, giving the learner control of learning and stressing the benefits of active learning for the learning process itself (p.28-29).

<sup>195</sup> Another technique associated with professional learning is 'mentoring' (see Tomlinson, 1995:38-40 and West-Burnham, and O'Sullivan, 1998:72-73). Tomlinson defines mentoring as a form of teaching that promotes learning. He suggests that the mentoring role of the headteacher involves guiding teachers to gain awareness and critical understanding of a range of pedagogical issues that are necessary for planning their teaching. It also involves coaching. By this, headteachers are required to offer direct assistance and support for teaching activity. The writer cautions against the temptation of adopting a 'mere coaching' approach. Instead, he recommends that headteachers use reflective coaching, which would take into consideration the previous related experiences, and understanding of the teachers, thereby making the coaching relationship an interactive one.

not 'diminish or detract from, the core purpose' of the research; hence they stress 'it is highly cost effective and congruent with the notion of teacher as learner accepting personal responsibility for improvement'.

West-Burnham on the other hand, distinguishes between 'mentoring' and 'coaching'. He sees mentoring as an act that is primarily concerned with 'listening, understanding and aiding reflection', while coaching 'is much more concerned with practice and implies active intervention'. Coaching is further described as 'a helping process designed to translate understanding into actual practice. According to him, 'it is very much about perceptions, negotiating, understanding and then identifying strategies, implementing them and reviewing change' (p.72). He identifies the following skills and qualities as necessary for achieving success in coaching:

- active listening to ensure genuine understanding;
- empathising and showing genuineness;
- providing accurate feedback;
- confronting negativity;
- analysing performance;
- acting as a source of information;
- offering encouragement and support;
- creating opportunities;
- critically reviewing options; and helping to create a picture of ideal performance.

### ***Personal and interpersonal competencies***

Of late, employers in both business and service organizations have increasingly attached importance to the type of people they recruit as leaders. This is because, as Thompson (2001:357) put it, 'it is people who ultimately determine whether or not

competitive advantage is created and sustained'. Without the right type of people, the writer suggests, organizations cannot meet 'the needs and expectations of their customers more effectively than their competitors'. Hence in guidelines for writing references on behalf of job seekers, for example, recruiting officers often place emphasis information about the applicant's character, attitudes and other personal qualities. These constitute a capacity that exemplifies what MacBeath and Myers (1999:2) refer to as competencies: personal 'qualities that people bring to their task and infuse the job they do with new meaning and direction'. A 1989 survey report on problems related to recruitment and retention facing the hospitality industry in London, for example, recommended that the industry's employers must 'emphasise the importance of personal qualities' in advertising employment vacancies (Boella, 1996:61).

The foregoing underscores the relevance of the headteacher' emphasis on the importance of personal and interpersonal qualities in their work. As described earlier some of the headteachers identified *fairness and firmness* as well as tolerance and patience as pertinent competencies they needed. Being fair is a competence that emerged in MacBeath's (1998:91) study into expectations of school leaders. The researcher reported that almost all parents and teachers who took part in the study expected the headteacher to 'act fairly at all times'. Gardner's (1995) list of qualities of a good leader also affirms the importance of the personal qualities mentioned by the headteachers. She identified the following as essential personal qualities: firmness, faithfulness, honesty, respectfulness, tolerance, empathy, selflessness, sympathy, patience, transparency, discipline, firmness, and visionary.

Personal competencies, such as those listed above, are very important because they could help the headteacher to build and maintain good interpersonal relations with those he/she interacts with in and outside the school. As the MOE (1994) puts it: 'certain personal qualities will help you build and maintain good relationships'; hence 'it is important that you are friendly with your staff, parents and members of the

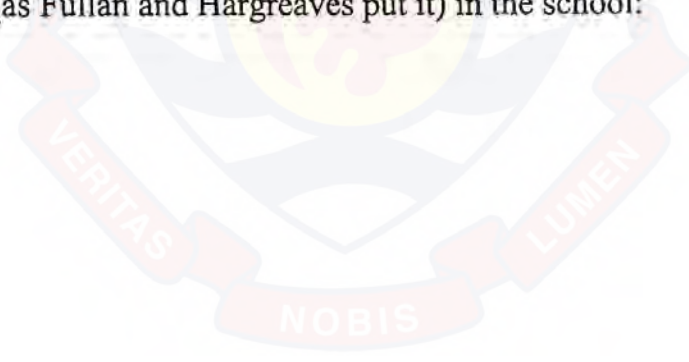
community. Moreover, you will meet people with different opinions, so be patient, tactful and tolerant' (p.31).

It is perhaps in this light that eight of the headteachers stressed that they needed skills that would enable them to relate well with the public. One (RUS1) explained that relating well with the public was essential because the school could not operate without the support of the community: 'you have to deal with the SMC, the PTA, the Chief so that they can help you in terms of need.' Another emphasised the need for heads to maintain good relations especially with 'those who matter in the community' because they would be in the position of 'supporting you to achieve your objectives'. The reasons for which the headteachers required competence in building good public relations suggest to me that they thought about school-public relations in terms of transaction. This trend has a parallel in the business industry where customer relations are considered a viable tool for enhancing the sale of goods. This is reflected in LeBoeuf's (1987:46) advice:

In any business, people who deal directly with the customers can make or break the business. Make a good impression and the customer buys, multiplies, and comes back. It's as simple as that. And the more service-oriented the business is, the more crucial it becomes to have front-line people who know how to sell themselves'.

Thus, dealing with public affairs and maintaining good relations with the public have become an integral part of the job of primary school headteachers in Ghana for two basic reasons; Firstly, because the primary school system in Ghana does not have a public relations officer attached to schools. Yet the head teacher needs to receive parents, interact with opinion leaders in the community, receive visitors and explain school issues that are of public concern. Moreover, basic schools in Ghana have, since the introduction of the 1987 Educational Reform, become community-based. The community through the SMCs support the schools financially; hence, as the headteachers argued above, it was essential that the school, through the headteacher, should initiate and maintain good relations with the public.

Another dimension of interpersonal relations identified by the headteachers is internal human relation. This involves the establishment of relationships between the headteacher and other members of the school: the teachers, pupils, and food vendors in the school. This, according to the headteachers, was necessary because they could not run the school alone. As one (RUS6) put it, 'what the community expects the school to do is so numerous and time-consuming that the headteacher alone cannot meet these expectations'. Hence, according to him, there was the need for the head to promote teamwork in the school. He declared, 'without teamwork, your work will be difficult'<sup>196</sup>. The importance of developing teamwork in schools has been emphasised by writers in the field of school leadership. For example, Dean (1995:74) asserts that research has increasingly proved that 'the school where the staff work as a team taking decisions together is more successful than the school where all decisions are made by the teacher'. The question however is, 'what should the headteacher do to promote teamwork in the school? Fullan and Hargreaves (1992:3) have suggested the following as characteristics that are necessary for creating team spirit or *interactive professionalism* (as Fullan and Hargreaves put it) in the school:



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<sup>196</sup>Mortimore *et al.*'s, (1988) study also suggests that effective schools demonstrate practices that encourage teachers' active involvement in decision making in the school. These views are supported by MacBeath and Myers' (1999:59-60) study involving some European and USA headteachers which further affirms 'importance of working with teams.

**Table 14.4: Characteristics of team-oriented schools**

Fullan and Hargreaves' interactive professionalism	Critchley and Casey's features of properly functioning team
<p><b>It occurs when:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers are allowed greater powers of discretion in making decisions;</li> <li>• Teachers make these decisions with their colleagues;</li> <li>• Joint decisions extend beyond the sharing of resources, ideas and other immediate practicalities to critical reflection on the purpose and value of what teachers teach and how;</li> <li>• Teachers are committed to norms of continuous improvement in the school;</li> <li>• Teachers are more fundamentally accountable as they open their classroom doors and engage in dialogue, action and assessment of their work with other adults inside and outside their schools</li> </ul>	<p><b>When:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People care for each other;</li> <li>• People are open and truthful;</li> <li>• There is a high level of trust;</li> <li>• Decisions are made by consensus;</li> <li>• There is a strong team commitment;</li> <li>• Conflict is faced up to and worked through;</li> <li>• People really listen to ideas and to feelings;</li> <li>• Feelings are expressed freely;</li> <li>• Process issues (tasks and feelings) are reviewed.</li> </ul>

Source: Dean (1995:75).

## Summary

In this chapter I have critically examined the concepts of *competence* and *competency* in the light of literature and opinions expressed by the KEEA headteachers. It emerged from the discussion that the term competence could be understood from two perspectives: generic and specific. The *generic* perspective encompasses both personal qualities and non-personal abilities, while the *specific* perspective limits itself to non-personal abilities, with personal qualities being referred to as competency. The discussion further suggested that although the competence-competency dichotomy simplifies the understanding of the concepts, in practice, the two concepts do not operate differently in an individual. The distinction is, therefore, for the sake of convenience and for academic argument. It was also evident from the literature and views expressed by the KEEA heads that the issue of language is crucial in understanding competence.

It further emerged that the headteachers were concerned with two main competences: those that relate directly to tasks they perform: administrative and professional competences and those that influence their task performance indirectly: personal and interpersonal competencies. Ability to manage school finance, specifically, the ability to keep financial records, was given much premium by the heads. In addition, they needed to develop their pedagogical and andragogical skills. School-based research (action research) and teamwork also emerged as important tools by which the processes of learning could be improved by headteachers.





## CHAPTER 15

# HEADSHIP TASKS: THE INTERPLAY OF THE SCHOOL'S MISSION, HEAD'S VISION AND EXPECTATIONS

### Introduction

The previous chapter suggests that headteachers' possession of relevant competences and competencies is a necessary condition for their efficient accomplishment of leadership tasks. This implies that knowledge about headteachers' tasks is indispensable when considering whether or not a headteacher is competent. Issues related to the duties of headteachers have featured prominently in school improvement research<sup>197</sup>. In this chapter, I discuss tasks performed by the headteachers, in the light of schools' mission as it prevails in Ghana, the head's vision for the school and internal and external expectations. The discussion seeks to establish the driving force behind the headteachers' tasks. I begin the discussion with a review of the tasks in the light of the literature. Thereafter I relate these tasks to the school's mission, the headteachers' own vision for the school and what teachers, pupils and parents expect from them (headteachers), with the hope of determining whether the school's mission, head's own vision and expectations (insiders' and outsiders') drive what the headteacher does in school in any way. I conclude by summarising the major issues emerging from the discussion.

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<sup>197</sup>This is exemplified by Mahony, MacBeath and Moos (in MacBeath, 1998:112-124), Southworth's (1995) investigation into primary headship, Saran and Trafford's (1990:103-104) review of studies on managerial work, Glasman and Heck's (1996) article titled *Role-based evaluation of principals*:

## What KEEA primary headteachers do at school

My data show that tasks that the KEEA primary school heads performed were varied. It was therefore very difficult for me to fully capture everything that they did in the school because, while some of their tasks were routinely done, others were situational. The nature of their tasks is reflected in comments such as 'at times, the head himself does not know what his task will be the next moment' (see p. 109), and 'in fact, what I do in a day cannot be spelt out at one sitting' (a rural head).

The fact that the headteachers themselves felt they could not in all situations know what their tasks would be the next moment seems to support Southworth's (1995:1) argument that 'we still know relatively little about what a headteacher actually does' in the school. In this light, I cannot claim that the tasks that emerged from my data are exhaustive: they constitute only a part of what the headteachers really do in the school. As shown on p.115, the tasks that emerged from my data are classified into two: *direct pedagogical tasks* (DPT) and *non-direct pedagogical tasks* (NPT). Each of these categories is discussed in detail below:

### The direct pedagogical task (DPT)

The major DPT tasks identified with the headteachers are:

#### *Supervision of teaching and learning*

Supervision of teaching and learning emerged as an important task among the headteachers (see chapter 8). Evans (1995) explains that different people view

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*developing an appraisal system* and Davies' (1987) study of British primary school headteachers, as well as Fullan's (1991:145-146) work on 'where principals are'.

supervision differently. Carroll (2002:1) corroborates Evans' explanation by arguing that 'even in instances where there is conceptual agreement on what it means, there are still differences on how it is operationalized'. To Robbins and Alvy (1995:100), 'supervision is providing support for teachers so they become the best they can be'. By this definition, one may conclude that a supervisor's task in the school encompasses all activities in which he/she engages as a way of offering teachers assistance that they require for enhancing their classroom performance. Glickman (1995:4-5) also looks at supervision as 'the function in schools that draws together the discrete elements of instructional effectiveness into whole-school action'. He explains that it is a process by which a person or a group of people is made responsible for providing a link between individual teacher needs and organizational goals, so that individuals within the school can work in harmony toward their vision of what the school should be. Unlike Robbins and Alvy's definition which does not specify the type of support that supervision should offer, Glickman specifies two things with which the supervisor should be concerned: *individual teacher's needs and goals of the school*.

To Musaazi (1995), supervision comprises 'all actions taken to improve or ensure the achievement of instructional objectives, when teaching and learning are in progress'. He seems to agree with Robbins and Alvy as well as Glickman that the goal of supervision is to improve teaching and learning. This implies that a major task of the supervisor is to motivate teachers to work enthusiastically towards the promotion of learning in the school.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>198</sup>In contrast to Robbins and Alvy and Glickman, whose definitions seem to favour 'support for teachers' as an approach to supervision, however, Musaazi fails to be explicit in his approach. The phrase 'all actions', as used in his definition is not clear. One wonders if by that he is suggesting that 'the end justifies the means'; hence what matters is the attainment of instructional goals but not the means by which they are attained? I think that specifying the action to be taken towards achieving the instructional objectives would have been more helpful to the supervisor. This point is illuminated by Byars' and Rue's (1998:3), specification of 'encouragement' in their definition: 'supervision is

In Ghana, the GES has, in recent times, identified supervision as a viable means by which public (government funded) schools could catch up with the distinct performance of private (non-government) schools in Ghana. A 1998 report of the GES Council on the re-structuring and operations of the GES, for instance, notes that 'the private schools with less qualified and less trained teachers perform better than public schools. The major reason is the more *effective supervision* (my emphasis) in private schools'<sup>199</sup> (p.20, item 6.9). I have reservations about the GES' comparison of public sector schools (which are non-profit-making) with private sector schools (which are geared towards profit) because the two do not operate under the same conditions. Nevertheless, I agree with the idea that effective supervision can make a difference in public schools. Glickman (1995:4) highlights the significance of supervision by observing that 'schools that make use of effective supervision are able to achieve their objectives better than those that neglect supervision'. He further proposes, that 'supervision can challenge teachers to think abstractly about their work' (p.21-22). The foregoing emphasises the importance of the headteachers' supervisory task. This notwithstanding, the fact that the GES has delegated the task of supervision to circuit supervisors raises a question as to what really makes the primary school head a supervisor.

### **What makes the primary school head a supervisor?**

As mentioned earlier, the GES appoints circuit supervisors who are specifically tasked with instructional supervisory tasks in basic schools. In each educational district, a

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concerned with encouraging the members of a work unit to contribute positively toward accomplishing the organization's goals and objectives'

<sup>199</sup> Private schools in Ghana are privately owned, and are run on business lines. More pupils from private schools are able to score higher marks in the Basic Education Certificate Exams (BECE) to enter the senior secondary school than those from the public schools. The distinctive performance of pupils from the private school is often attributed to, what I term, entrepreneurial supervision. One wonders why the report seems to make the performance of private schools the key variable promoting effective supervision in the public schools. I think there is the need to delve deeply into the reasons for the private schools' better performance.

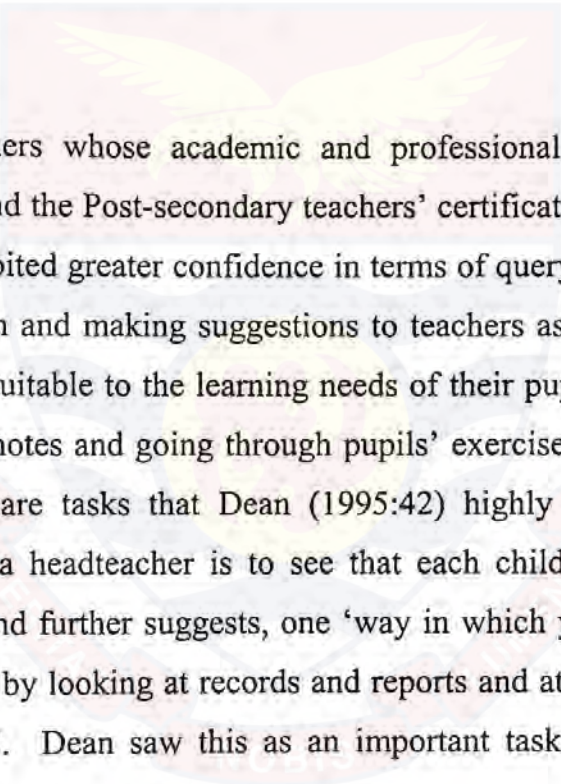
circuit supervisor is assigned to about 15 schools and charged, among other things, with the responsibility to:

- promote teaching and learning in schools;
- interpret educational policies to teachers and help them understand educational policy objectives, e.g. curriculum;
- organize 'INSET' for the professional development of teachers;
- monitor the achievement and performance of pupils and staff. (Manpower and Training Division, GES, n.d.)

If these are supervisory roles assigned to circuit supervisors, then why should primary school heads burden themselves with the task of supervising the work of teachers? These tasks are reflected in comments such as: 'I have to go to the classrooms to find out whether teachers are teaching and the children are learning' (RUS1) and 'I sit in the class to listen to how he (*referring to teacher*) is delivering the lesson and how the children are responding' (UBS1). They also supervise pupils' learning: 'I move around to check the pupils' exercise books and advise teachers where there's the need' (UBS9). In addition, they supervised the pre-teaching preparation of teachers by vetting their (teachers') lesson notes as a way of ensuring that teachers prepared well for their teaching tasks, that lessons planned were related to the syllabus and that their proposed methods of lesson presentation were suitable for promoting pupils' learning. One head explained, 'I see to it that all teachers present their lesson notes. I vet them and then give their lesson notes back to them to go and teach' (RUS3).

What I found intriguing is that what some of them meant by 'vetting teachers' lesson notes' was just getting confirmation that the teachers had written down something in their notes for endorsement. They did not go through any rigorous check to see whether stated objectives were achievable, teaching-learning aids were relevant to the

lesson, or stated method of presentation was suitable for the pupils. What they did involved making a tick with a red pen and endorsing the notes to prove to circuit supervisors that they were in control. It was obvious, from my observation, that those heads who adopted this approach lacked the confidence they required to carry out this activity effectively. Hence, if they had their own way, they would have avoided the task of vetting lesson notes of their teachers. This was prevalent in schools where the academic and professional qualifications of headteachers were lower than the teachers whose lesson notes they were required to vet.



Among those headteachers whose academic and professional qualification were beyond GCE 'O' level and the Post-secondary teachers' certificate, however, the case was different. They exhibited greater confidence in terms of querying aspects of what their teachers had written and making suggestions to teachers as to ways of making their lesson plans more suitable to the learning needs of their pupils. The practice of vetting teachers' lesson notes and going through pupils' exercise books to check the progress of their work are tasks that Dean (1995:42) highly recommends. She observes, 'your task as a headteacher is to see that each child is considered as a developing individual' and further suggests, one 'way in which you can monitor the progress of each child is by looking at records and reports and at teachers' notes and at the work of children'. Dean saw this as an important task of the headteacher because,

It is a very difficult task for teachers to ensure that all their children are learning. It is very easy for teachers to provide for the middle ability group within the class, dealing with the less able as and when they can and assuming that the most able will get on because of their ability. It is the responsibility of the headteacher to see that there is provision for all children (p.40).

Although the foregoing confirms the importance of the headteachers' role in supervising teaching and learning activities in the school, one wonders if the supervisory role of the headteacher does not duplicate the duties of circuit officers. To what extent does the supervisory role of the headteacher differ from that of the circuit officer? I address this question by drawing a lesson from the business sector.

### **Headteacher's versus circuit officer's supervisory tasks: a lesson from the business sector**



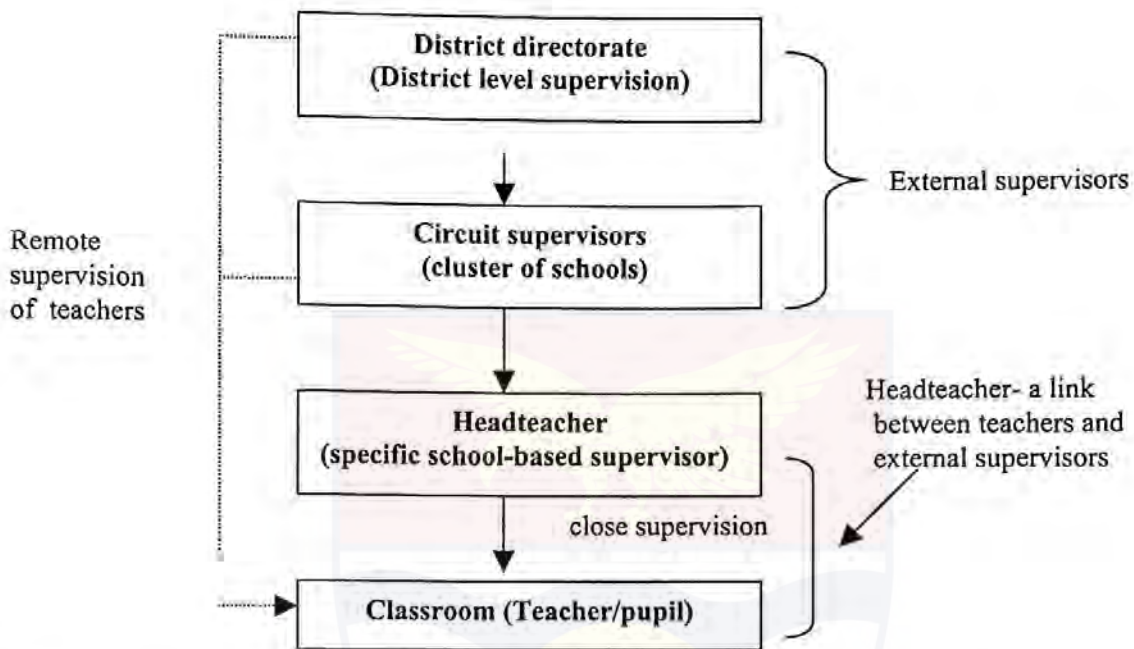
The KEEA primary school headteacher occupies a supervisory position that can be likened to what Byars and Rue refer to as 'first level of management' (p.3) or what Evans refers to as 'front-line manager or first-line manager' (p.114-115) in the business sector. My reasons are as follows: firstly, in the business sector a frontline manager is often referred to as 'supervisor' because it is argued that he/she 'operates at close range' in dealing with his workforce whereas management controls such workforce remotely'. This somehow explains the situation of the primary school head, and why he/she performs supervisory roles. Like the front-line manager in business, the primary school head deals directly with teachers and has the chance of more closely monitoring their activities in the classroom than the circuit officers.

Secondly, the supervisor in business is regarded as a member of the most junior level of management in the organization who serves as a 'link-person' between top levels of management and the workforce. As a 'link-person,' he/she is 'a boss in one sphere - his work group - and subordinate in another - his boss' (Evans). This characteristic is also true in the case of the primary school headteacher. As illustrated in figure 15.1 below, the headteacher occupies the lowest step on the supervision ladder of the KEEA district education unit of the GES, and also serves as a link between teachers,

who constitute his/her workforce, and the circuit officer. Moreover, at the level of his/her school he/she is considered as the head of the teachers (perhaps this is why some writers prefer using the term *head teacher* to *headteacher* when referring to school heads), whereas in relation to his/her circuit officer, he/she is a subordinate.

Thirdly, the writer explains that the task of supervision cuts across every level of the management structure and that 'every manager is a supervisor'. The only difference between the 'front-line' manager and other managers, Evans further explains, is that 'front-line' managers have 'subordinates who are not managers but operatives, clerks, fitters etc.' Hence, while the authority to plan and control the work of his/her group is delegated to him/her, 'all he can delegate to the group is the work itself' (p.116). That every manager is a supervisor is also true in the case of the KEEA District Education Service. As illustrated in **Figure 15.1**, the headteachers perform supervisory roles, just as the directors at the district headquarters of the GES and the circuit officers do, but at different levels. Whereas the district directorate and circuit supervisors operate from outside the school, the headteacher operates within the school. Since the headteacher has closer interaction with the teachers, his role in ensuring that teachers carry out their teaching task with much diligence to promote quality learning among pupils is crucial.





**Figure 15.1: The headteacher as a junior member of the KEEA District/Circuit supervisory team and a link person.**

It is perhaps for this reason that the GES emphasizes the supervisory task of the primary head. The *Headteachers' Handbook* (MOE, 1994), for instance, stresses :

It is your responsibility to make sure that instructional time is put to very good use. [...] You have to make sure that both teachers and pupils are coming to school. Once they are there, they should be engaged in learning activities (p.38)

Following the foregoing clarification, and considering the definitions discussed earlier, I have within the context of this discussion defined supervision as:

A process by which a headteacher, through a non-threatening but purposeful interaction and the provision of requisite material and non-material support, inspires self-confidence, enthusiasm and hard work in his/her teachers and pupils towards the promotion of quality teaching and learning in the school<sup>200</sup>

Interpreting how the headteachers carried out and talked about their supervisory tasks, I found within the context of my definition that the majority of them viewed the aim of their supervision from the perspective of 'hierarchy' and 'teacher accountability'. This is evident, firstly, in the strategies that characterised their supervision of teachers' work: some sat in the classroom while teaching and learning were in progress and others walked up and down the verandah of the classroom block occasionally watching what was going on in the classrooms. The instructional supervision by walking around (ISBWA) technique was more commonly used by the urban headteachers than their colleagues in the rural schools. Although Fitzgerald claims that this technique, which he terms 'Management by walking around (MBWA)' has become an acceptable practice 'since Tom Peters coined the term in the early 80's' (1998:1), the way it was used by some of the headteachers, from my observation, was very intimidating to the teachers.

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<sup>200</sup> This definition implies that the headteacher should, in the course of supervising activities of his/her teachers, create an enabling environment that would encourage teachers to carry out their task of promoting learning in the classroom with much enthusiasm. In this light, supervision should be such that teachers would see it as part of their professional development but not as a tool for judging his/her worth as a teacher.

Another strategy identified in the data is that some of the headteachers neither walked up and down nor sat in the classrooms, but positioned themselves at a vantage point from which they could see all that the teacher was doing in the classroom. As one urban head said, 'sometimes, I just stay somewhere to see how the teachers are delivering the lesson'. One rural head explained that it was necessary for them to monitor the teacher's work because 'at times these teachers just relax' (RUS2). Secondly, comments such as 'I ensure that teachers are well behaved. They shouldn't be standing on the veranda wasting instructional time' (UBS8) and 'I go round to see to it that teachers give adequate work to the children because that is what the circuit supervisors will look for' (RUS4) connote *accountability*.

Their focus on accountability seems to have been influenced by the fact that the GES requires them to report on their teachers from time to time. To fulfil this task, they are to supervise teachers by way of performance assessment: 'in order to be able to give a fair assessment of them, you should have studied their performance and gathered reliable information on them' (MOE, 1994:188). The document further describes teacher assessment as 'the process of comparing a teacher's performance against the standards and expectations of GES in order to decide how well the teacher does his or her job' (ibid.). It is perhaps the GES' reference to 'teacher assessment' and the definition attached to it that had influenced the headteachers to view supervision from an accountability perspective. This is because 'performance assessment' in Ghana's teacher education has long been associated with accountability. Each of the headteachers, by virtue of attending a teacher training college, had experienced the way some tutors assessed student teachers during teaching practices. A 1982 personal experience recounted by Oduro (JEM, 1998:64-82) exemplifies the nature of this experience<sup>201</sup>.

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<sup>201</sup> Referring to his encounter with supervisors during his post-middle student-teaching practice at Enchi Presby Primary school, in the Western region of Ghana, Oduro argues that 'even though the principle underlying student teaching assessment is directed towards professional development, the

Oduro's (1998) narrative provides a clear picture of what prevailed in the schools of the 17 headteachers. Hence, it is possible that they might have internalised the threatening nature of the assessment to the extent that they felt that once they operated with the label 'teacher assessment,' they had to adopt a hierarchically intimidating approach to ensure that their teachers were always busy in the classroom. I also presume, based on the problem of confidence associated with some of the heads, that such hierarchical and accountability techniques were used by the headteachers as a defence mechanism to cover up their inadequacies.

What makes this situation more puzzling is the fact that guidelines provided by the GES on the conduct of teacher assessment seemed not to have changed their attitude towards supervision. To make the assessment process beneficial to the teachers, the GES, provides the following guidelines<sup>202</sup>:

- it should be directed towards helping them to improve upon their work;
- it should result in building up their self-confidence;

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most crucial moment in the life of the student teacher is when a supervisor is present to assess his/her teaching performance'. He explains that, as a student teacher, he often found himself in a frustrating mood whenever his teaching performance was to be assessed because: 'the supervisors did not create the atmosphere for me to view the assessment process as part of my professional development. Supervision never started with a pre-observation conference to enable the supervisor identifies himself with my problems. Some often entered when the class had already begun, collected my lesson notebook, sat comfortably at the back of the class and started rating my teaching. Others quietly positioned themselves in an obscure point outside the classroom and suspiciously watched through the window as if I was a prisoner under police surveillance. After each assessed section, the supervisor held a post-observation conference with me which always turned out to be a one-way communication session characterised by open criticism as I received information about my performance'.

<sup>202</sup> Although these guidelines are development oriented, it was evident that the headteachers saw supervision more as a means of enhancing their authority and control over the teachers than supporting them. This reflects the idea of 'authority' and 'power' that characterised the way they viewed the concept of school leadership as I discussed \*\*\*in chapter 7. Such a situation raises a question as to how the contents of the Headteachers' Handbook impact on the attitude of the KEEA headteachers. Is it that the headteachers did not read the Handbook hence they were not aware of the guidelines the GES had prescribed for the conduct of teacher assessment? Or is it that they read the Handbook but could not conceptualise the phenomenon of teacher assessment in the same way as the GES? Such questions seem to support my earlier proposition that the provision of Handbooks for headteachers *per se* is not a guarantee that they will understand concepts and perform their tasks as policy makers prescribe. These are issues that headteacher professional developers within the KEEA district as well as educational researchers need to help address.

- it should help to motivate them;
- it should never be turned into a fault-finding exercise; and
- it should give teachers ample opportunity to contribute to the follow-up discussion

Although, some may argue that the headteachers' authoritarian approach to supervision 'has the strength of making teachers more accountable to public', it reflects what Fullan and Hargreaves (1992:162) classify as 'traditional teacher evaluation,' which 'does not fit too well with the ideas of staff development'. This is because basic assumptions of staff development models require 'an emphasis on co-operation, collegiality and decisions from the bottom-up rather than from the top down' (Dawe 1989, in *ibid.*)

In contrast with the hierarchical and judgemental ideas exhibited by the 17 headteachers, three of them saw their supervisory tasks in terms of guidance and assistance. These were reflected in comments such as 'through supervision, you get to know these things (*referring to some actions of the teacher that hinder learning among pupils*) and advise the teachers what to do' (RUS2). 'I go round and ask if there is a problem and help the teachers to solve them' (UBS6) and 'I move round to check the pupils' exercise books. If I find a problem with any of them, I discuss it with the teacher and we both find ways of helping the pupil concerned' (UBS9). The clauses, 'advise the teachers what to do', 'help the teachers to solve them' and 'we both find ways of helping the pupil concerned' connote an act of *support*. This reflects Robbins and Alvy's assertion that supervision entails giving teachers the support that they need to enhance their performance. The last clause further connotes the headteachers' collaboration with their teachers to find ways of improving teaching and learning in the classroom. This implies that the heads recognize that they needed the co-operation of teachers in order to achieve the goals for which parents send their children to school, which is primarily to learn.

Nutt recommended as far back as 1920, the recognition of the positive effects of a supervisor's respect for, and co-operation with teachers. Considering that Nutt's literature is almost seven decades old, one may be tempted to dismiss his ideas as being obsolete. Yet, I find his views very relevant to current discourse on the headteacher's supervisory tasks<sup>203</sup>.

Nutt's emphasis on mutual cooperation between the supervisor and supervisees supports the practice of the three KEEA headteachers who involved the teacher in discussing ways of improving pupils' learning. This approach to supervision is likely to make teachers see the headteacher more as a professional leader who is interested in their development than when the headteacher adopts a top-down approach to supervision. As Mussella and Hickcox (in Fullan and Hargreaves, p.163) put it, 'There is a move away from the highly structured, rational and linear characteristics of the traditional approaches to a less hierarchical and, in a sense, less organised set of procedures [...] toward professionalism for teachers'. It is essential, therefore, that those professional developers within the KEEA district education design strategies for changing the top-down trend of supervision as portrayed by the 17 headteachers.

### ***The headteacher as a classroom teacher.***

Some of the headteachers performed a dual role of leading the school and handling classes. This was common in schools, especially those located in rural areas, where

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<sup>203</sup> Writing under the heading *Laying the basis for cooperative teaching*, Nutt at that time advised: 'the supervisor should realize first of all that he makes his contribution to the education of the pupils who are being taught through the work of the teachers who teach under his direction. In order to make a valid, definite contribution to the education of the pupils, the supervisor must secure the hearty cooperation of the teachers in carrying out his ideas. On the other hand, the supervisor must cooperate most heartily with the teachers in the performance of their duties. [...] In other words, both supervisor and teachers should feel that the teaching of the pupils is a mutual undertaking to which each must make his contribution in harmonious cooperation with the other (Nutt, 1920:23).

there were problems related to staffing or where the strength of pupil enrolment was very low (see p.123 and 124).

In general, the headteachers complained about the workload involved in combining their leadership roles with classroom teaching. This was a complaint that cut across the individual and focus group interviews as well as the rural and urban divide. They denounced the idea of 'attached headship' and strongly recommended its abolition. One of them argued, 'It is better that you're not attached to teaching so that you can have time to attend to your correspondence and school records'.

The argument as to whether headteachers should be assigned classes or not, does not seem to be peculiar to the KEEA heads. Dean's (2001:83) review of Mortimore *et al.*'s UK-based study of deputy headteachers, for example, provides a parallel of this; even though their sample comprised deputy heads. Her review shows that the heads had conflicting feelings about their role as classroom teachers. This is in contrast with the situation of the KEEA heads that demonstrated a unanimous denunciation of their teaching tasks. On the one hand, 'they felt it was an advantage in many ways' because 'it enabled them to continue having direct contact with pupils and to provide an example for colleagues'. Such a positive view was not characteristic of the KEEA heads' reaction to the teaching task. On the other hand, the deputy heads 'felt that the dual role put pressure on them because they had too little time to get to know all the children and parents and to support colleagues'. This view supports the KEEA heads' argument that their role as classroom teachers was adversely affecting their effectiveness.

One rural head who demonstrated high indignation about the teaching component of their tasks remarked, 'it's not fair; it's demeaning. I taught for more than fifteen years before I was made a head and I'm still teaching. How will my teachers respect me as

head?' Although this comment came from only one head, I could infer from the resentful comments made by most of the attached heads that the 'demeaning' role was a common concern for them. The fact that some of them regarded the performance of a task meant for the classroom teacher to be degrading further strengthens my proposition that 'authority, power and prestige' are factors that influence everything that the Ghanaian primary headteacher does in the school.

The practice of making primary heads substantive classroom teachers, as it operated in the KEEA schools, appears to be highly incongruous with the GES' quest for quality improvement in pupils' learning. None of the attached headteachers I observed was found to have utilized the teaching time indicated on the timetable (see appendix 5) to the full benefit of pupils. In most cases, pupils were left on their own in the classroom while the head attended to other non-teaching tasks. Left on their own, such classes were often characterised by purposeless noise, fighting and bullying. Some of the heads tried to control the situation by occupying pupils with class exercises (see p.111 -113). In most cases, I saw that the headteachers set as many exercises as they could, especially in mathematics, on the chalkboard for the pupils to do. In other cases, the class prefect was asked to occupy the pupils with singing and story telling. In yet other instances, the children were asked to go out and play outdoor games. The boys played football while the girls played a traditional game called 'ampe'.

In general, the heads agreed that leaving pupils on their own for a long time in the classroom, while not appropriate, was in the prevailing circumstances the best strategy they could adopt. One head illuminated the practice as follows: 'I have chosen to teach pupils in Primary Six (*who are aged 11+*) because, they're grown. When I set work for them and I'm not around, they can control themselves and do the exercises given them.'<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>204</sup>Another dimension of the problem associated with the model of attaching heads to classroom teaching is that it seems to be making primary school headship unattractive to some of the young teachers in the rural areas. One rural primary school teacher I opportunistically interviewed during my



I find the concerns expressed in the foregoing discussion to be critical in the implementation of the Ghana Government's free compulsory and universal basic education (FCUBE) policy, which aims at creating equal learning opportunities for all children of school going age in the country. To me, equal opportunity implies that every pupil whether in a rural or urban school must have equal access to full teaching/learning interaction with his/her teacher in the classroom. He/she must also have equal exposure to all subjects provided on the teaching timetable through the guidance of an accessible teacher. Hence, inequalities emanating from dual roles of headteachers require urgent corrective attention of the educational authorities in Ghana, because it became increasingly apparent from the evidence that improving pupils' learning in the primary school requires the assistance of a full-time dedicated classroom teacher. So it is essential that efforts are made to relieve heads of their classroom roles to enable him or her to, as Dean puts it, have 'time to deal with his or her responsibilities, particularly those of supporting other staff'; and replace them with teachers who will be solely responsible for teaching pupils.

### **The non-direct pedagogical task (NPT)**

'Every school', according to Dean (1995:104), 'has a number of tasks to be done which are not part of the teaching process'. MacBeath, Moos and Riley (in Leithwood, p.237-242) concur with this view, in their exploration of how headteachers in three European countries behave, spend their time and order their priorities as follows: 'increasingly, English heads had to take on many tasks which, in

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visit to one of the schools stressed that he was not interested in being a head because it was too demanding. This problem was highlighted by one of the GES officers who participated in my studies, as follows, 'the workload is quite tedious but because of my position I can't talk. You (*referring to the GES*) want them to perform as a classroom teacher, financial manager, perform as an administrator, liaise with the community and a whole lot of things, and you want them to be effective! It's humanly impossible. If they can be detached, and given an encouraging incentive as rural heads, it'll help the schools. As it is, it's discouraging the headteachers and very soon we may be facing a problem getting young teachers to take up headship posts in the rural areas'.

their view, they had not come into education to perform, which they do not have the skills for, and which did not lead towards the vision they had for the school'. The major NPT tasks identified with the KEEA heads are discussed below:

### *Inspecting building projects*

The headteachers' task of supervising was not limited to teachers' work in the classroom. It also involved supervising the process of cleaning and tidying the school campus: 'I come to school very early and see to it that the teacher on duty goes round the children to see that they tidy the school' (RUS4). It further involved ensuring that vendors of food in the school compound maintained hygienic conditions: 'even though I'm not a health inspector, I have to see to it that the food that they prepare is well cooked' (RUS3). In addition, they ensured that building projects in their schools jointly initiated by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in conjunction with the MOE were properly carried out<sup>205</sup>.

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<sup>205</sup> Even though, on the surface, it may appear that the headteachers' task of supervising such projects will be the same, in content, as their teaching/learning supervision tasks, I observed that they were not the same. Unlike their DPT supervisory roles, which were characterised by hierarchy and the exercise of authority, their approach to supervising the building projects was benign: they showed a more cooperative attitude towards the site workers. (This was interesting because one would have thought that the heads would, in general, have adopted a more lenient leadership approach towards their teachers rather than the project workers). What they did on the site could be likened to the work of a watchman or a security officer at the exit gate of a factory, whose primary duty is to protect materials and products of the factory from being pilfered. It is this picture that made me use the term inspection instead of supervision. In three schools, which were beneficiaries of WSD and USAID-sponsored projects (involving the construction or renovation of classroom blocks), I observed that the heads' major concern was to ensure that the workers did not steal the building materials. Justifying these inspection tasks, one of them explained that some building materials, such as cement and iron rod, were under their custody; hence they were accountable to the sponsors and the GES for the way they (materials) were utilized. One female head explained that there was a foreman who had been charged by the contractor in charge of her school's project to ensure that the work was properly done; yet she was compelled to monitor what they were doing because headteachers were expected to report to the sponsors whenever they visited the school. Two others, who said they were secretaries to their villages' Development Planning Committees, claimed the government's policy of community participation in school management requires that communities provide labour, as part of their contribution to such projects. Hence, as secretaries, they had to be at the site not only to encourage inhabitants of their villages to work, but also to ensure that everybody took part in the communal work.

It is pertinent to question why such a task should occupy the time of already overstretched headteachers. Admittedly, 'the condition of school buildings affects teaching and learning in many ways', and the successful completion of the building projects had an ultimate benefit for pupils' learning. But should that long-term goal prevent pupils from enjoying immediate full contact hours with headteachers who handled their classes? The evidence that pupils in classes handled by attached headteachers within the KEEA district hardly benefit fully from approved contact hours (see p. 111-113), seems quite problematic. This is because schools in Ghana do not have support teachers to assist them in their work. Moreover, there is evidence to demonstrate a 'connection between children's' achievement and the time given to learning, especially the time on task' (Denham and Lieberman (1980, quoted in Dean, p.84).

### *Performing office work*

Office work is another task that was commonly mentioned by the headteachers. Dean (1995) acknowledges the indispensability of the headteacher's office work by observing: 'as headteacher you find yourself in charge of the school office' (p.106). She further observes, 'the smaller the school, the more important your role as far as the office is concerned' (ibid.). This notion is perhaps based on the fact that her writing focuses on a cultural milieu that provides administrative support for headteachers who head schools that are considered to be large in terms of population. In Ghana, and within the KEEA district, the situation is different because the practice of providing support staff to undertake administrative and clerical tasks in primary schools does not exist. Hence, all headteachers, irrespective of the size of their schools, are deeply involved in office work. If there is any difference at all, then it is

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that heads of large schools with student and staff populations of over 500 have more office work to grapple with than those with smaller populations.

I found the KEEA heads' office-related task 'fragmented into many varied and short-term activities' (Davies, see p.26-28). Some of these activities related to record-keeping, while others related to human interaction and encompassed issues concerning documentation, pupils and teachers' welfare, securing and maintaining school equipment, meeting with parents, opinion leaders, educational authorities and many others. I further observed that constraints imposed by these tasks created a situation where the detached headteachers, especially in the urban schools, tended to spend more time in dealing with external people than they did with pupils and teachers in, their schools. This is because, as reflected in the following comments, they were the point of contact for all visitors to the school: 'as a headteacher [...], you receive visitors. [...] some will come and they will be with you most of the time [...] and you cannot carry out any day's work you have planned' (UBS8).

A parallel of this trend is found in MacBeath, Moos and Riley's finding in their study that English headteachers spent less time with children than their Danish counterparts because of 'pressures from outside' (p.240). The only difference is that, whereas English headteachers have deputies to support them, and schools have support teachers who assist in facilitating learning in the classroom, the KEEA headteachers were responsible for everything in the school. Of course, in some of the schools the heads had appointed assistant headteachers who carried out some delegated duties.

Yet, my interaction with some of these assistant headteachers suggests that they had very low commitment towards that job because they saw it as voluntary<sup>206</sup>.

### *The headteacher's health-related tasks*

One striking aspect of their NPT activities is the health-related roles they performed. These roles were reflected in practices whereby the headteacher ensured that food prepared and sold to children in the school was well prepared. As one explained, 'if the children don't take in good food, it affects their health so even though I'm not a health inspector, I have to see to it that the food they prepare is well cooked' (RUS3). In addition, the headteachers were responsible for creating conditions that would minimise the sustenance of injuries and general illness among pupils.

Some people in Ghana hold the opinion that schools, unlike the mining industries or manufacturing companies, are a minimum risk to health and safety, hence not much concern should be given to this aspect of school life. Pantry (1997:1) also notes that 'generally schools are run without risk to health and safety'. Yet, my observation on the field, especially in the rural schools, suggests that some conditions within the school pose a threat to the health of both teachers and pupils. An example is the case narrated by a rural head about a school girl who slipped at a pit latrine and hurt her herself (see p.110). Other health problems with which I found the headteachers grappling, and which I had personally experienced during my days of teaching in the primary school, included malaria, nausea and vomiting, fainting, diarrhoea and

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<sup>206</sup>The GES allows the headteacher to make two types of appointments for the purpose of 'delegating special duties to staff': one is mandatory and is to be based on compulsion. This is reflected in the following directive, 'some duties will need to be allocated even if no one has an interest in them: staff secretary, school treasurer, weekly duty staff, and teachers in charge of ground work, agriculture, sports and games, general singing and health and environmental sanitation' (MOE, p.7). From this directive, it is apparent that the post of assistant headship is purely voluntary. It falls within the second category of appointments the headteacher does, which according to the directive, 'should be made on the basis of teachers' capabilities and interests' (ibid.).

stomach ache. In the event of a pupil or a teacher sustaining injury through accidents or becoming ill, the headteacher was required to provide first aid before referring the case to medical practitioners. Hence, each school was expected to keep a first-aid box. Such situations make the headteachers' health-related role significant<sup>207</sup>.

Although, between the KEEA headteachers and those in the UK, the degree of emphasis on the headteacher's health and safety roles might differ, one common feature emerges: the provision of first aid. However, I observed among the 20 KEEA schools involved in my study that only five of them had first-aid boxes containing drugs such as chloroquine and paracetamol for treating malaria, bandages, plasters, massaging ointment and pairs of scissors. Eleven (seven rural and four urban schools) kept virtually empty first aid boxes, while four did not keep any first aid box. One head explained that he normally bought first aid items during periods of inter-school sporting activities. Apart from two schools where the headteachers had received some form of training in first-aid, none of the others had received any training; yet they were all required to administer first aid treatment to sick pupils. Consequently, some explained that they often asked pupils who fell ill to go home for treatment. In the rural areas, where access to hospital or clinic is very difficult, such practice can prove

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<sup>207</sup> The significance of headteachers' health and safety roles in the school is not peculiar to Ghana's KEEA education district. Pantry reports that a UK charity, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, 'has long campaigned and worked hard to ensure that health and safety is featured in all school activities. It has also lobbied government for the wider inclusion of health and safety in curriculum activities'. In addition, Doe (1992) refer to the existence of a Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) in which local education authorities (LEA) and school governors are charged with the responsibility of 'safeguarding employees and persons, such as children, who may be affected but who are not employees'. Dean (1995:119) further urges headteachers to 'ensure conformity with health and safety legislation'. She explains that governors check to see that headteachers of schools they govern have made adequate provision for first aid, whether staff have been trained in first aid, and whether children are given health and safety training where appropriate. Pantry concurs with this view by explaining that headteachers have 'a legal duty to co-operate with their LEAs and governing bodies so far as is necessary to enable health and safety requirements to be complied with' (p.3).

to be disastrous for a pupil's life. This further underlines the significance of the health-related role of the headteacher.

So far I have discussed some tasks performed by the headteachers from two broad perspectives: those that are directly linked to teaching (DPT) and those that are indirectly linked to teaching (NPT). The discussion of the DPT suggests that combining teaching with the task of supervision is problematic for headteachers. It further suggests that it adversely affects pupils' classroom contacts with their teachers (detached heads). The NPT discussion, also suggests that most of the headteachers performed tasks in some of which they did not have any skills in, and for which they had not been trained.

### **The driving force behind KEEA headteachers' activities: is it the school's mission, head's vision or external expectations?**

A vision, according to Bennis and Nanus (1985:89), 'is a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization [...] a view of a realistic, credible, attractive future of the organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists'

Having a vision for one's organization is characteristic of outstanding leaders (Beare *et al* (1989:107). MacBeath and Myers (1999:6) highlight the importance of vision in their statement that 'without vision, strategy leads to a mundane place'. For a vision to become meaningful, Beare *et al* observes that, it must be shared with members of the school. Dean (1995) corroborates this point by observing that leadership 'means knowing where one is going and working to achieve a shared vision with colleagues'

(p.2). She further stresses that an 'effective school has an effective headteacher who works collaboratively with staff, sharing with them a vision of where the school is going and placing emphasis on achievement' (p.8). That is, the headteacher, in performing his/her leadership role, need to have a clear picture of where he/she wants his/her school to go or what it should be like in the future, and communicate such a picture 'in a way which secures commitment' among teachers. She cautions headteachers to ensure that such a shared vision focuses on 'children's learning' because 'all other aspects of the school are subsidiary' (p.2).

Whereas the tasks performed by the headteachers were varied and differentiated, not much difference existed between them in terms of the visions they had for their schools. A few of them mentioned visions that related to character development, attracting trained teachers, gaining laurels in sports, promoting gender balance among teaching staff and acquiring new classroom blocks. The emphasis that they placed on these desires differed from school to school and between urban and rural headteachers. The vision of ensuring that their schools achieved academic excellence, however, emerged as a common desire among them. This was evident in statements such as (see p.106-107):

I'm expecting high grades for my school, high grades in terms of academic work.

These days, we have inter-schools test competition in English and mathematics organised by the district, I want that every target we set for our pupils will be achieved

In contrast with Dean's caution that 'vision must be about children learning', their concern was first and foremost to ensure that their pupils excelled in the district exams in order that their schools might gain public recognition. The following statements further illuminate this:



If your school does not achieve your target for the SPAM, you're not respected so I want my children to pass the exams organized by the district education office (RUS5)

To the parents who brought their children to this school, what they expect is that their children should be able to emerge first academically; so my vision is that the pupils should score high marks in the district exams (UBS1).

The fact that the headteachers located their desire for academic excellence within the frame of public recognition suggests that their vision was determined by public expectations. As reflected in UBS1's statement above, one major criterion that most parents used in choosing a school for their children was academic results. Hence, in the view of the headteachers, the level of respect that parents gave to them was determined by his/her schools' examination results. A parallel of this thinking is evident in Black and Dockerell's, (1988:161) observation that politicians see examinations as an essential tool for making the educational system more accountable to the electorate (tax payer), thereby winning their continuous support. Parents both wealthy and poor – also see it as a necessary tool for maintaining social status and for gaining upward social mobility. Hence, 'attempts to minimise or abolish external examinations tend to provoke a public and political outcry'<sup>208</sup>

The Reader's Digest Association Limited (2001:619) defines the term 'mission' as 'a strongly felt aim or calling'. Beare *et al.*, (p.215-216), however, differentiates

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<sup>208</sup>Research has suggested that achieving higher examination results alone does not demonstrate that learning has taken place in pupils. As Gipps (1990:29) observes, examination results *per se* 'is not proof that standards are rising'. Burgess and Adams, (in Murphy and Torrance 1998) also argue that when examinations become the yardstick for measuring the attainment of set standards, the curriculum tends to be narrowed and teachers tend to teach to the test. They found in their study that many aspects of education: 'the capacity to act responsibly, to co-operate, to initiate activities, to problem-solve and so forth were undervalued as educational goals and as achievements of young people, precisely because they were unassessed' (p.27). This situation relates well to the situation in the KEEA district where the major concern of most headteachers was to prepare their children for examinations. Such a situation raises a question: what really is the mission of the school?

between a statement of objectives (vision) and a 'mission statement'. They explain that objectives 'tell outsiders what the institution stands for and hopes to achieve', while a mission statement 'defines the particular targets which the insider team has set for itself for the immediate future'. An example of the difference between the two concepts is seen in the vision and mission statement of the Farmington Elementary School<sup>209</sup> as shown in **table 15.1** below:

**Table 15.1: Farmington Elementary School's Vision and Mission Statement**

Our Vision	Our Mission Statement
<p>Farmington Elementary School recognizes the uniqueness and individuality of each child. We are a community of learners. Students, staff, families, and the community work together as partners in the learning process to achieve academic, physical, emotional and social growth of the highest quality.</p>	<p>The mission of Farmington Elementary School is to work with students, family, and the community in providing a safe, academically stimulating and nurturing atmosphere for the education of our children. This environment will enable each child his/her potential intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially. We will strive to develop in each child the discipline, pride, self-worth and confidence necessary to become a well-balanced empathetic and responsible member of society.</p>

Source: Adopted from Family Education Network (2000-2002) [MySchoolOnline](#)

<sup>209</sup>Farmington's 'vision' and 'mission statement' shown above, clearly give a picture of what the school stands for: children's total development through collaborative efforts. Further, the pronoun 'our' that qualifies the school's stated 'vision' and 'mission suggest that the headteacher involved his/her teachers in formulating the statements. Beare *et al.* suggests that, once the headteacher articulates his/her vision, it becomes the 'shared vision' of teachers with whom he/she works with, 'and illuminates their ordinary activities with dramatic significance' (p.109). It also provides the headteacher and his/her teachers with a 'shared understanding of what the school is trying to achieve and how it is setting about doing this' (Smith, 1995: 36). Hence, he concludes, it is essential that every school formulates a mission statement to guide what it does. But the question is 'whose mission or vision should the school formulate?'

Among the KEEA headteachers, however, there was no evidence of a documented mission statement for their schools. Moreover, the idea of a 'shared vision' in the school was not demonstrated by the headteachers. This is reflected in their emphasis on the pronouns 'I' or 'my' while talking about the vision they had for their schools. It further emerged clearly from the data that the vision that the headteachers mentioned was to a large extent, and as found elsewhere in the world, a mere echoing of government and public expectations. In other words, the headteachers' vision for academic excellence in their schools was not because such a vision had emerged through personal critical analysis of situation or through any collaborative efforts with their teachers. Rather, as exemplified in the following quotation, the vision was largely driven by external expectations:

Also, the parents of the Moslem children want their children to know how to speak Arabic so it is my expectation that by the time they complete the primary school they can speak some Arabic and also speak the English language well (RUS10).

The quotation above shows that the headteacher's desire that his pupils should be able to speak Arabic proficiently is contingent upon the expectation of parents. This situation, in my opinion, creates a dilemma for the headteachers because, as heads, they deal with people whose interests and expectations are varied. Should they concentrate on pupils' expectation, teachers' expectation, parents' expectation, the SMC's expectation, alumni's expectation, opinion leaders, expectation, or the politicians' expectation?<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>210</sup>Each of them has expectations that they require the headteacher to fulfil. For example, some pupils expect their headteachers to play the role of spiritual advocate: 'I want her (headteacher) to continue praying hard for us' while others expected their heads to buy computers for their school. In the same way, teachers expect their headteachers to seek their welfare in all cases. As one head put it, 'as teachers, they expect me to be very lenient with them pertaining to writing of lesson notes, absenteeism and lateness by not querying them' (RUS1). In addition, following Ghana's 1987 education reform's provision for community participation in school governance, the community (comprising parents, old boys, opinion leaders and other stakeholders) has generated much interest in the school and expect the

## Summary

A major suggestion that emerges from the discussion is that what the headteacher does in the school is influenced by both internal and external factors. Yet government and parental expectations seem to be the most determining factors. It further emerges that vision(s) that the headteachers had for their schools were more geared towards achieving higher examination results. This vision notwithstanding, the headteachers performed tasks that went beyond classroom teaching. Some of these tasks related to health and building construction matters. These are tasks for which the headteachers had not been trained; yet it formed part of their tasks. Another issue that emerges from the discussion is that some of the headteachers handled full-time classes in addition to their leadership roles. On the whole, the headteachers denounced this practice and wished it could be abolished to enable them to concentrate on their administrative role. It was also seen that the task of supervising permeated every aspect of the headteachers' activities in the school. The fact was also highlighted that what the headteachers did in their schools involved a lot of walking. Lastly, the discussion revealed that none of the schools led by the headteachers had a mission statement.

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headteacher to behave in a particular way. All these people, through their expectations, exert some influence on what the headteacher does in the school.

## CHAPTER 16

### THE HEADTEACHER AS A MODEL AND A ROLE MODEL

#### Introduction

Ghana's MOE has underscored the importance of a teacher, and for that matter headteacher acting as a role model in Ghana's school system<sup>211</sup>. It also supports the views expressed by the KEEA headteachers as to the importance people attach to their acting as a role model in and outside the school (see chapter 10). In spite of this, one puzzling question arises: for whom and of what should the headteacher be a model? Finding an answer to this question from the perspective of the KEEA headteachers constitutes the thrust of this chapter. The discussion will be in four parts. In part one, I discuss the complex nature of relationships that exist in the primary school as a system. This is to enable me to define clearly those with whom headteachers in general interact in the school, and for whom they are expected to be a role model. In part two, I explore, within the context of the KEEA heads, and with the support of relevant literature, the question of role model for whom. Part three addresses the question of role model of what. In part four I conclude the discussion with a summary of major issues emerging.

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<sup>211</sup>As an example, Ghana's 'Minister of State for Basic, Secondary and Girl Child Education, Ms Christine Churcher, has called on teachers to be good role models to the children they have under their care' (The Ghanaian Chronicle, Vol.2, No.59 – May 28, 2002, p.3)

## **The nature of relationships in the primary school as a system**

The school has long been described as a social 'system' (Locke, 1974:3). A system, according to Van Fleet and Peterson (1994:16) and Moorhead and Griffin, (1998:18), 'is an interrelated set of elements that function as whole'. The writers identify human interaction (which is the focus of this discussion) as constituting an integral part of these elements. Moorhead and Griffin explain that the systems approach to organisations provides a useful framework for understanding how the elements of an organisation interact among themselves and with their environment.

Lipham and Hoeh (1974) suggest that the systems theory helps us to understand the relationship that exists between and among the units and sub-units within the school and the larger environment. Illuminating this relationship within the British context, Smith (1995) defines the school as a place 'where teaching and learning take place', and 'where people are working together within a finite space with restricted funds and material resources' (p.1). The primary school, the writer further suggests, is 'full of management structures,' some of which are 'the internal responsibility of each individual school', while 'others are imposed either by national initiatives or by local demands such as LEAs and the school's immediate community' (p.2). Hence, he explains, 'what happens inside the school is dependent on the interrelationship of different structures'. The school 'cannot function without teams of individuals, nor can the individual work and perform effectively without a successful team that exists within the whole organization' (p.3). That is, for the school system to exist and function properly, there must be a relationship between and among individuals and groups within the school.

This relationship, as Smith notes, does not end within the confines of the school organization: it extends to 'include a wider network of influential groups' (p.3). This is because, as the functional theorist, Durkheim (1956, cited in Chapman, 1986:38-39), argues, the school, as an agency of education, is created by society to ensure that

'values and intellectual skills needed by children to perform the role to which they had been allocated' are developed to guarantee 'the survival and development of society'. Hence, the school and its components do not operate in a vacuum: they interact with the society in the course of carrying out its functions. It is at the centre of this interaction that the headteacher is located. He/she interacts with both internal and external members of the school on whom they (headteachers) directly or indirectly exert some sort of influence.

### **The concept of 'model' and 'role model'**

Describing the head as a role model has become a topic of increasing interest in educational discourse (Schroeter 2002:1), and became apparent from my own data that being a model is a highly valued benchmark by which people tend to judge the quality of leadership provided by a KEEA headteacher.

A model has been defined as 'an example for imitation or emulation' (Merriam-Webster, 1999:335, definition 1:3) or 'an excellent example of a quality' (The Reader's Digest Association Ltd 2001:621, definition 5). A typical example of the concept of model is found in the fashion industry where people are employed to advertise new products by wearing them and demonstrating different ways by which the quality of the product can be sustained. Models, in this context, deal with specific products such as clothes, pairs of shoes, body sprays, hair shampoos et cetera, and their modelling is directed towards a specific audience: customers – those 'who buy goods or services from a shop or business' (ibid. p.223). Moreover, what is to be modelled is determined by the employer of the modeller. Apart from viewing the concept from the institutional perspective, Schroeter explains that an individual can become a role model for others by the way he/she behaves or by virtue of a particular trait he/she possesses. What is interesting is that models have also become role models. Others increasingly emulate their skinny structure, dresses they wear and make-up they use. She concurs with Nauta's and Kokaly's (2001, cited in ibid.) assertion that role models could be understood as 'persons who, either by exerting

some influence or simply by being admirable in one or more ways, have an impact on another’.

The example drawn from the fashion industry suggests that for a role model to exist, there must be evidence that some people base their character, values and aspirations upon examples set by those with whom they interact. That is, as Nickay and Brooklyn (1997:1) put it, ‘when a person has a role model, they look up to that special someone, adoring them, wanting and trying to be everything that person stands for’.

In the context of educational leadership research, Leithwood, Tomlinson and Genge (in Leithwood *et al.*, 1996:809) identify ‘modelling’ as a perspective of transformational leadership in which the leader, as Podsakoff *et al.*, (1990:112, in *ibid.*) put it, ‘sets an example for employees to follow that is consistent with the values the leader espouses’. They explain that modelling has the potential of enhancing ‘teachers’ beliefs about their own capacities, their sense of self-efficacy’ and contributing ‘to emotional arousal processes by creating perceptions of a dynamic and changing job’.

This brief overview of the concept and benefits inherent in ‘role modelling’ seems to imply that for a person to successfully model a role, there must be a common bond of interest (whether conscious or unconscious) between the role modeller (headteacher) and those who perceive him/her as such. But the question is, for whom is the head a role model?

### **For whom should the KEEA headteacher be a role model?**

As illustrated in table 16.1 below, primary school headteachers within the KEEA educational district interact with people who are located within the school: teachers, pupils (who are directly linked with teaching and learning) and food vendors. All



these expect the headteacher to influence their lives in one way or another. During the individual interviews and group discussions, headteachers commonly mentioned that their pupils and teachers expected them to behave in such a way that they (pupils) would be proud to emulate their (headteachers') behaviour. As one urban head put it, 'the pupils expect you, the headteacher, to be role model to their life'. A rural head also remarked, 'my teachers expect that I lead an exemplary life so that they follow' (p.125)<sup>212</sup>.

The fact that the KEEA headteachers saw themselves as models for both pupils and teachers is paralleled in Myers' (1995-1998, in MacBeath and Myers, 1999:57) study of some English headteachers. According to her, 'several of the heads spoke about the importance of modelling – how their behaviour gave important signals and clues to the adults and children they worked with'. She, for example, cites one male primary head as saying, 'I think 'modelling' in relationship to the children and the curriculum is vitally important. I try to work closely with teachers to show what is possible and what our children are capable of' (p.58).

In addition, food vendors in the school, as well as those with whom the headteachers interacted outside the school, who had influence on the school's operation, also required that headteachers led exemplary lives. I have classified such people as the external members of the school<sup>213</sup>. Table 16.1 below illustrates the internal and external members of the primary school:

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<sup>212</sup>None of the headteachers referred to people who sold food in the school compound in relation to their role model expectations. Yet evidence from one school suggests that food sellers in the schools also expected the headteacher to be exemplary in all that he/she did. This was reflected in an observation I made while I sat under a mango tree in the school's compound, where the women sold fruits and other food items. One of the women made a comment, apparently in gossip with another food seller about the headteacher who had just walked past to see some parent visitors off. Her comment, which sounded complimentary, literally translates into the English language as 'in fact this master is very humble, I wish all the teachers were like him'. By such a comment the woman implied that the headteacher was an example of humility for her.

<sup>213</sup>As mentioned in chapter one, the government of Ghana, through its 1995 sub-reform programme for basic education dubbed 'Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education' (FCUBE) provides for the active involvement of the community in the management of primary school education in the country. A school management committee (SMC), which comprises people drawn from all sectors of the community: parents, traditional rulers, opinion leaders, old pupils (alumni), the clergy and politicians,

**Table 16.1: Membership of KEEA Primary schools for whom heads are models**

<i>Internal membership</i> (Those located within the school)	<i>External membership</i> (Those who influence the school's operation but are located outside the school)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistant headteacher (where available)</li> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Pupils</li> <li>• Food vendors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The School Management Committee (SMC)</li> <li>• Circuit officers</li> <li>• Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)</li> <li>• Old boys/girls (alumni)</li> <li>• Other schools within the neighbourhood</li> <li>• Individual parents (Non-P.T.A. members)</li> <li>• Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)</li> <li>• Ghana National Association. of Teachers (GNAT)</li> </ul>

The data suggest that parents within the KEEA district see the moral character of the headteacher as a yardstick for judging the capability of the school he/she heads to develop good morals in their children. It further suggests that, although parents require the school to promote academic excellence in their pupils (as the headteachers

is charged with the responsibility of assisting in the management of schools within their localities. Delivering a keynote address at an orientation workshop for some community leaders in Kumasi 1996, for example, Hon Amuako-Nuamah, the then Minister of Education, explained 'the school management committees have been created to strengthen community ownership of schools and make teachers more accountable'. Members of the SMC, as well as, the parent-teacher association and all other stakeholders of the school, who interact with the school indirectly or directly, expect the headteacher to be a role model for their schools, and in some cases, for them.

suggested in the previous chapter), they are also particular about the behaviour that their pupils develop in the school<sup>214</sup>.

## Of what should the headteacher be a model?

Although the KEEA headteachers' tasks in the school are influenced by many people (Table 16.1), their (headteacher) description of the content of roles they were expected to model was limited to three groups of people: pupils, teachers and parents. As with the numerous tasks they performed, the contents of the roles they were expected to model are also numerous, and in some cases seem to be unattainable.

### *Modelling as Welfare Officer*

One area where the headteacher was expected to be a model is in matters of welfare. This was reflected in the comment 'pupils expect you to like them and show care and are concerned about their welfare' (see p.118). As summarised in table 9.1 (p. 120) pupils expected their headteachers to treat them as they would treat their own children by encouraging them, talking and listening to them, granting them confidentiality so they could trust the headteacher, praying for them and counselling them. From the perspective of teachers, the headteachers said they (teachers), especially those in the rural schools, expected them (headteachers) to be models not only in professional matters but also in welfare matters. 'As for teachers, they expect that you think about their welfare always'. Another sum up this welfare role as follows, 'teachers want to

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<sup>214</sup> From the perspectives of the KEEA headteachers, the way parents in Ghana perceive the headteacher affects the image of the school. For instance, one rural head (RUS8) explained that 'when parents find that a particular headteacher has a questionable character (*he explained questionable character to include issues such as embezzling school fees, having sexual intercourse with school girls, etc.*), they would not send their children to his/her school.' Such a situation, some of them explained, brings disgrace to all those associated with the school; hence they (parents) expect the headteacher to lead an exemplary life, avoiding all forms of gross performance misconduct, for their children to emulate.

see that they can get your support professionally, socially and even spiritually' (see p.125)<sup>215</sup>.

Some explained that they were compelled to share their already 'poky' accommodation with their teachers because that was the only way they could retain them in the school, as it was difficult getting decent accommodation in the village for teachers. For instance, one said, 'I'm forced to share my one-bedroom flat bungalow with four of my teachers' (RUS3). Although it was not obligatory for the heads to accommodate the teachers, they performed this role because they thought it would serve as an incentive for retaining them (teachers). In addition to this, some felt by doing so, the teachers would acknowledge their exemplary kindness<sup>216</sup> and, as put it, they will 'tell people that my headteacher is very good'. Although in the urban schools the same thinking emerged, the welfare role focus of the headteacher was different: they did not share their rooms with teachers. What the teachers needed most from them was to allow them to organize extra classes for pupils as a way of making additional money to meet the cost of maintaining themselves. Hence, some heads mentioned that in situations when they failed to create conditions for promoting such opportunities, which some (teachers) considered as an incentive, the head was branded as bad.

From the foregoing, it seems likely that one reason for which the headteachers, especially those in the rural schools, were committed to their welfare role modelling

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<sup>215</sup> Because it is difficult getting trained teachers to accept postings to the rural areas it seems that some teachers regarded their acceptance to teach in the rural schools as a favour being done to the headteachers; hence they expected the headteacher to cater for everything related to their maintenance, and security. This was reflected in one head's comment: 'when they are broke, they expect that you give them money. If you don't give them then you're not a good leader (a male rural head- RUS7). Others mentioned that, although they were themselves living on very skimpy maintenance resources, they were compelled by this welfare role model to go beyond their means to provide for some of the needs of the teachers.

<sup>216</sup> From the reason the headteachers gave for sacrificing their comfort and money for the sake of their teachers' welfare, one may question if it really reflected role modelling since they seemed to project motives of self-interest. Yet, by inference, the headteachers' act could be seen as role modelling because their behaviour could be emulated by others, who aspire to headship, as a strategy for retaining teachers in schools.

was to retain teachers in their schools. That is, they hoped that by offering financial assistance in the form of loans to their teachers, providing accommodation for them, and, in the case of the urban schools, creating room for teachers to make additional money through the promotion of extra classes, they would be able to retain teachers in their schools. In one of the schools, some teachers to whom I spoke informally confirmed the reality of this hope by mentioning that it was the headteachers kindness towards them that continued to keep them in the school. These were teachers who were being accommodated by their headteacher.

This thinking seems to support the view that fringe benefits are a means by which employees may be attracted and retained by employers. Fringe benefits, according to Boella (1996), have in recent times gained much credence in human resource development 'partly because of pressure from other sources such as the rapidly increasing competition for employees' (p.159). He stresses that fringe benefits do not only serve as an incentive for motivating 'employees to give better performance' but also encourage them to stay with the employer. The fact that the headteachers, even though they were not the teachers' employers, could provide such a type of fringe benefit for the teachers, to me exemplifies a role model for other headteachers in the district who also grapple with the problem of staffing.

### *Acceptable behaviour modelling (ABM)*

The headteachers were also expected to be exemplary in the way they behaved. The headteachers' discourse suggests that pupils expected that their headteachers, through their (headteachers) day-to-day actions, should show practical examples of whatever behaviour the school required them (pupils) to lead. They did not see the headteacher as a fallible human being who operates under physical, monetary or emotional constraints. This is reflected in the following similar, but differently focused, extracts from some of the headteachers' quotes:

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They expect the headteacher to be punctual to school so that they will also emulate what he or she does (RUS8).

If you are the headteacher, they look at the way you dress, the way you talk, the way you handle their issues, the way you solve their problems ((UBS8).

We've told them that everybody should speak English so if I am speaking with the teachers, the children are there to see whether their headteacher is speaking with the teacher in that language (UBS4).<sup>217</sup>

Central to the many tasks parents also expected, is 'role modelling for children' (see p.129-132). This is reflected in the statement, 'parents expect me to lead exemplary life so that my children will copy'. This idea was recurrent in the headteachers' discourse. They are expected to set examples of good behaviour for children to emulate. The expectation that headteachers, and for that matter the teachers, should provide a role model for primary school children is a generic desire that goes beyond the KEEA schools.

Writing from the perspective of British schools, for example, Dean (1995:37) reminds primary school heads that the 'school affects the way children develop' and stresses that 'children are not only affected by their peer groups in school. They also use older children and teachers as models'. She further explains that children learn from experiences that come their way and from 'the values of those around', which in the context of this chapter includes the headteacher, 'are made evident in the reactions of others to their behaviour, as well as in conversation, and children begin to develop their own sets of values. Everything that happens to children contributes to the picture of themselves that they are forming'.

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<sup>217</sup> That is, they did not want their headteachers to be seen as 'signposts' or benchmarks directing them to the right behaviour while they themselves behaved differently.

Although the foregoing highlights the importance of a headteacher's exemplary life to the child's moral development, many of the KEEA headteachers saw the ABM expectation not only as a burden for them, but also as an encroachment upon their rights to live as human beings. As articulated by one head (RUS5),

Parents expect too much from us. The little mistake you commit, they say look at the headteacher. Even if you go to the drinking bar to drink, they will talk; they expect that you behave like an angel.

An urban head (UBS10), who spoke in a dejected mood, also remarked, 'let's say you're at home, and someone provokes you and you become angry, people will ask, 'Ah, is she not the headteacher?' (see p.132). The picture painted by the headteachers suggests that parents, who constitute an integral part of the community in which the primary schools are situated, expected the headteachers to live above reproach. To some of the headteachers, this expectation was because they (parents) saw the headteacher as an embodiment of perfection in terms of knowledge, morality and emotional balance.

In understanding the driving force behind the parents' ABM expectations, it is perhaps worth reflecting on the influences of history and culture.

### **Historical context of ABM expectations**

Historically, the early European missionaries, as mentioned in chapter two, introduced the school system in Ghana as a tool for evangelism: bringing light to a supposedly dark country. The schools were formed around values which may be best understood in terms of what Strike (2002:3) refers to as 'thick values'<sup>218</sup>. Oral accounts from

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<sup>218</sup>Thick values, according to Strike provide a comprehensive and systematic way of orienting people 'as to the nature of good lives or of human flourishing'.

some elderly people in Ghana suggest that during that period, one could not gain access to school education unless he/she denounced his/her traditional name and his/her indigenous home (which were considered heathen). He/she was then removed from his/her family home to a Christian settlement that had been created by the missionaries called 'Salem' (which signified a 'holy settlement'). Thereafter, he/she was given a new name (Christian name) to symbolise that he/she had become holy, and therefore sinless as described in the bible: 'If anyone is in Christ, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new' (2 Corinthians 5:17)<sup>219</sup>.

### *The moral placement of the headteacher in the early schools*

Until 1852, when the first Education ordinance was passed by the colonial government to 'provide for the better education of the inhabitants of Her Majesty's forts and settlements on the Gold Coast' (McWilliam and Kwamena-Poh, 1975:36), one could not become a headteacher of a primary school unless one had gone through the initiation process and had been certified as holy. Indigenous people who became headteachers were those who had been trained as catechists to support the missionaries' evangelistic work of converting people to the Christian faith. This scenario created a situation where the headteacher-catechist, who at the time was designated 'master', was regarded in the community as someone who had been imbued with virtues. As head, he<sup>220</sup> was expected to 'be an example in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity' (The RSV Bible, 1 Timothy 4:12.).

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<sup>219</sup>By this means, they created school communities in which those who belonged shared common moral values, which were believed to be the best way of life. In so doing, the early providers of school education, in Ghana (then Gold Coast) created the idea that 'good behaviour' was a monopoly of school education, and the church. Those who did not share the school's values were therefore considered 'unholy' or 'sinners' and therefore excluded from benefiting from school education.

<sup>220</sup> I am focussing on masculinity here because none of the literature I have consulted suggests that the missionaries at the time appointed indigenous women as school heads.



Despite the fact that, the missionary trend has, since the enactment of Ghana's 1961 Education Act which provided for compulsory primary education for all children, been drastically toned down, the idea of viewing the school head as a symbol of 'good behaviour' still exists, especially in the rural areas. This explains why some of the headteachers said parents often brought their misbehaving children to the school to be disciplined. It is perhaps partly because of this historical scenario that the school continues to be criticised in the Ghanaian society for the increasing moral degeneration among the young people. As one headteacher put it, 'they want the headteacher to make sure that every child in the school behaves well. When a child does not behave well, they say it is the school's fault'.

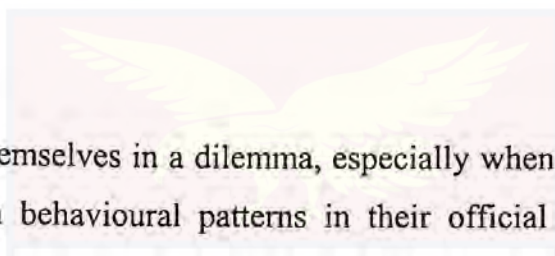
### *The cultural influence of ABM expectation*

Closely linked to the missionary factor is the high cultural value that Ghanaian traditional societies place on good morals. Amongst the Akans, which include the KEEA district where I conducted my study, moral character (suban), which includes virtues like honesty, modesty, respect for old age, obedience, integrity, hardwork, kindness and many others, continues to be considered as a very important aspect of individual's personality development. The prominence of this virtue is reflected in one of their most cherished proverbs: 'Enim nguase mfata Okan ni ba', which literally translated means 'disgrace is unbecoming of an Akan citizen, and any Ghanaian citizen for that matter' (Ampene 1986:8). Disgrace, in this context, means any shameful effect that results from an act by an individual that is traditionally considered to be an affront to one's family and the larger society.

Owing to the importance tradition attaches to good character, installing chiefs and assigning leadership responsibilities to individuals are dependent on their level of moral uprightness. Hence, before one is pronounced chief, he is kept in doors for some time and taught how to behave as a leader, so as to become an example to the

young ones in the society. It is within this cultural framework, coupled with the missionary scenario discussed earlier, that one may understand why the KEEA headteachers were expected to lead lives that are beyond reproach.

### **Modelling acceptable behaviour: functional relations versus personal relations**



Some heads found themselves in a dilemma, especially when some parents could not draw a line between behavioural patterns in their official and private lives. The dilemma seemed to be more pronounced in situations where some of the headteachers had to decide between pursuing the school's basic function of promoting learning among pupils, and meeting parents' and teachers' demands that appeared to be in contrast with the school's learning objectives. This dilemma appears to hinge on how the teachers and parents perceived the relations that they expected the headteachers to have with them. As mentioned earlier, parents expected headteachers to be models of good behaviour. Good behaviour, in the context of Ghanaian culture, includes being sensitive to the needs of others and caring for them, a role that is traditionally considered to be necessary for the sustenance of personal relations, and promoting social cohesion.

According to a Scottish philosopher, Macmurray (cited in Fielding 2000:4), *personal relation* is one form of two relationships we have in a community. The other one is *functional relation*. He describes *personal relations* as a form of relations that is not 'task specific or role specific; rather they are expressive of who we are as persons'. They focus on 'care and delight in each other'. The data suggest that parents, especially those in the rural areas, as well as some teachers, saw their relations with the headteachers more from the *personal relations* perspective. They therefore

expected headteachers to show practical concern for their (parents' and teachers') well-being. Reporting her study of business organizations in Ghana, Gardiner (1996) explains that there is so much infiltration of cultural values into the workplace that it is difficult for the indigenous Ghanaian to separate a manager's life in an organisation (which in the context of my work is the school) from his/her life outside. As a result, some parents did not understand why headteachers should prevent them from using the labour of their (parents) children while carrying out domestic and commercial activities during teaching/learning periods. In the words of one headteacher, 'some of them (parents) come to the school to insult me for not allowing their children to stop studies to go and help them to sell things on the market day'.

This quotation suggests that both the parents and the teachers considered headteachers who did not place the goals of the school secondary to their personal needs as bad. To them, therefore, this type of head may not be considered as a model of acceptable behaviour. This explains why they had to protest by verbally attacking their headteachers.

The *personal relations* perspective from which the parents and teachers seemed to view their relations with the headteachers contrasts that of the *functional relations*. As Macmurray explains, *functional relations* refer to a situation 'in which we enter into relations with each other in order to get something done, in order to achieve particular purposes' (ibid.)<sup>221</sup>. Applying this to the KEEA school situation means that the headteachers' relationship with teachers, parents and pupils should be centred on the basic purpose for which they find themselves as members of the school community: pupil learning. In this case, all other issues that do not directly contribute to the

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<sup>221</sup> An example of *functional relations*, according to him, is the relationship that one establishes with a person from whom one buys an item or to whom one sells an item. In this case, what binds the buyer and the seller together in the relationship is the object of the transaction. Hence, as Macmurray puts it 'when the transaction is completed your relationship ends'.

promotion of teaching and learning in the school become secondary to the relationship. In this light, a behavioural role model that is worth demonstrating by the headteacher may be that which focuses on pupils' learning.

## Summary

The discussion suggests that pupils and teachers expect their headteachers to be role models for them. Parents also expect heads to be role models for their children. Heads were expected to be role models in professional, social and moral matters. Professionally, pupils expected their heads to ensure that no child was denied the chance of studying any of the subjects on the teaching timetable and also to provide both human and material resources that were necessary for the success of teaching/learning in their schools.

They also wanted their headteachers to be exemplary in matters of punctuality and regular attendance to school, and also be a model to them in matters of speaking the English language. Teachers also expected their headteachers to be an example to them in all aspects of their work. Socially, pupils and teachers wanted their headteachers to demonstrate sensitivity towards their welfare. In this light, teachers (especially in rural schools) expected heads to show concern for their accommodation and monetary needs. Parents also expected headteachers to show concern for their social needs and grant them assistance needed whenever they (parents) approached them (headteachers).

Morally, parents expected headteachers to lead a 'perfect life' and be beyond reproach. They did not want the headteachers to behave as any other normal human being would behave. Although the headteachers acknowledged the need for them to

be role models to both teachers and pupils in their schools, some of them were in a dilemma as to what exactly should be the content of the ‘good behaviour’ they were to exhibit. This dilemma was pronounced when it came to choosing between pursuing the school’s goals (*functional relations role*) and satisfying individuals parents’ personal requests (*personal relations role*) that were likely to affect a pupil’s classroom learning. They did not understand why parents failed to distinguish between their (headteacher) official role, that they thought should be limited to their life in school, and their role outside the school, which they thought was private. **Figure 16.1** below sums up some of the role model attributes that the headteachers were expected to demonstrate:



**Figure 16.1: Attributes of KEEA headteachers’ role modelling**

## CHAPTER 17

# THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER RESPONSIBILITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADSHIP

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on gender-related issues that emerged from the data (see p.109-112). In the context of this discussion, gender<sup>222</sup> is used to describe sex differences and indigenous role stereotypes that influence the placement of female headteachers in urban or rural primary schools within the KEEA and how these role stereotypes affect the performance of their leadership roles.

In recent times, the phenomenon of 'gender' has become an important issue in education (Riehl and Lee, in Leithwood *et al.*, 1996:875). In both developed and developing countries, there have been increasingly fervent efforts towards ensuring gender equity and equality in all aspects of the educational system. Arnot *et al.*, (1999:3) exemplify this fact by observing 'the gender gap in educational performance is currently a major subject of public policy debate internationally'. Examining the implementation of UK's National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH), Cubillo (1999) observes that, even though, in the past models on which characteristics of effective leaders were based were 'stereotypically androcentric'

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<sup>222</sup> The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM, 1993), distinguishes between the two terms. It defines gender as 'women's and men's roles that are socially determined and are therefore changeable', while sex is simply 'biological in the sense that we are born either as a man who fertilizes women or as a woman who gives birth. These roles cannot be changed' (cited in Fagbemi, 1996, in *Greenhill Journal of Administration*, vol.10, 1996:42). This conceptual contrast is echoed by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) (1999) in their observation that 'sex and gender are two distinct concepts that interact to produce varied experiences' (p.1) Gender, on the other hand encompasses an 'array of socially and culturally determined roles, personal traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power, and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis' (ibid.). CIHR explain that the 'forces of cultural norms and values' determine gender.

(male-centred), recent studies have emphasised the salience of gender influences on school leadership effectiveness. Krugger's (1996) study of secondary school headteachers in the Netherlands suggests that 'the gender variable has significant effects on leadership performance' (in *ibid.*). In the United States, Riehl and Lee report on the pertinence of 'gender' in elementary school education. They attribute this to the fact that, even though, 'elementary schools are dominated by women teachers and have a predominantly male-controlled administrative hierarchy, [...] women are obtaining many new leadership positions at this level'<sup>223</sup>. Singleton (1993) also argues that 'the use of gender perspective allows a more creative view of the management role'; hence, 'effective management requires a balance of feminine and masculine skills' (in *ibid.*, p.548).

### **Towards engendering education: the context of Sub-Saharan Africa**

In the context of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa successive governments, since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1995 (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2002:1), have initiated strategies to ensure that 'gender equality concerns are integrated into all their policies and programmes' (The Economic Commission for Africa, ECA, 1999). In this light, many capacity-building activities for women have been initiated to equip them with the requisite skills, attitudes and opportunities for functioning in every aspect of the economy without discrimination. Laws and administrative practices have been reviewed to 'provide women with equal rights and access to economic resources' and social services established 'to provide jobs in support of women' (*ibid.*, p.4).

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<sup>223</sup> Moreover, they note that, 'gender issues are salient to school leadership because they are an overlay on a central mission of schooling, namely the socialization and education of young people'. Hence, they argue that it is vital that school leaders 'understand the salient gender issues for children under their charge' and 'have a full understanding of the gender issues facing the adults in their institutions' (p.876).

With regards to education, there have been efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child in terms of accessibility and affordability. For example, in 1997 Ethiopia initiated a girls' enrolment drive programme for primary schools, while in Kenya, 'mobile schools for nomads' were set up to ensure that both boys and girls gained access to teacher contacts throughout the year since they will be taught wherever they move<sup>224</sup>.

In Ghana, Amoako-Nuama (2002:2) explains that a major focus of the Government's development programmes has been to alleviate poverty, 'with special emphasis on women as central players in the family set-up and in resource management'. The government through the National Council for Women and Development (NCWD), for example, had initiated a 15-year programme of action (1986-2000) prior to the 1995 Beijing declaration, which aimed at integrating women in the nation's development efforts with priority attention given to 'power-sharing and decision-making (political participation), mechanisms for promoting women's advancement, legal issues, poverty, access to resources, education, health, employment, prevention of violence against women, environment and social perception and cultural practices' (ibid, p.4). Moreover, Mawaya (1999) reports that Ghana as at 1999 had put in place an affirmative action policy to ensure that 'a 40% quota representation of women' is observed at all levels of leadership. That is, there have been fervent efforts by the nation to increase the level of women's participation in decision-making in all sectors of the economy, including education<sup>225</sup>.

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<sup>224</sup> This, according to Siring (2002:1), was based on the fact that the pastoralist communities moved from place to place in search of water and pasture and this affected their children's attendance in the normal school.

<sup>225</sup> To achieve this feat, the government, in 1997 established a Girls' Education Unit (GEU) within the Ministry of Education (MOE) to cater for the interest of girls in the implementation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education Programme (fCUBE), which seeks to increase access and participation to basic schools. A major responsibility of the GEU is to ensure that the enrolment of girls in basic education in both rural and urban-areas is increased 'to equal that of boys' and also to 'reduce the dropout rate of girls in primary schools from 30% to 10%' by the year 2005. It is also to ensure that girls' participation in science, mathematics and technology (SMT) subjects is increased 'by improving the quality of teaching and enhancing the perception of these subjects' across the country (MOE, 2000:1-2). The concern that the government of Ghana attaches to the issue of gender equity and equality in terms of participation in decision making is further echoed by the fact that there is at present a cabinet minister responsible for primary and secondary education for girls, with the sole task of



Nevertheless, it emerged during my fieldwork that there is gender imbalance in the distribution of headteachers to the urban and rural schools within the KEEA education district. It also emerged that female headteachers within the district encounter some gender-related problems in the course of carrying out their leadership roles. These, coupled with the importance that both the available literature and government of Ghana attach to women's empowerment, give credence to the focus of this chapter. Three main issues will be addressed in my discussion. The first issue focuses on gender representation in primary school leadership within the KEEA district. It looks critically at issues that emerged from the data regarding the under-representation of women in rural school leadership within the district. Drawing on the support of related literature, it will explore how indigenous gender role stereotypes within the Ghanaian society have contributed to the gender imbalance in the urban-rural schools, and its perceived effects on the girl-child's learning. The second issue illuminates gender-related problems with which the headteachers had to grapple while performing their professional tasks. The third concludes the discussion by summarising the major issues emerging.

### **Urban-rural gender discrepancy in KEEA's primary school leadership: causes and perceived effects on pupils' learning.**

The issue relating to the under-representation of female teachers and headteachers in the KEEA rural schools (see p.68 and 99-102) cannot be properly understood unless it is located within the general problems that the GES encounters regarding the posting of teachers to rural schools in the country. Primary school teachers in Ghana are trained at 38 post-secondary teacher-training colleges spread across the country. Three of these training colleges are located in the central region, where the KEEA district is sited. Available statistics suggest that not less than 5,000 teachers are turned out from these colleges each year. In 1996/97, for example, a total of 5,695 newly

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encouraging 'girls to remain in school, especially those living in the rural areas' (Effah-Apenteng, cited in Commission on Status of Women, Press Release WOM/1266, 7<sup>th</sup> march, 2001).

trained teachers graduated from these colleges (Manpower Division, GES, 1997), yet the GES encounters problems in posting teachers to the rural areas because most teachers refuse postings to such areas. As Hedges (2000:12) observes, 'there is a strong bias in trainees' choices to the more urban southern regions' and their 'choices reflect a strong preference among trainees throughout the country ' for places 'nearest the most developed cities in Ghana: Accra, Kumasi, and Tema'. During the 1998/99 academic year, for example, a news item in one of the national news papers reported that 115 out of 262 newly trained-teachers posted to one of the deprived regions in the northern part of the country did not report (The Daily Graphic, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1999). In situations where they accept postings to less developed regions, most of them prefer staying in the regional capital or district capital.

Similar problems were encountered in the KEEA district. Information from the Training and Development Unit of the GES in the district suggests that about 20 percent of newly-trained teachers posted to the rural areas within the district in 1998/99 did not report, leading to a situation where in some schools two teachers had to carry out tasks that were meant for six teachers. This observation was reflected in complaints that some of the headteachers in my study made about their overwhelming workload, as exemplified in the following comment made by a headteacher of a double stream school:

At present, instead of twelve teachers, we have only nine including me making me ten so we're having a time. In fact, the teachers sometimes after giving work to their own pupils, that's their own class, they also go to the next class, without teaching, to give them work. Sometimes I have to go and teach the classes in addition to my own class and also supervise the work of the teachers.

As mentioned earlier, in some schools, the problem of understaffing had compelled the headteachers to combine classes for easy handling. In one school, pupils of primary six and five had been combined under one teacher, while primary one and two had been combined and were handled by the headteacher himself. Available statistics suggest that this is a problem nationwide. In his study, which was carried out as part of a multi-site teacher education research (MUSTER) in Ghana, for example, Hedges (2000:5) noted that as at 1996/97, as many as 10,881 (18 percent) vacancies for teachers in rural basic schools (primary and junior secondary schools) across the country had not been filled. This had long been highlighted by Konadu (1994:50, cited in Hedges, 2000:3) in his observation that the uneven distribution of teachers between rural and urban districts and regions had left many rural schools with one or no staff, while urban schools were often overstaffed. In some situations, national service personnel (mainly graduates from the senior secondary school) were posted to the schools concerned to fill the vacancies.

In one rural school I visited, there were three trained teachers (including the headteacher) and three national service personnel on the staff. I took advantage of my interaction with the trained teachers to find out what had motivated them to accept a posting to that remotely located school. Both of them responded that nothing had motivated them, with one stressing, 'Motivation? What will motivate me to come to this place? For what? I came because I was posted here. If I had my own way I wouldn't have come. Come here for what?' This reaction exemplifies the general thinking of newly-trained teachers about postings to the rural areas. Hence, as the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC) observes in its research into basic education in Ghana, 'in most rural communities, teachers to provide the training remain the critical constraints' (p.5). It is perhaps for this reason that the literacy rate of rural dwellers (39.9 percent) continues to lag behind that of urban dwellers (63 per cent) in Ghana (Statistical Services, 1997). This general understaffing problem facing rural schools in Ghana sets the pace for discussing the under-representation of women in the KEEA rural schools

## **The issue of female staff under-representation in rural schools within the KEEA district**

Two major issues emerge from the preceding discussion. Firstly, there is a general shortage of teachers (both male and female) in schools located in the rural parts of Ghana. Secondly, newly-trained teachers have a generally negative attitude towards postings to rural schools. Considering that female teachers form 'about 36 percent of the number of teachers in basic schools in the country' (Dogbey-Hloademe, 2002:1), and the problem of rural school staffing relates to both male and female teachers, one may be tempted to view their (female staff) under-representation in the KEEA rural schools as normal. But when one considers that they are not evenly represented between urban and rural schools, then it raises an issue. Why is it that women should dominate urban primary schools while men dominate rural schools?

In four of the rural schools visited, there were no female teachers, while male teachers dominated the remaining six schools. Even in the two schools which were led by female headteachers, there was male domination. During the individual interviews two headteachers complained bitterly about the lack of female teachers on their staff. One male head remarked, 'we're all males; they're saying the area is too remote for a female teacher to be brought here so from the records no female teacher has ever been to this place' (RUS6). The issue further emerged as a major concern of all the ten headteachers during the focus group discussion. Even among the urban school headteachers, in whose schools female staff representation was not a problem, most discussants, with the exception of two female headteachers, expressed grave concern about the gender imbalance of teaching staff in the rural schools. The two female headteachers were opposed to the idea of posting female teachers and headteachers to the rural areas. One advanced the following argument (see p.102):

If you're a female teacher, you should not be posted to the interior part because there're problems there. Sometimes, they may get there and may out of necessity marry to a man who already has two wives; they're compelled to give in because ladies are weak.

### *The marriage factor*

The argument of female teachers not getting marriage partners of their choice, as presented in the quotation above, was one of the common reasons that emerged even among those headteachers who advocated female postings to the rural areas. One male headteacher observed, 'my experience tells me that when they come from the training college and posted to the rural areas, the people that they meet does not help them to get the right partners' (RUS5). One of the GES training officers (GESTO1) illuminated this factor by stating that even though the GES issued a national postings guideline to all district directors in 1998, which requires that '60% of trained teachers should be posted to primary schools', the guideline explicitly states that 'female teachers should be sent to urban areas'. He justified the GES' decision by arguing that 'they're delicate and weak and sometimes they're at risk'. He cited an instance where 'a female teacher was once posted to an interior area and this female teacher ended up marrying a hunter over there' to support the Ministry's decision.

The commonality of the issue of 'marriage' in the reasons assigned by the headteachers and the arguments advanced by GESTO1 to justify the MOE/GES' policy shows the importance that the Ghanaian society attaches to the marriage prospects of women. The value attached to the female teachers' family life seemed to be so strong that, in situations where some female teachers were posted to some semi-rural schools in the district, getting married was a sufficient reason for the GES to grant them prompt transfer from their rural schools to urban schools. As one other GESTO (3) put it, 'we get females going to rural areas only during the initial stages of their appointment. You post ladies there, they get married and apply for a change', and stressed, 'you can't prevent them from joining their husbands'. Simply put, marriage is viewed as a visa by which a female teacher could migrate from a rural to an urban school.

Similar findings emerged in Hedges' study in which he noted that 'women teachers who accept postings to rural schools rarely seem to stay long and, according to district officers, often refuse the posting in the first place', and continued 'this practice recognizes a Ghanaian reality (fears of parents that their daughters may lose their marriage or be put in vulnerable positions) which is apparently not acknowledged in recruitment for training colleges' (p.16). One question that baffles me as I reflect on this trend is, why is it that male teachers are posted to the rural areas without consideration of the fact that they could also be compelled by the same limitations that were used to justify the exclusion of women? Whereas by that practice young female teachers are given the chance to meet a wide range of young men from whom they may choose a marriage partner, their male counterparts are limited in terms of choice. I wonder if that is not a case of discrimination against young male teachers?

### *The factor of deprived rural conditions*

It also emerged that the deprived conditions prevailing in the rural areas (see p.100) partly contributed to the lack of female staff in the rural schools. In three of the rural schools, for example, it was very striking to note that transportation was a problem for the headteachers and the teachers. In some situations residents had to walk distances ranging between four and nine kilometres to the nearest possible place for transport. In the words of one head, 'it is difficult to get transport from this village. I have to walk for about four miles to the roadside before I can get transport'. What made the situation more difficult, according to others, was the uncertainty that one would even get the transport at the roadside. Such situations, some claimed, often affected their response to invitations extended to them for meetings and workshops in the district capital. ISODEC's (n.d.) participatory poverty assessment project report on Ghana supports this difficulty in their observation that:

In most rural communities, the availability of school buildings, tables and chairs, [...] remains critical. In an overwhelming number of rural schools, children either lie or sit on the bare floor, on stones or logs of wood or share benches, tables and chairs' (p.5).

All the headteachers made reference to these deplorable conditions as a reason for which females reject postings to the rural areas. Some male heads were of the view that women generally like entertainment and other social activities such as 'watching films, attending concerts, and attending parties', which are not available in the rural areas. Hence, as one head put it, 'in a situation where you wake up and all that you hear is the sound of birds, they would not want to be there'. GESTO1's narration (see p.100 to 102)) also presents another example of how lack of social amenities affects the attraction of females to the rural areas. Thus, lack of electricity, a clinic and pipe-borne water were of much concern to the female teacher. Generally the picture presented by the headteachers seems to suggest that female teachers in the KEEA district are fussy about the social conditions prevailing in the particular communities where they choose to work. The absence of such facilities, therefore, tends to put them off.

Although, all the headteachers acknowledged that deprived conditions and marital disadvantages were good reasons for which female teachers should not be posted to rural areas, the majority of them still held the view that female representation was very essential. All the male headteachers strongly argued against the practice of not posting females to the rural schools. They felt it was a form of discrimination against girls in the schools. It was commonly argued that, once schools in the rural areas were mixed and involved both boys and girls, it was necessary that female teachers were posted to the schools. This argument was articulated in comments such as 'in our schools, we have girls and female teachers must handle these girls', and 'girls have some special problems which only female teachers can best handle' They argued that the absence of female representation on their staff was adversely affecting their school's work.

## Effects of female staff under-representation on girls' learning activities in the school

Some of the headteachers mentioned that the lack of female teachers in schools was not motivating girls to attach importance to their studies. It came to light during the focus group discussion sessions that some girls did not heed pieces of advice they (headteachers) gave them towards studying hard because 'they don't see any example'. At times, the girls tended to feel 'it is a waste for them to come to school' because female role models they encountered in the villages were farmers, seamstresses, fishmongers and/or housewives who 'give plenty birth' (RUST7).

The negative effect of female teacher under-representation on girls' attitude towards school activities, as implied in the headteachers' argument, reflects the claim made by the Forum for African Women Educationists' (FAWE) in their study of sub-Saharan African countries that 'the lack of female teachers as role models is discouraging to girls and can prevent them from doing well at school (cited in Oxfam, 2000:4). Ankomah's (1998:86) study of girls' attitude to school education in rural Brong Ahafo Region also discovered that rural girls in their study saw low-income generation activities such as 'farming, trading, hairdressing and food processing', which their parents and other women in their villages carry out, 'as perhaps the only means of getting money without the need for any further schooling'. An intriguing aspect of his finding is that out of 75 girls interviewed, as many as 51 (68 percent) felt boys needed schooling more than girls, with only 12 (16 percent) desiring schooling<sup>226</sup>.

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<sup>226</sup> In view of various interventions put in place by the government, in conjunction with some international and local NGOs, such as the CAMFED, OXFAM, the 31<sup>st</sup> December Women's Movement (DWM) and FIDA, towards promoting girl-child education in Ghana, over the last two decades, one may be tempted to argue that Ankomah's finding might not be the case today. But the fact that the KEEA headteachers expressed concern about the negative attitude of girls towards studies at school, and the desire that female teachers were represented on their schools' staff to motivate the girls, suggests that rural girls within KEEA, especially those in the most interior places, still have problem with acknowledging the significance of girls' school education.



Denying girls access to relevant guidance and counselling on matters that are unique to girls is another effect the headteachers identified with regard to the under-representation of female staff in rural schools. Some heads argued that, although by the provisions of the 1987 educational reform, pupils are expected to complete their primary school education by age 12, circumstances in some of the rural schools were such that some primary six girls were between the ages of 15 and 17. At that age, they explained, girls have special physiological and psychological problems for which they need experienced female staff in which they can confide and get pieces of advice. One identified the handling of issues related to 'menstruation', as a common problem girls in his school encountered, and which often embarrassed him; hence he emphasized 'so without them it s really difficult'. Another argued that some accidents involving girls that occur in the school are such that it needs the urgent attention of a female staff. He illustrated his point with an incident in his school where she had to fall on some food vendors on the school compound to take care of a girl who 'slipped at a public toilet and was pricked by a wood at her private part' (see p.100 to 102)<sup>227</sup>.

Nevertheless, four headteachers (one male and three females) opposed any attempt to send female teachers to the most deprived areas of the district. They acknowledged that rural school girls need motivation from female teachers in terms of studies and agreed that some problems encountered by girls in the schools required the assistance

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<sup>227</sup>The concerns expressed by these male headteachers could be understood within the Ghanaian cultural practice where issues of menstruation and other sex-related matters affecting girls are expected to be handled by women, and those affecting boys handled by men. With particular reference to menstruation, it is traditionally believed that menstrual periods carry a bad omen; hence, even a husband is not permitted to eat food prepared by his menstruating wife. In a situation, where a woman is found to have concealed her menstruation and prepared food for her husband, it is construed as an abomination and a justifiable reason for divorce. This belief has over the years developed in the minds of traditional women through socio-cultural conditioning to such an extent that the traditional rural school girl is likely to be embarrassed by any experience of menstruation while at school and will be more likely to be shy of telling her male headteacher or male teachers than a female headteacher or a female teacher. Admittedly, the idea that girls would be more likely to be shy telling male heads about their menstruation is common in every society, even in the UK. What makes the situation in Ghana an issue is the 'unholiness' attached to menstrual periods.

of female teachers. Yet, they argued that it would be wickedness for any person to think of sending a young female teacher to a village which lacks many social amenities. With reference to the problem relating to menstruation, they argued that such issues and others which male headteachers or teachers found difficult to handle could be referred to the parents of the particular girl concerned.

It was interesting that all of them seemed to accept the fact that women are weaker than men and are less likely to adjust to the difficult conditions prevailing in the rural areas than male teachers would be. More intriguing is the fact that all three female heads identified themselves with the thinking that women are weak and therefore teaching assignments in the difficult rural areas should be the prerogative of males and not for them. Hence, to them the MOE's policy of not sending female teachers to deprived rural areas was laudable and should be maintained. This thinking seems to reflect the traditional stereotyped patterns of socialization that differentiate between female and male roles in that 'while boys are thought to be fit for places of responsibility, girls are considered to be dependent, their important role in life being marriage' (Rogers, 1980, cited in Ankomah, 1998:86).

### **Gender-related challenges encountered by female headteachers**

Fagbemi (1996) has identified 'uncooperative male subordinates' as a factor that militates against the effectiveness of female managers of public institutions in Ghana. He supports his view with Ferrario's (1994:14-17) observation that 'the main barrier to women in management is that of male attitudes'.

In contrast, my data suggest that female headteachers of urban schools within the KEEA district encountered more problems from female teachers who served under them than they did from male teachers. Although, in general, problems identified by the headteachers (both male and female) against their teachers, irrespective of sex, centred around issues such as 'getting drunk to school', 'lateness to school', 'late

submission of teaching/lesson notes and other duty-related problems, five female headteachers (all urban) complained bitterly about the uncooperative attitude of female teachers on their staff. According to them, the female teachers in their respective schools were not according them the recognition due to them as headteachers. In general they attributed this to the female teachers' envy of the fact that they (being women) had been placed in a responsible position over them. One explained that if they were male headteachers, the teachers' attitude towards them would have been different. Being women themselves, however, the headteachers were of the view that their teachers did not see why they (teachers) should take directives from them. One other explained that female teachers in her school 'feel I'm a woman so whatever they do, I should understand them'. She continued that the female teachers often considered her insistence on disciplined life in the school rude. As a result, some of them said if they had the authority, they would have replaced most female teachers on their staff with men.

Although the female headteachers attributed the challenges they were encountering in working with female teachers to the fact that they belong to the same sex group, it is difficult to conclude that the seeming conflict between them is exclusively the result of the same sex factor. As mentioned earlier, the cultural respect for age also influences the attitude of people towards those in authority. In this light, there is the probability that the age factor could contribute to the problem the headteachers were encountering. It is also difficult to conclude that female headteachers get on better with male teachers than they do with female teachers, because other factors are likely to influence such good relations. For instance, it was observed that the female headteachers were employing a more collaborative approach to their leadership by delegating substantial duties to their teachers and consulting them on issues. In one school, for example, the headteacher had entrusted all financial matters to one of the male teachers on her staff. By reposing such confidence in the male teachers, it is more likely that they would reciprocate by cooperating with the female headteachers. One may also want to probe into the extent to which the female headteachers' concern for the welfare of their teachers contributed to the situation.

Two headteachers in the rural areas, however, complained that their initial days in their schools as headteachers were difficult because they happened to be the first female headteachers in the schools. As a result, the male teachers, especially the older ones found it difficult to cooperate with them. Moreover, one mentioned that her school's School Management Chairman (SMC) chairman did not take it lightly when she expressed a contrary opinion about issues affecting the school whenever they had an SMC meeting. Being the only female member of the SMC, the chairman, according to her, expected that she would accept whatever the male members agreed on. As a result, she said she was once shouted at by the chairman: who used a local expression that literally translates as 'don't forget you're a woman, soften yourself'.

## Summary

One major issue that emerges from the discussion is that the under re-presentation of female teachers in rural primary schools within the KEEA district affects the way rural girls study in schools. Specifically, it does not provide the rural school girl with any role model by which she could be motivated towards committing herself to schooling. It also emerges that it is against the policy of the MOE/GES to post female teachers to deprived rural areas in the country. It is thought that female teachers are more vulnerable than men; hence females should be posted to the urban areas while their male counterparts go to the rural areas. Another reason for which female teachers are excluded from teaching in rural areas is the need to grant them the opportunity of choosing their desired marriage partners from a wider range of men.

Although, all the headteachers acknowledged that it was important that girls in the rural schools are taught by female teachers, they were divided as to whether females should be posted to the rural areas. The majority (15) argued for the posting of females to rural schools in Ghana for two major reasons: the fact that rural school enrolment comprises both girls and boys, and the fact that some problems that affect girls in the school would be best handled by female teachers. The remaining (five)

opposed the posting of female teachers to the deprived rural schools because they thought women could not cope with the difficult life there.

Some experts in gender issues with whom I interacted, during the process of analysing my data argued in support of the idea of not posting female teachers to such remote rural areas. One clearly stated, 'I will not post women to such a place'. While one cannot refute the fact that life in the rural areas is difficult, I find it puzzling to understand why girls in the rural areas should not be granted the opportunity of enjoying the same gender-balanced teaching privileges that other girls in urban schools enjoy? How do we reconcile this with the government's efforts towards creating equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls at all levels of the educational system? By not posting female teachers to the rural areas, are we not discriminating against the innocent poor rural girl by virtue of her geographical location? These are questions that need to be considered against the backdrop that about 69 percent of the Ghanaian population is found in the rural sector (Statistical Services, 1988). Considering that females constitute more than 51 percent of the total population of Ghana, of which majority live in the rural areas, (Amua-Sekyi, 1998), it is only fair that female teachers are provided to teach rural girls. Clearly Ghana cannot preach women empowerment without ensuring that all girls (irrespective of geographical location) gain equal access to role models.

As long as the distribution of female headteachers is highly skewed in favour of urban primary schools, female role stereotyping will persist and thereby make the GES' efforts at promoting girl-child education in the rural areas problematic.

## CHAPTER 18

# RECRUITING, SELECTING AND THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF HEADTEACHERS: WHAT WORKS?

*The single best way to prepare top-notch educational leaders is to start with a pool of candidates who are intellectually superior and capable. No matter how good the preparation, the result will be limited without a strong base of initial talent*  
(Improving the preparation of school administrators, 1989:13, quoted in Bredeson (1996), in Leithwood et al. (eds.), 258)

### Introduction

The quote above suggests that it is crucial for the education enterprise to attract individuals with a 'strong base of initial talent' to lead schools at all levels. Pounder and Young (1996) observe that, 'effective recruitment and selection of school administrators continues to be one of the more challenging human resource administration functions in educational organizations' (in Leithwood *et al*, eds. p.1)<sup>228</sup>.

In Ghana, a major problem with which successive governments have been grappling since her independence in 1957, in respect to staffing of the educational sector, 'is that of attracting persons to the teaching field' (Antwi (1992:120). This concern has often focused on the classroom teacher, yet we cannot exclude the problem of recruiting and developing headteachers in Ghana. This is because Ghana, like other countries

<sup>228</sup>In the UK, Caplan (2001:1) highlights this in his article titled, '*Attracting talent in a scarce skills market*', in which he observes that 'the shortage of teachers and nurses is well known', and challenges employers 'to sharpen their act when it comes to recruitment and selection and develop a strategic approach that will enable them to beat the competition for talented, skilled people'.

(both developed and developing), appoints headteachers from amongst serving teachers. Problems relating to teacher recruitment and retention therefore have direct impact on the appointment of headteachers as well. Following from this, one may argue that if the recruitment, retention and development of teachers are crucial for improving teacher performance in Ghana's classrooms, then that of the headteacher is of paramount importance to the entire school system. But the question is, what can we do to improve the recruitment and selection, as well as the professional development of headteachers? Do practising headteachers themselves have any answers to this question?

This chapter discusses what the KEEA headteachers perceive to be the ideal professional development programme for primary school headteachers in Ghana. The discussion begins with an overview of headteacher recruitment and selection issues emerging from the data. It explores the concepts of recruitment, selection and professional development, and discusses how they relate to one another. It then discusses some strategies that experts recommend for competent recruitment and selection, and relates them to the KEEA primary headteachers' recruitment strategies with the aim of identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses. Thereafter it discusses the pre-service and in-service debate in the light of the views expressed by the KEEA headteachers regarding their preferred professional development model. It concludes by summarising major issues emerging from the discussion.

## Overview of headteacher recruitment and selection issues emerging from the data.

It emerged from the data that the recruitment and selection of primary school headteachers within the KEEA takes the form of appointment based on recommendations. They are also primarily based on seniority in 'rank' and 'experience'. For one to become a headteacher, one should have had a long experience in the classroom as a teacher. One GES official (GESTO 4) explained the processes involved in appointing headteachers as follows:

The headteachers are appointed from the teachers in the district. To qualify for appointment as headteacher, you must be a principal superintendent or anybody of a higher rank or assistant director<sup>229</sup> if he chooses to be in the classroom.

He further explained that there are some exceptions: 'in deprived rural areas where it is difficult to get principal superintendents to accept being posted to schools, a senior superintendent or superintendent is posted as the substantive head'. The process of appointment, according to him, starts with a recommendation from the aspirant's circuit officer. Put in his own words,

The circuit supervisors will ensure that actually the person being nominated has proven leadership skills, has sound financial management, the person is morally right, disciplined, approachable, and knowledgeable. The person must be capable of solving problems and when these recommendations are made to the director, a panel is constituted and he is brought before the panel for an interview.

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<sup>229</sup> Assistant directors (AD) are normally not posted to the primary schools as teachers or headteachers. Once a person becomes an Assistant Director, he/she is posted to the District Office as a Schedule



These processes were confirmed by the headteachers. The processes appear to suggest that, so far as primary school headship is concerned, using Amuzu-Kpeglo's<sup>230</sup>(1990:3) comment concerning the training of secondary school headmasters, 'the Ghana Education Service seems to be working on the assumption that a successful classroom teacher necessarily makes an effective school administrator'.

The process seems to be more skewed towards screening and selection, rather than attracting and recruiting headteachers. This stems from the finding that the process of selecting headteachers is limited to three main issues: *recommendation/nomination, interviews* for screening purposes and decision on *appointment*. Of course, these processes are not peculiar to the Ghana Education Service. It reflects Pounder and Young's (1996:285) observation that:

The selection of school administrators to fill vacant positions in the school setting has often been viewed through a single lens. Relatively, less emphasis has been placed on attracting and recruiting candidates to position openings.

The writers, however, challenge this trend by stressing the importance of considering recruitment processes as well. They argue:

In times of low labour supply relative to demand, candidate recruitment procedures may be more important than candidate selection procedures to secure quality employees for position vacancies. [...] It is disappointing that few, if any, empirical studies exist which bear specifically on the attraction of individuals to public school administrator positions. (p.285 and 288).

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Officer. Posting of an AD to a primary school is therefore based on the willingness of the particular AD.

<sup>230</sup> Amuzu-Kpeglo conducted a survey of training needs of headmasters in 1990. His study focused on secondary school headship. Although his work neglected primary school headship, his comment cited in the text holds true for primary school headship. The trend at the secondary school level has increasingly changed. Although, his study neglected primary school leadership, his comment seems to be still appropriate for describing the trend at the primary school level. That thinking still influences the recruitment of primary school headteachers.

Extending Pounder and Young's argument to the context of the GES, it raises the question as to whether or not the practice of focusing on *recommendation/nomination, interviews and appointment* limits the chances of other equally capable people who might be interested in taking up the post of headship. It also raises an issue as to whether limiting the technique for appointing headteachers to selection processes alone limits the chances of the GES in selecting the most capable candidate<sup>231</sup>.

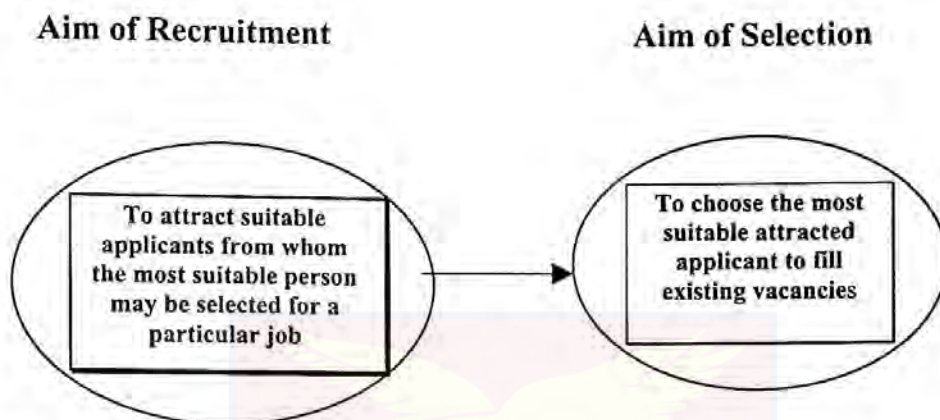
## **Recruitment and Selection in the light of school headship**

Writers in the field of human resources development in education and educational leadership such as Reboire (1982), Castetter (1992), Latchem and Lockwood (1998), and Pounder and Young (1996) agree that, although recruitment and *selection* differ in concept, they complement each other. Latchem and Lockwood, for example, suggest that 'recruitment is geared to attracting candidates with the required experience and attributes' through 'press advertisements and booklets describing the job and competency requirements'. 'Selection', on the other hand, 'is a comprehensive process, which in all cases involves interviews' (p.153). Guillory establishes the link between them by defining *recruitment* as a process of generating a large applicant pool, and *selection* as a process of getting 'these applications narrowed down, or screened, to a reasonable number for interviews'. Some researchers, he explains, define selection of staff 'as the elimination of candidates whose values, interests, needs, and abilities, having been carefully analysed, fail to satisfy the

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<sup>231</sup> To meaningfully discuss these issues, it is essential that the process of recruiting and selecting are properly understood. This is because 'a professional career' (like school headship, as implied when teaching is viewed as a profession) 'begins with recruitment, continues through preparation and initial licensing, and extends to lifelong professional development' (National Commission on Teachers and America's Future, 1998). Moreover, no meaningful discussion of primary school headteachers' professional development can be accomplished without reference to the elements of recruitment and selection. As the Hertfordshire GRID for Learning (HGfL) (2003:1) puts it 'Professional development is recognised as a vital element in recruiting and retaining leaders'.

requirements for a particular role'. The diagram below illustrates the complementary relationship between *recruitment* and *selection*:



**Fig. 18.1: Relationship between recruitment and selection**

The aims of recruitment and selection summed up in Fig, 17.1 above seem to suggest that the two concepts are different. Yet the discussion so far shows that both selection and recruitment are directed towards the same process: hiring the most capable person to lead the school. It is perhaps for this reason that Pounder and Young (p.286) stress that proper selection of school administrators can take place only when 'an adequate applicant pool' (AAP) is attracted through recruitment.<sup>232</sup> They are of the view that the larger the applicant pool, the more likely it is that those appointed to school leadership positions would represent the 'multicultural and gender diversity of candidates'.

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<sup>232</sup>They explain that AAP 'depends on both the actual numbers of high quality candidates and the multicultural and gender diversity of candidates'. They argue that when pools are restricted, as exemplified in the headteacher selection technique identified in my data, 'multicultural and gender diversity among the administrative ranks' are often neglected. Although, the writers acknowledge that a large pool of applicants 'does not automatically insure a proportionate increase in the quality of applicants for vacant administrator positions', yet they argue that 'it is more likely to do so than a small applicant yield ratio'.

The writers' observation above provides another reason for the gender imbalance among the rural headteachers discussed in the previous chapter. It raises the question as to whether the degree of the imbalance would be the same if the GES were to adopt an AAP approach to the selection of headteachers to the rural areas. Just as the two female graduate headteachers I mentioned earlier voluntarily opted to work in the rural areas, is it not possible that more female teachers would have applied for the position of headship in rural schools if the system of selection were not restricted? To Pounder and Young, the most appropriate means by which the actual number of candidates, as well as the gender diversity of applicant pools, could be increased is to give equal attention to both recruitment and selection. These are issues that need to be pursued by researchers in the field, and considered by the GES.

### **Strategies for competent recruitment and selection of primary school headteachers**

Castetter (1992:146-151) underscores the need for competent recruitment and selection of staff in the school system. He argues that improper selection of staff can be very costly to the school system, the community, and the taxpayer as well as the pupil population. Proper selection, however, 'helps to minimize dissipation of time, effort, and funds that must be invested in developing a school staff'.

### **Strategies for improving recruitment**

Two major strategies for recruitment emerge from the literature: (a) *job description and personnel specification* (b) *recruitment advertising* (Dean 1995:179; Torrington and Hall, p.206).

### ***Job-description and personnel specification: the context of recruiting KEEA headteachers***

Job-description provides a communication link between the organization and those it seeks to attract (Guthrie and Reed, 1991). From the perspective of primary school management, Dean suggests that *job-descriptions* provide information to prospective applicants on issues relating to the nature of the vacant position available, salary range, duties and responsibilities to be performed, and person (s) to whom the post holder will be responsible. On the other hand, *person description*, also termed as 'personnel specification' (Torrington and Hall, p.206), provides clear information about 'the kind of person wanted for a particular vacancy'. As an example, she identifies 'qualifications, knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, special aptitudes and qualities, particular interests' as essential features of the contents of person description statements. This reflects the characteristics of competence and competency discussed earlier (see p.26-29, 188-194). As MacBeath and Myers (1999:2) classify these terms, 'qualifications, knowledge and experience' will fit into *competence* while 'abilities, special attitudes and qualities, as well as particular interests' will fit into *competency*.

In the context of my data, there was no evidence that recruiters attached any importance to making aspirants for primary school headship aware of the nature of the position they were being appointed to occupy, through job and person descriptions. This is reflected in the finding that seven of the headteachers who were involved in my study did not know their job descriptions prior to their appointment. In the words of one head:

I was appointed all of a sudden to be the head, which I wasn't expecting. I didn't know many things involved in it. For instance, I didn't know keeping financial records or preparing for auditing was part of the headteacher's job.

Consequently, they had to depend principally on trial and error approaches in carrying out their leadership tasks<sup>233</sup>.

### ***Recruitment advertising in the context of recruiting KEEA headteachers.***

Another strategy commonly identified in the available literature is 'recruitment advertising' (Torrington and Hall, p.210). 'Advertising', according to Boela (p.68) is 'a method by which an employer communicates to potential employees that he is seeking to fill a vacancy'. He concurs with Dean that 'the ideal advertisement should attract the right candidates only'. He emphasises the need for recruiters to think carefully about the choice and content of advertising because:

If the advertisement is loosely or vaguely worded, it may encourage too many unsuitable applicants or, worse still, it may not attract the most suitable people. Moreover, the money wasted on ineffective advertising could well have been spent on new equipment, or even increases in salaries.

In the context of recruiting primary school headteachers within the KEEA district, however, one wonders if the issue of recruitment advertisement is relevant. As my data suggest, all the headteachers involved in the study were recruited internally from amongst other serving teachers through nominations. Few were appointed straight from the training college. In this case, it is evident from the data that the strategy adopted in recruiting headteachers in the district did not create opportunities for a prospective appointee to make any critical decision regarding his/her willingness to apply for the post or not. Moreover, the strategy seems to create the impression that attracting teachers to apply for the post of primary headship is not an issue. Yet the

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<sup>233</sup> Even the remaining 13 headteachers, who said they were aware of their headship tasks prior to their appointments, did not attribute their sources of information to access to *job-description* or *person description* from the appointing authority. They gained such awareness through their own efforts. While some gained the awareness through observing activities and experiences of other headteachers, others derived awareness from personal experiences they had gained while assisting their former headteachers.

literature suggests that advertisement is indispensable in both internal and external recruitment.

*Chapter 18: Discussion: recruiting, selecting and professional development*

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Recruitment experts acknowledge internal recruitment as an important means by which vacant positions in organizations could be filled. Referring to the US, Pounder and Young argue that the school district is itself a major source of potential applicants. There are current qualified employees who may desire to become administrators or to be promoted to administrative positions. In this light, Boela urges:

It is good management practice, therefore, for all vacancies in a company, and particularly those that may be seen by existing employees to be promotions, to be advertised internally on the staff notice boards or by circulars (p.65).

This places a question mark over the practice in the KEEA district where, according to my data, details of vacancies in schools were exclusively circulated to circuit officers to be used as the basis for recommending potential headteachers in the primary school. Is it not likely that prejudices that a supervisor has against a particular teacher, who otherwise possesses qualities befitting a leader, could exert an influence on his/her recommendations? As Boela observes, 'circulating details to supervisors only is not satisfactory as some employees may fear that their supervisors will not put them forward for various reasons (p.65).

### **Strategies for improving the selection of headteachers**

As illustrated in Fig.17.1 (see p.273), the process of selection aims at choosing the most suitable candidate from amongst the pool of respondents to recruitment advertisements. The data suggest that the GES, within the KEEA district, used two main headteacher selection strategies: *appointment through direct posting* and *appointment through selection interviews*.

### ***Appointment through direct posting***

This strategy, according to officials from the GES, involves appointing newly-trained teachers to lead schools, especially in the rural areas. This does not involve any rigorous selection process. In cases where a school is staffed with pupil teachers<sup>234</sup>,

such an appointment is not even based on recommendation. Instead, the individual teacher concerned is persuaded by the authorities and encouraged to take up the appointment.

This approach, according to the official, was deemed appropriate because of the difficulties the GES was encountering with recruiting teachers to the rural areas. The unattractiveness of rural life in the district appears to have made working in rural schools non-competitive among teachers, who might otherwise have had aspirations to be appointed as headteachers. A parallel of this situation is found in Tracy's (n.d.) web-site article titled, *Recruitment and selection of staff - making the best "purchase" decision*, in which she argued that, one reason for which employers in New Zealand do not use sound staff selection tools and do not seem to be much bothered with employing the best person for the job 'could be the lack of real competition in some sectors'.

### ***Appointment through selection interviewing***

The second selection strategy, which is largely associated with the appointment of urban school headteachers, is *interviewing*. As one GES official explained, when the circuit supervisor nominates a teacher for a headship position, recommendations are made to the District Director of Education. 'A panel is then constituted and the

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<sup>234</sup> In Ghana, untrained teachers are referred to as 'pupil teachers'.



teacher is brought before the panel for an interview'<sup>235</sup>. The panel normally comprises a representative of the District Director of Education, the Assistant Director in charge of manpower and training, a circuit supervisor, a unit school representative (*if it is a mission school*) and in some cases, a retired educationist.

*Experience, rank and recommendation* still form an integral part of the selection process. Yet the data strongly suggest that the use of a selection interview, which Schneider and Schmitt (1986) identify as 'the single most important and widely used tool in the selection process', has since the advent of the 1987 Education Reform become a major tool for selecting primary school headteachers. As Tanye (2001:14) puts it:

The one major and relevant policy put in place to govern the recruitment of primary headteachers since the implementation of the New Reforms and the fCUBE programme to date, is interviewing aspiring and potential headteachers.

An interview, according to Torrington and Hall, 'is a controlled conversation with a purpose.' (P.264), which primarily aims at collecting information 'in order to predict how well the applicants would perform in the job for which they have applied, by, measuring them against predetermined criteria'. Dean recommends that it should be based on a careful scrutiny of all applications received from applicants: 'they need to be sifted to decide which ones warrant seeking further information' (p.181). She cautions, 'even if there are few applications you need to think very carefully before pursuing someone who is not qualified by experience and knowledge for the post in question' (ibid.). This implies that application forms are crucial to the selection

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<sup>235</sup>Prior to the 1987 reform, the appointment of primary school headteachers was not based on interviews. It was largely based on long service and experience as well as promotion to a senior grade rank in the GES. Teachers who rose to the grade of Principal Superintendent due to long service, without a university degree qualification, were potential primary school headteachers, while those with university degrees were considered for appointment to the District Education offices or transferred to the secondary school level (Asiedu-Akrofi, 1978). This trend has not changed much.

process. 'It speeds the sorting and short listing of applications and it guides the interviewers as well as providing a starting-point for personnel records' (Torrington and Hall).

If, by Dean's recommendation above, scrutiny of applications is a precondition for a successful staff selection interview, then a major question arises as to how selection interviews are carried out for prospective headteachers within the KEEA district. The finding is that applications (whether in the form of applicants completing application forms or writing application letters for primary headship appointment) seem not to be used in the district. This situation calls for future in-depth research into the content of the pre-selection interview stage of the selection interview process within the district to ascertain the validity and reliability of selection decisions emanating from the interviews.

To ensure that the selection interview achieves its goals, Dean cautions those who use the strategy not to take things for granted because 'interviewing is known to be fallible and even the most experienced interviewer makes mistakes' (p.181). Torrington and Hall illuminate this by claiming that the 'selection interview has been extensively criticised as being unreliable, invalid and subjective'. Wagner's (cited in Pounder and Young) study which sought to verify 'the reliability (accuracy, consistency/stability)' and 'predictive validity (relationship to subsequent job performance)' of the selection interview, for example, suggests that 'predictive validity' of the selection interview 'was very low'. This is corroborated in a recent survey of some graduate recruits in Britain. 52 percent of the students reported that their selection interviews had left them with a poor impression of the company, *due to lack of skill on the part of the interviewer* (Sisson, 1989).

Although, the above criticism appears convincing, it seems to suggest that the problem is with attitudes exhibited by interviewers in the conduct of the interviews

but not with the selection interview as a strategy *per se*. As Lopez (1975:5) argues 'all the complaints and denunciations boil down to the argument that it is the interviewer and not the interview that is at the heart of the problem'<sup>236</sup>.

The discussion has so far identified the best strategies by which the education sector can secure the most suitable staff: *recruitment techniques* designed to attract a large pool of applicants, and *selection procedures* involving systematic and consistent use of job-related selection criteria (Pounder and Young, p.304). But the question is, 'do these strategies, by themselves, imply that successful candidates are automatically equipped with the requisite skills, attitudes, knowledge and motivation for achieving the goals for which they were employed?' Of course, as Smith (1995:129) seems to suggest, recruitment and selection *per se* do not guarantee effective and efficient performance of employees. The appointee, 'whether a newly trained teacher or someone appointed after several years' teaching' will need further professional assistance.

### **Primary school headteachers' professional development: context of KEEA district.**

From the literature, training emerges as a major common strategy for carrying out professional development. None of the writers who discuss this avoid the element of *training* in their discourse. In the context of this discussion, professional development is used interchangeably with *training*.

The 20 headteachers unanimously considered *training* to be very significant for their professional practice. They contested the idea, held by some politicians and policy

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<sup>236</sup>The foregoing strengthens Dean's concern regarding the need for interviewers to adopt strategies that will ensure that selection interviews provide the best results. This is because, 'whatever selection procedures are used, it is essential that an interview is included' (ibid. p.183). Corroborating this view, Torrington and Hall argue: 'the interview is crucial, and when worries are expressed about its reliability, this is not a reason for doing away with it: it is a reason for conducting it properly'.

makers in Ghana, that any experienced teacher could automatically succeed as primary head, or that it was not necessary for government to invest in the training of primary heads in the country. The headteachers justified the indispensability of training in their professional development (see p.146-147). They agreed that changes that occur in the society affect the school's aims, which in turn affect the nature of school administration. In this light, the headteacher needs to be trained to enable him/her to acquire the requisite competences for meeting the challenges posed by such changes. A few argued that it was unfortunate that some people out of ignorance thought that 'as for primary school, you don't need to train people in leadership before they succeed as heads'. Others were of the view that the primary school was responsible for laying the foundation for future educational success. As described on p147 (footnote 147), one head argued that 'out of the 12 years that the child spends in school before he enters the tertiary institution, primary school alone takes six years' and cautioned, 'any mistake at the primary school, will affect him at the JSS and SSS level'. In an angry tone, she concluded:

How on earth can you make the difference when you don't attach importance to the training of the headteacher at the primary level? [...] You need the cream of professionals to be in the primary school to manage it. So training of the primary head is very important.

The significance of the headteachers' desire for training is underscored by Bell's (1989:128) argument that 'the appointment process does not end when the successful candidate has accepted the post. The appointment is, in fact, the start of another process, that of induction'<sup>237</sup>. Hence, Dean (1995:185) calls for professional development policies that will perhaps ensure that 'teachers have opportunity and encouragement to develop in their work'.

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<sup>237</sup> Thus, recruitment and selection are just aspects of the process of securing quality headteachers. In the words of Hart and Weindling (1996), 'securing effective leaders for schools involves many steps, including preparation, recruitment, selection, and on-going development' (in Leithwood *et. al.* 1996:309).

It is in this light that the 17 headteachers, who said they had received some sort of headship-related training since their appointment, acknowledged the benefits of such training courses. Those who had been headteachers before the advent of the 1987 Education Reform saw these training initiatives as encouraging and wished them to continue. They explained that they did not have access to such training courses during the pre-reform era. Their observation supports Amuzu-Kpeglo's (1990:2) argument that:

The educational system, as we know it, does not provide for a well-established and articulated formal administrative training programme for the various categories of administrators<sup>238</sup>. Typically, these administrators are experienced classroom teachers who combine professional experience with academic qualification. Some have as many as 30 years service in the classroom. They are promoted through the ranks and given their new administrative positions without the requisite and appropriate administrative training background<sup>239</sup>.

At the primary school level, the training of headteachers still remains a problem. There has not been a sustained systematic training programme for them. Although the University of Cape Coast has introduced an undergraduate programme in primary education leading to the award of a B.Ed. degree, and students on the programme are

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<sup>238</sup> By educational administrators, Amuzu-Kpeglo was referring to heads of divisions, regional, district and unit levels of the Ghana Education Service. He specified these to include directors at the GES headquarters, regional directors, assistant directors, district education officers, regional managers of and supervisors of mission educational units (within the public stream), headmasters of secondary schools and principals of the polytechnic, technical and vocational schools.

<sup>239</sup> Amuzu-Kpeglo's concern was directed towards senior educational administrators who excluded primary school headteachers. While his reasons for this exclusion were not given, it seems to confirm the thinking some Ghanaians at that time, and even now, hold to the effect that investment in training primary school headteachers is a waste. The problem at the secondary school level has been increasingly solved. The University of Cape Coast, Ghana, currently runs two different postgraduate programmes for secondary school headmasters: M.Phil (Educational Administration) offered at the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) and an M.Ed. (Educational Management) programme offered at the Institute of Education.

introduced to some courses in educational administration, yet the courses do not prepare students specifically for primary school headship. This problem, of course, is not peculiar to Ghana. Bush and Jackson (2002:2) observe that 'training in many countries is not a requirement for appointment as a principal and there is still an (often unwritten) assumption that good teachers can become effective managers and leaders without specific preparation'.

As discussed in chapter one, this is a problem that the Commonwealth Secretariat (1996:iii) since the mid-1990s has identified in African countries' 'strategies for training and supporting school heads (are) generally inadequate throughout Africa'. In spite of the Secretariat's interventions through the preparation of school administration manuals to guide school heads and the provision of funds to support training programmes, 'recognition of the need for specific preparation for aspiring and practising school leaders [...] has been slower to emerge' (Bush and Jackson, p2). It is in this light that the headteachers lauded the *ad hoc* in-service training courses they had benefited from, and wished that they could be sustained.

### **Factors that necessitated the retraining of primary school headteachers in Ghana**

Atakpa (2001), who co-authored the primary school Headteachers' Handbook, and said he had been involved in the training of headteachers since the advent of the 1987 reform, supported the views expressed by the headteachers that the INSET programmes associated with the reform were a welcome innovation. He explained that the need for retraining primary school headteachers was necessitated by the general changes that the reform had brought to the basic education system: 'the curriculum had been expanded, teachers' job expectations had changed, the structure of the system had changed; everything had been changed so there was the need for us to retrain teachers to handle the new curriculum to ensure success'. The changes, he further explained, meant teachers were to work harder than before. To achieve this,

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headteachers needed appropriate skills, attitude and knowledge that would enable them to supervise and monitor teachers' performance as well as pupils' learning efficiently. In that respect, he further explained:

The retraining of headteachers became very important. Before that time, our system did not have any specific programmes in place for training headteachers in the job of being a manager or a leader in a school. Now that the system was being reformed, the headteachers also needed to be trained. As leaders of the team that operate in the school, they also needed training.

Atakpa's explanation seems to agree with Craft's (1996:5) observation that changes emanating from educational reform as well as 'demands for high standards and calls for improving quality,' have made it necessary for headteachers to constantly update and improve their skills through professional development programmes<sup>240</sup>

### **Nature of the professional development scheme for the KEEA headteachers**

It emerged from the data that only selected schools, mostly drawn from urban and semi-urban areas, usually benefited from professional development programmes in the district. This was partly attributed to the mostly foreign initiated and *ad hoc* nature of the training programmes. The training programmes, according to one GES official (GESTO 1), were fully funded by the participating bodies. Such bodies initiated and implemented the programmes in conjunction with the MOE. He further alleged that some of the training schemes were part of major foreign-based research projects while others were offered as part of partnership arrangements into which the government of Ghana had entered with multinational bodies such as the World Bank, UNESCO, UNDP, ODA, USAID, CIDA, and the British Council.

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<sup>240</sup> This partly explains why professional development has in recent times 'attracted increasing attention'. It is in this light that England and Wales, for example, have, over the past two decades designed a number of strategies such as *school development planning*, *professional interviews*, *staff appraisal and training for newly qualified headteachers* (Teacher Training Agency, 1995, Craft, 1996;

Neither the MOE nor the GES, he observed, had any sustained locally-initiated and fully-funded professional development programme for primary school headteachers in the country. It was further revealed that in most cases the bodies involved determined the number and category of schools to be selected for such training programmes. This seems to explain why three of the headteachers, located in the most interior part of the district, said they had not been given the opportunity of benefiting from any of the training programmes initiated in the district.

In addition to this, it emerged that the training programmes that were tied to foreign-based research projects ceased once the project was accomplished because the GES complained of funding problems. As an example, he referred to a training programme that the GES, in conjunction with one body introduced for some selected headteachers in the country but which ended halfway. The programme was to be run in three phases. A foreign body funded the first two phases, and the MOE was to fund the third phase. He lamented: 'Some KEEA headteachers benefited from phases one and two. When it came to phase three, after that body had left the country, the GES said there was no funds. So up till now, phase three hasn't taken place'.

The problem of funding seems to be a genuine factor that has retarded the MOE's efforts towards developing primary school headteachers in the country. Available statistics suggest that expenditure on basic education alone takes over 30 percent of the total budgetary allocation the Government makes to the education sector. The Government's 2002 Budgetary Statement, for example, indicates that about two hundred and seventeen billion cedis (₵217 billion) out of the 'total allocation of ₵1,800 billion (one thousand and eight hundred billion cedis) which is about 70 percent of the total allocation to the social services sector' in the country was allocated the primary sector (Min. of Finance, 2002). Yet commitments relating to the provision and maintenance of facilities, personnel salaries and others seem to ensure that the professional development of headteachers is placed very low on the priority list.

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5-10) 'to ensure that school and individual needs are addressed through professional development activities' (Craft, p.9).



## **Problems relating to the INSET programmes: what the headteachers say.**

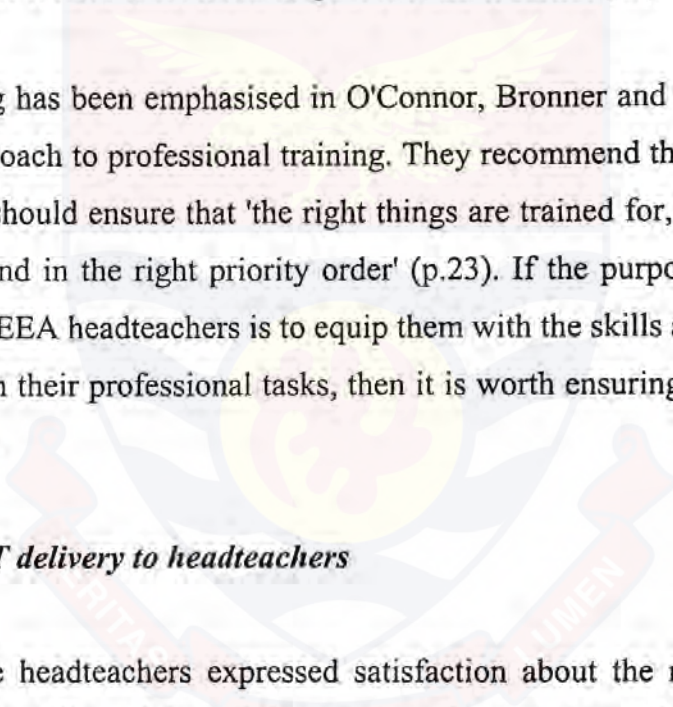
### *Duration and timing of training programmes*

As described earlier, all the headteachers who had benefited from the INSET programmes expressed displeasure at the duration of the sessions. They did not find the 'two days', 'ten days' or 'two weeks' duration of the training sessions sufficient. Some felt they would have benefited more from the courses if time were extended to cover longer periods. They expressed varied views about what they considered to be 'longer periods'. While some of them felt that any period between three weeks and twelve weeks (three months) would be ideal for the training programmes, others wanted a period of between six months and one year. This is intriguing because the literature suggests that on the average INSET programmes last between one day and three weeks (Morris and Chance, 1997:335). An Ofsted Inspection Report on *professional development opportunities for headteachers/deputy headteachers and senior managers in Derby schools, UK*, for example, suggests that INSET could even take 'half day' (Derby City Education Service Ofsted Inspection Report 2001).

The headteachers' criticism of the duration of the training programmes raises an issue as to whether the training they had received had really made any impact on their performance. They acknowledged the fruitfulness of the sessions they had attended, but it is difficult to ascertain what these judgements mean and the extent to which they feed into practice. As Morris and Chance suggest, it is possible that a workshop could be entertaining for participants without having any impact on their learning. The medium of instruction during the training sessions was the English language. Two headteachers, with strong academic backgrounds (they were university graduates), did not find anything wrong with the length of training. The majority of those who complained were post-middle and post-secondary certificate holders, whose proficiency in the English language was comparatively low. In such

circumstances, it is questionable how effective training can be offered without language issues being taken into consideration and provided for.

### *Timing of the INSET programme*

Some felt the training programmes were not organized for them at the right time. Two of them commented, 'in fact, if I had the training before I took over as head, my school would have been at the top of the English reading test [...]'; and 'it was organised late [...] it'll have been more helpful if I had it earlier [...]'.  


Appropriate timing has been emphasised in O'Connor, Bronner and Delaney's (1996) training cycle approach to professional training. They recommend that those involved in training others should ensure that 'the right things are trained for, in the right way, at the right time and in the right priority order' (p.23). If the purpose of the INSET provided for the KEEA headteachers is to equip them with the skills and attitudes they need to accomplish their professional tasks, then it is worth ensuring that the training is offered on time.

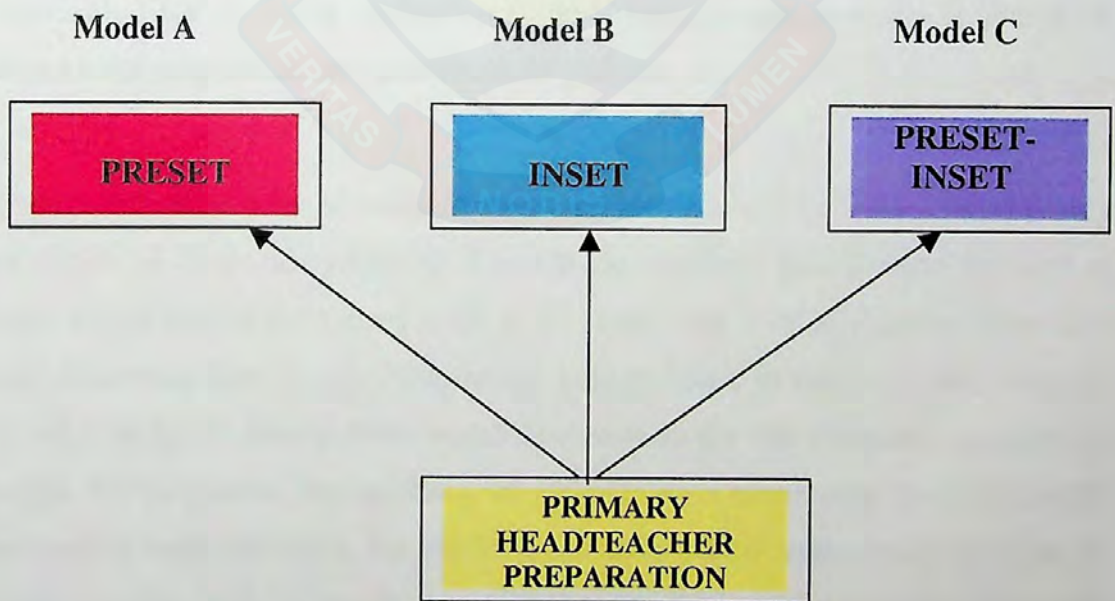
### *Methods of INSET delivery to headteachers*

On the whole, the headteachers expressed satisfaction about the resource persons' approaches to the handling of the training sessions. In most cases, they explained, the training sessions were organised in the form of workshops and provided them with opportunities to share ideas with other participants in groups. In a few cases the trainers used the seminar or lecturing approach. Some of the headteachers found these approaches boring and unhelpful. Although workshops, seminars and lectures are common methods used in training programmes, experts in the field of professional development do not encourage their usage. They are seen to be 'too top-down' and 'too isolated' from classroom realities to have an impact on teachers' practice. (Joyce and Showers, 1982). Hence, unless it is used in such a way that participants are actively involved, the training session could become not simply boring but an ineffective way

of helping people develop skills. It is in this light that Joyce and Showers have recommended the theory-demonstration-practice, feedback and follow-through model.

### **Pre-service training (PRESET) versus In-service training (INSET) schemes: what the headteachers say.**

As discussed in chapter two, there are contrasting opinions about strategies for preparing school leaders. Whereas some argue in favour of pre-appointment training, others advocate post-appointment training (Hart and Weindling, 1996:301). Among the KEEA headteachers, three preferences emerged. Four of them argued in favour of pre-service training, while five of them felt strongly that in-service training was more appropriate for developing them professionally. In contrast, eleven of them argued that what headteachers needed in order to perform their task efficiently was a combination of both pre-service learning and in-service learning. These three models have been illustrated in **Figure 17.2** below:



**Figure 18.2: Models of primary headteacher preparation**

**Model A: PRESET MODEL**

The *PRESET* model represents the views of four headteachers who argued that pre-service training was what the headteacher needs in order that he or she should succeed in his/her new leadership role. They said that pre-service training was especially important for newly-trained teachers who are posted straight from college to the rural schools as headteachers because they do not have any experience in the field. They also felt that the work of primary heads in Ghana was becoming increasingly complex because of increasing public pressure, and that the only way newly appointed headteachers could cope with this pressure was if they were fully trained for the job.

This model parallels the US strand discussed earlier in chapter two. It is however, uncertain if the model as practised in the US and Canada, would be wholly applicable to the Ghanaian situation. The US strand tends largely to focus on preparation at the masters or doctoral level. Moreover, it involves pre-appointment practical training through 'internships rather than as guided practice through the induction period (Hickcox and House, 1991, cited in Hart and Weindling, p.31). Whereas the element of internship may be easily applicable to the Ghanaian situation, the emphasis on graduate level preparation seems likely to be problematic.

As mentioned earlier, trained teachers constitute the main source from which primary headteachers in Ghana are recruited. The official academic qualification required of primary school teachers in Ghana is GCE 'O' level (now SSSCE - Senior Secondary School Education Certificate). First-degree holders teach in the secondary schools. They are usually the source from which headmasters for the secondary schools are recruited. In this context, the emphasis on graduate level preparation may be suitable for secondary level education, but not for the primary school, where most teachers do not even possess GCE 'A' levels to qualify for an undergraduate studies. This does not, however, mean the idea of pre-service training for headteachers should be dismissed in the Ghanaian context. Lessons could be drawn from Singapore and Hong-Kong. Singapore runs a full-time six months training course leading to an

award of Diploma in Educational Administration for aspiring school leaders (Bush and Chew, 1999, in Bush and Jackson, p.420). Hong-Kong, on the other hand, runs a compulsory 30-hour training programme for potential heads alongside non-mandatory masters level courses run by three of her universities (ibid.).

### ***Model B: INSET MODEL***

Those who argued in favour of in-service training (five) were of the view that their training at the teacher training college had already offered them a foundation in educational administration on which they only needed to build. As a result they thought a scheme of sustained in-service training programmes was the most appropriate for their professional development. They wanted the programmes to be organized as soon as they were appointed and also to become a regular feature of their professional development.

INSET is a widely-used strategy for developing headteachers. As discussed in chapter two, in England there is a Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme (HEADLAMP) that supports newly-appointed headteachers to help them develop professionally. The programme 'provides a budget of £2,500 for each new headteacher to spend on his/her professional development (Bush and Jackson, p.422). At present the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) is designing ways of improving the INSET programmes for headteachers in England through a project dubbed: 'New Visions: Induction to Headship'.

### ***Model C. PRESET-INSET MODEL***

As mentioned earlier, those who opted for the Preset-Inset model acknowledged the need to equip potential headteachers with the requisite skills, knowledge and attitudes prior to their assumption of duty and also to continue nurturing them during the

process of their job performance. They were of the view that pre-service training alone was not enough to sustain the headteacher in terms of meeting the increasing challenges that changes in the educational system might pose. As a result, they commonly agreed that pre-service training (PRESET) should be supported by in-service training (INSET).

Considering that primary school teachers in Ghana, who constitute the main source of recruiting headteachers compared with the UK and US, possess lower academic qualifications, the suggestion of a combination of pre-service and in-service training seems worth considering by the educational authorities in Ghana. This is particularly important when one considers that the scope and intensity of the educational administration course provided at the initial teacher training level is just introductory and 'focuses more on classroom management techniques rather than school management' (Atakpa, 2001).

In this light, it seems to suggest that adopting the 'train-appoint-retrain' approach practised in France would be more appropriate for preparing primary school headteachers in Ghana. As discussed in chapter two, the professional development of school leaders in France consists of two phases (Buckley 1985:43)<sup>241</sup>.

## Summary

The discussion has suggested strongly that *recruitment, selection and training* are crucial to the professional development of primary school headteachers. This was

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<sup>241</sup> Hart and Weindling underscore the relevance of this model in their observation that, in practice, 'no clean divisions exist between those who advocate pre-and post-appointment programs of school leaders preparation', and that school systems now take advantage of using both approaches in their staff development programmes. They argue that although Johnson (1991) observes that many states in Australia tend to emphasise 'certification in management as a criterion for selecting school managers', Schwartz and Harvey (1991) provide evidence that this practice does not affect Australia's commitment to the professional development needs of their school leaders.

reflected in both the data and the literature. Recruitment and selection play complementary roles in the appointment of the most capable person to lead primary schools.

Recruitment helps the school to attract potential applicants for headship positions through three main tools: job description (*competence*), personnel specification (*competencies*) and *recruitment advertising*. The most reliable recruitment strategy is that which attracts a large pool of internal, external or both internal and external applicants. Selection, on the other hand, helps the school to choose the most suitable person from those attracted through recruitment, to fill headship positions. It involves sorting and screening applications and other relevant information, matching them against pre-determined job and personnel descriptions, short-listing applicants for interviewing, making decisions regarding the best candidate and implementing decisions.

The discussion further suggested that professional development of headteachers does not end with their appointment. They must be helped to adjust to their new job and environment. The most common means by which this is achieved is through training. Three models emerged from the schemes of training that the headteachers said they needed. The majority of them preferred a combination of both pre-service and in-service training (PRESET-INSET). This was followed by (INSET) and then (PRESET). This suggests that the headteachers prefer a type of training that will initiate them into their job and continue to prepare them for meeting the changing challenges associated with their jobs.

## CHAPTER 19

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Introduction

As mentioned on p.4, my study had four objectives: exploring how headteachers themselves within the KEEA Educational district of Ghana themselves perceived their preparedness for the leadership task they were appointed to perform; how they conceptualised their headship roles; how they perceived the adequacy and relevance of existing headteacher training schemes in the country; and what they perceived to be the most appropriate training to equip them with the requisite competences to enable them to accomplish their leadership tasks. This chapter presents a summary of the main conclusions emerging from the study and their implications for professional development practice and policy as well as for future research.

#### Summary of findings

The summary derives from the views expressed by the headteachers in response to the research questions that guided the study. They are presented below:

##### *Conceptualisation of primary school headship*

The headteachers' understanding of school headship is skewed towards the exercise of 'power and authority'. Their understanding is influenced by factors related to the Ghanaian cultural orientation towards *respect for* and the *exercise of power and authority, value for age and language*. The terms *administration, management and leadership* are largely used interchangeably by the headteachers to mean the same



thing: ensuring that teachers performed their duties through the exercise of authority and power.

### ***The headteachers' perceived competences for their job accomplishment***

The headteachers were concerned with two main competences. The first relate directly to tasks they performed in the school. They placed a high premium on knowledge and skills for managing school finance, especially the keeping of school finance records. They also emphasised the need to develop their pedagogical, andragogical and people management skills. The second involved competences that influence their task performance indirectly: personal and interpersonal competencies.

### ***Specific activities performed by the headteachers***

The headteachers performed varied tasks. These tasks can be classified into two:

- Those which relate directly to teaching and learning, such as supervising teachers' lesson preparation and delivery, handling classes, provision of teaching/learning materials performance.
- Those, which indirectly affect teaching and learning, such as carrying out office, work, attending meetings, attending to teachers and pupils' welfare matters, keeping school finance records and receiving visitors.

Combining teaching with their administrative tasks often disrupted pupils' learning processes in the classroom.

### ***Visions the headteachers had for their schools***

The headteachers' main concern for their schools and their pupils was to attain academic excellence. They were also concerned about their pupils' personality development: moral, emotional, social. It was suggested, however, that their visions

were driven by the main criterion which the government and the public use in judging a good school in Ghana: *examination results*.

### *Headteachers' perception of existing training schemes*

The mode of training within the KEEA district is in-service training (INSET), which is *ad hoc* by nature. The majority of the headteachers found the contents of the INSET programmes relevant to their leadership tasks. A headteacher's access to frequent INSET was, however, determined by the geographical location of his/her school: the closer one's school is to the district capital, the more likely it is that the headteacher will gain frequent access to INSET.

The INSET programmes had some shortcomings: the length of training was too short and the timing inappropriate.

### **Conclusions**

The conclusions emerging from my interpretation and theorising about the data are presented below. The generalisation of these conclusions are confined to primary school headteachers within the KEEA educational district of Ghana:

- Headteachers' understanding of school leadership is influenced by the cultural and political practices, beliefs and values upheld by the society in which they operate.
- Language, particularly one's mother tongue, plays a crucial role in headteachers' conceptualisation of school leadership.
- Meaning attached to headteachers' competence is largely influenced by the context in which he/she operates and the language used.

- Headteachers require a combination of both professional competences and personal/interpersonal competencies in order to succeed in their leadership roles.
- Government and parental expectations seem to be the most influential factors that determine what the primary headteacher does in the school.
- Combining full-time teaching with school leadership tasks increases the workload of primary school heads and adversely affects pupils' learning.
- Primary headteachers' activities involve a lot of physical movements. Some of these seem to be a waste of teaching/learning time.
- Primary heads are expected to be models of good professional practice for teachers and good behaviour for pupils.
- Headteachers with university degrees showed more confidence in their work than those without higher academic qualifications.
- The under-representation of female headteachers in rural schools is perceived as having an adverse effect on the attitude of rural school girls towards schooling.
- Female headteachers have more problems working with female teachers than male headteachers had with female teachers.
- Recruitment, selection and training are crucial to the professional development of primary school headteachers.
- The ideal scheme of training to equip primary heads with the requisite skills for meeting the contemporary challenges with which schools grapple is that which combines both pre-service and in-service training.

### **Implications for headteachers' professional development practice and policy**

The conclusions emerging from the discussions have implications for the GES' headteachers' professional development practice and policy.

Firstly, the finding that cultural politics influences the way headteachers conceptualise school leadership implies that policy formulation should take into consideration local politics and cultural factors that are likely to hinder or promote the understanding of concepts adopted from other cultures. This would mean that those involved in formulating policies and designing training programmes for primary school headteachers' professional development should inform their planning with extensive research. It is also essential that policy-formulators avoid being enticed by the quest for money to adopt leadership-related labels and *ad hoc* foreign leadership training initiatives without considering limitations and challenges of policy borrowing.

The confusion surrounding the terms *administration*, *management* and *leadership* also calls for a 'holistic'<sup>242</sup> approach to the curriculum designed for headteacher training programmes in the district. It implies that those involved in headteacher training programmes, and especially planners of training courses for headteachers, should take into consideration ways in which local language (L2) can enhance or retard participants' understanding of school leadership. It may be necessary for the MOE to engage the services of Ghanaian language specialists to translate the phenomenon of leadership in the school, as a learning organisation, as prescribed by experts. Most of the headteachers, because of their low academic qualifications, appeared to be limited in terms of English words for appropriately conceptualising the terms *administration*, *management* and *leadership*. It suggests strongly that these terms could have been better understood if heads had been exposed to equivalent terminology in their local language.

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<sup>242</sup>By 'holistic', in this context, I am referring to a curriculum that would seek to consciously create awareness among headteachers regarding cultural politics issues that affect leadership in the Ghanaian context.

Secondly, the headteachers' identification of issues related to financial management, teaching skills and management of people as areas where they felt they were incompetent raises questions as to the relevance of the numerous MOE/GES/NGO-initiated INSET programmes. It further raises questions as to the extent to which headteachers' work is informed by the guidelines spelt out in the Headteachers' Handbook. These questions imply that there is the need for the authorities to intermittently review the strategies and contents of existing INSET programmes on the basis of a needs assessment survey.

Furthermore, it suggests that provision of a Handbook *per se* does not guarantee headteachers' acquisition of competences outlined in the book. This is because some may not even read the book. Others, by virtue of limitation in the use of the English language, may read but may not understand concepts in the way that the policy-makers might hope. Hence, there is the need for a policy that makes it professionally unacceptable for any headteacher to be supplied with and be obliged to use a handbook without receiving prior training. It implies that INSET programmes organized for headteachers must not end at the training centres. Training officers should design a strategy by which they could follow up the headteachers up in their schools in order to obtain feedback on how the training received is impacting on their activities.

To effectively carry out this, developers of headteacher's professional policy need to understand clearly the concepts '*competence*' and '*competency*'. This will assist them in identifying those skills and knowledge that headteachers can acquire through INSET training and those that are more a matter of personal style and values such as honesty, fairness. Such an understanding would enable the trainers to adopt strategies that would encourage the headteachers to become conscious of the need to enhance their performance while adopting a greater awareness of personal qualities, which support or inhibit effective performance.

Thirdly, the fact that the headteachers performed certain tasks related to health matters, for which they had not been trained for has implications for professional development practice and policy. Since headteachers are formally required to provide first aid to pupils who fall ill or sustain injury at school, it implies that they require requisite skills and knowledge to enable them to perform this task efficiently. This is a crucial issue, especially in view of the fact that in most of the rural areas within the KEEA district, gaining access to a hospital or a clinic is very difficult. Hence, there is the need for headteachers to acquire some fundamental training in first aid administration. As Smith (1992) stresses, 'the more knowledge you have immediately at hand, the more useful you can be in an emergency' (p.282).

Another issue relating to the tasks performed by the headteachers, which has implications for professional development policy and practice, is the amount of physical movement involved in what the headteachers did at school. This movement took the form of 'walking around'. Generally, it was clear from the focus group discussions, individual interviews and my own observations that making decisions regarding judicious use of school time was a problem for the majority of the headteachers. I attribute this partly to the concept of 'African time' by which 'time is made to extend to accommodate work; work is not compressed to fit into time as it is in the Western World' (Hagan, 1984:18).

Although, in the opinion of the headteachers, these tasks were necessary to their work, the frequency of the movements associated with some of the tasks seemed to be a waste of time and the tasks themselves unimportant. Adjibolosoo's (2000:14) observation of performance effectiveness in Tanzania's Structural Adjustment Programme corroborates my point:

The concept of time seems to be non-existent in Tanzania. As such the value of time does not feature much in the Tanzania economy. People do things when they desire to rather than when they have to.

As such scarce time resources are continuously wasted. People seem to have it in abundance and use it as they desire.

The 'African time' idea is such that people who visited the schools and engaged the attention of the headteachers failed to acknowledge the fact that school time lost cannot be replaced. For their part the headteachers seemed to place social interaction so high in their list of priorities that they failed to be conscious of the fact that entertaining such unprogrammed visits during school hours constituted a waste of time. Considering that operation of the school is regulated by a timetable, the scenarios I have described above raise an issue about how best the school time could be effectively managed by the headteacher. This issue, to me, is crucial because as Drucker puts it, 'time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed' (quoted by Evans, 1995:569).

In this light, makers of policy regarding headteachers' professional development in Ghana need to take into consideration the 'African time' concept, which is likely to influence the way the headteachers utilize time. This would call for making 'time management' an integral part of the training programmes that are designed for headteachers' professional development. It would also mean creating awareness among the headteachers regarding the essence of school mission statements, and helping them through workshops to formulate achievable statements to guide their schools' operations.

Fourthly, the concerns raised by the headteachers about female teacher under-representation in the rural areas have implications for headteacher recruitment and professional development. It calls for strategies that will help female teachers and prospective headteachers to adopt a more confident approach towards rural life. They should be helped to discard the notion that difficult tasks should be performed by men because, as Griffiths and Greene (2002:17) explain, 'a just society is one in which we

all contribute and benefit'. Without the principle of justice, the Ghana government's attempts to ensure equality and equity in the provision of primary school education for all pupils through the FCUBE programme by the year 2005 may not be achieved. Providing incentive packages for female headteachers who accept postings to the rural areas may reduce the problem of female under-representation. This could be in the form of opportunities for further government-sponsored study after a specified time of service in the rural community or any other form of incentive the GES finds necessary. The GES could also undertake a survey to sample opinions of female teachers themselves about what they think will make teaching in rural schools more attractive to them.

Fifthly, the finding that female headteachers encounter problems with female teachers more than with male teachers has an implication for their professional development. To help female headteachers develop the right attitude and skills for dealing with female teachers, there is the need for the GES to undertake a nationwide study into gender factors that affect primary school leadership, leading to a review of its curriculum. It may also be necessary to introduce gender-related studies as part of their training programme in order to create awareness of how gender issues play out in recruitment, retention and performance management. Riehl and Lee (1996:911-12) argue that this is an essential aspect of the leadership task and enjoin all educational leaders to be 'good stewards of gender' and create 'positive school environments that are gender-inclusive'.

Sixthly, the finding that recruitment plays a crucial role in the staff selection process has implications for the current practice of appointing headteachers through the *recommendation/nomination; interviewing and appointment* (RIA) process. The neglect of recruitment in the process suggests that the pool of teachers from which headteachers are appointed is limited. It does not encourage all capable and willing applicants to compete for the post. To make use of the recruitment process, the pool needs to be expanded through both internal (schools within the KEEA district) and external (schools outside the KEEA district) advertisement of vacancies. Internally,



the vacancy could be advertised in all the schools in the district, as well as the District Education Office. There may be teachers in other schools who might be interested in the post for various reasons. Externally, advertising the vacancy in the local newspaper or in the quarterly magazine of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) or in the teacher-focused tertiary institutions in the country could attract the interest of wider range of individuals to apply for posts. Considering that the two female graduate headteachers who took part in my study volunteered to work in rural schools, although they could have chosen to stay in the urban area, suggests that there is the possibility that others' interest could be generated through a well-judged and attractive advertisement. Moreover, there are retired educationists and other urban dwellers who might wish to change work environments and therefore respond to such advertisements.

The headteachers' negative impressions about the timing of the existing in-service training also poses a challenge to the training officers concerned. It implies that the *ad hoc* nature of the training programmes needs to be reviewed. This calls for proper planning of such training programmes. Although the training programmes are normally organized with foreign support, it is essential that the MOE/GES negotiates with the bodies concerned to construct timetables that would make the courses more beneficial to the headteachers.

In addition to the above, it is essential that the MOE considers instituting a locally designed sustained training programme for primary school headteachers just as it is doing for heads of senior secondary schools and principals of teacher training colleges. It would be helpful if the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) of the University of Cape Coast, were mandated to run either a certificate or a diploma level course in Primary School Leadership for both serving and aspiring headteachers in the country.

Such a programme should be informed by an extensive training needs survey across the country to ensure that courses run for students are relevant to the needs of schools on the ground. Training programmes for primary headteachers should also contain

periods of internship to enable aspiring headteachers to get first-hand experience of primary headship. For motivational purposes, the certificate or diploma obtained by an individual should be considered as part of the requirements for promotion at the primary school level.

In making this recommendation, I am aware that introducing an institutional training programme for primary school headteachers in the country will have financial implications<sup>243</sup> for the MOE. But if the nation really believes that quality primary education provides the backbone for her development efforts, then it should be possible to make adjustments towards the fulfilment of this aspiration. A commission could be set up to look into how best the training of headteachers could be offered and financed.

### **Implications for future research**

The following questions emerging from the study require in-depth investigation:

- 1. Is it true that girls' attitude towards learning in primary schools led by male headteachers is negative as compared to schools led by female headteachers?*

This is an area, which educational researchers in Ghana, based on literature I have so far accessed, have not yet explored. If it is true that the gender of the headteacher

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<sup>243</sup> As Bush and Jackson point out, leadership development programmes are linked to the funding model. They identify diverse ways by which programmes are funded. In Singapore, they explain that the government meets the cost and candidates continue to receive their salaries. North Carolina's two-year programme also represents a substantial investment: candidates receive loans. In Sweden, the state and the municipalities fully fund the cost of training, which includes the 'cost of stand-in teachers'. In contrast, candidates for training in Ontario pay their own fees. In New South Wales, candidates receive supplementary grants to assist fees. Of course, the economic situation in Ghana differ from that of these countries; hence one cannot argue for total funding of such programmes but that does not mean

influences girls' attitudes to school learning, then it has policy implications. Hence, there is a need for developmental research to ascertain the relationship between the gender of headteacher and girls' attitude towards learning. This study would have implications for headteachers' professional development policy and its relation to current government policy, which is promoting the education of girls.

***2. To what extent does the interplay between the English language (L2) and the indigenous language (L1) influence the understanding of contemporary school leadership issues among Ghanaian headteachers?***

None of the research-based literature I have accessed has investigated how the interplay between the English Language (L1) and the indigenous language (L2) influences the way primary school headteachers conceptualise school leadership. Neither have any of them explored the effect of the L2 on headteachers' understanding of English terminologies used in school leadership. This perhaps accounts for some of the continued leadership problems that primary school heads encounter in Ghana, in spite of the many training interventions that have been employed by successive governments. Because of the small sample size I used in my study, however, I cannot make generalised and valid claims beyond the KEEA educational district, which was the focus of this study. Yet the issue of language, as I inferred from my data, seems to open a new chapter for school leadership research. It implies that researchers, who conduct large-scale studies into school leadership in Ghana, and other Anglophone countries within West Africa, need to develop interest in exploring how the 'mother tongue' (L2) influences the way primary school headteachers comprehend school leadership.

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there should be a neglect of properly planned training programmes for primary headteachers. There is the need for conscious planning by the authorities concerned to find a way out.

## Significant contribution to knowledge in primary school leadership

This study makes significant contribution to knowledge about primary school leadership in Ghana. It has unearthed some crucial socio-cultural and political issues that tend to affect the thinking and professional practice of primary school leaders, but which school leadership researchers and professional development policy makers in the country have over the years taken for granted.

As demonstrated in chapter two, there is a vast literature that addresses different aspects of school leadership. In Ghana, researchers such as Daddey (1990), Amuzu-Kpeglo (1990; 1992), the Commonwealth Secretariat (1993) as well as the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) (1997) have undertaken a number of studies into school management-related issues. Yet, none of them have attempted to explore the perspectives of primary school headteachers themselves on their roles and professional development (see p.4).

By successfully drawing on Southworth's qualitative method of exploring meanings that headteachers themselves give to their tasks is of itself a contribution to the existing debate among Ghanaian educational researchers as to what qualifies as academic research<sup>244</sup>.

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<sup>244</sup> Educational researchers in Ghana, especially, within the University of Cape Coast are so obsessed with quantitative research that most of them often relegate qualitative research to the background when it comes to academic research. This is reflected in the research-training component of both the Bachelor and Graduate programmes offered in the University of Cape Coast's (UCC) Faculty of Education, which focuses on quantitative research. As an alumnus of the University, I never knew qualitative research was an internationally accepted tool for creating academic knowledge until I took research training at the University of Cambridge. In 2000, while collecting data for this study, I had the opportunity of witnessing an oral examination (viva) of an MPhil student in one of the departments of the University of Cape Coast's Faculty of Education. In the process of the examination, a member of the five-member panel advised the candidate 'your work is very interesting but add some statistics to it to make it academic'.

This contribution lies in how, through an interpretive data collection approach, my study has been able to illustrate the extent to which tradition, culture, geography and politics frame the conceptions of school leadership (p179-204). Some issues, which primary school management researchers and policy makers in Ghana have hitherto de-emphasised, emerged as crucial factors in headteachers' professional development and practice.

The first issue relates to the place of gender in rural school leadership (see p. 109-110). Admittedly, the issue of gender is not new to educational research and policy formulation in Ghana. Since 1961 when African nations held the Addis Ababa Conference on Education, the focus of educational policy issues in Ghana has been the creation of equal opportunities for both boys and girls to acquire quality primary education (Makela, 1991). The country has since 1999 put in place an affirmative action policy to ensure that 'a 40% quota representation of women' is observed at all levels of leadership, (Mawaya 1999).

A key finding of my study, however, lies in the discovery that there are deeply held cultural and tribal traditions of men and women's respective roles that continue to deprive women of opportunities to explore and exercise their leadership capabilities in rural school tasks. Experiences shared by males who provide leadership for girls when there were no women in schools (see p.109-113), help us to understand better the extent to which female under-representation in school leadership de-motivate rural school girls in their involvement in learning activities. Riehl & Lee (1995) stress the need for 'positive school environments that are gender-inclusive'. Achieving this, undoubtedly, requires a systematic change in the distribution of female headteachers in Ghana and a professional development strategy that would take into consideration cultural and traditions that affect female leadership for learning in schools.

A second key finding is in relation to the place of movements in the professional task performance of headteachers. As far as primary school leadership in Ghana is concerned, my study is the first to have made movement an issue in primary school headship. It is the first to have identified and documented the frequency of movements that headteachers make and how such movements affect the performance of management tasks and affect leadership role. Movement in the context of this study describes the number of times the headteacher walked to and from his/her desk to other positions to carry out a task within his/her office or in another area within the school during official teaching/learning hours (see p.117; footnote number 107). The significance of this discovery to headteachers' professional practice and development lies in the observation that such movements have implications for time management (see p.117-120). Moreover, the issue of movement emerging from my study provokes another dimension of primary school leadership debate in Ghana. It may help to conceptualise the role of the headteacher, the relationship between managing and leading and so open a new chapter in primary school leadership research within the KEEA district. To this date, none of the available school leadership- related studies carried out in Ghana have focused in such detail on headteachers' movements within the school – nor examined the implications of such a complex and demanding range of tasks.

Thirdly, my study has illuminated the importance of pupils' voice in headteachers' professional development policy and practice. Ghanaian tradition tends to index wisdom to one's age; hence the views of children are suppressed in matters of decision-making. Besides, the desire to exercise hierarchical authority and power over those below in the hierarchy have served to create the impression among some educational practitioners that a primary school pupil is ignorant and too young to have anything useful to contribute in respect of his/her headteachers. This perhaps explains why all the available Ghanaian-based school leadership literature tends to neglect pupils' views. It is in this light that the pre-fieldwork plan of my study did not

consider it necessary to explore the views of pupils until I laid hands on the opportunistic data from some pupils (see 132-137).

The use of opportunistic data in my study is by itself a contribution towards the quest for techniques for creating knowledge in the field of school leadership. The opportunistic data I collected from pupils themselves (see p.133-137) challenges the view that primary school children have no opinion about the professional practice of headteachers. Though primary school children in Ghana are young (aged between 6 and 11) and comparatively inexperienced, those who participated in my study gave evidence which demonstrated a clear knowledge of what a headteacher should do to support their (pupils) learning (see p.128-137). Thus, a unique contribution emerging from my study is that pupils' voice is a source through which knowledge about critical skill that primary school headteachers require for leading learning in the school can be identified.

### **Personal reflections and limitations**

Comparing my pre-fieldwork expectations to my experiences on the field, I have learnt that although it is essential that fieldwork be guided by a research schedule, the researcher should not be a slave to such a schedule. There is a need for flexibility in research design in order that he/she could adapt to situations as they arise in the field. Prior to the collection of my data for example, I had thought I could get equal representation of female and male headteachers in my sample. As I explained in chapter four, however, the under-representation and over-representation of female headteachers in rural and urban schools necessitated a review of this sampling strategy.

In addition, feedback I received from some colleagues who critiqued aspects of my data analysis and discussion has helped me to identify a limitation in terms of validating my findings. This limitation is reflected in my inability to offer all the twenty headteachers the opportunity to, first, listen to the tape recordings before they were transcribed and secondly, allowing each of them to gain access to the transcript of the recorded interviews for their confirmation. As I narrated on p.89 and 90, only five out of the 20 interviewees had the opportunity to listen to their recorded interviews. By listening to the audio tape recordings immediately after the interviews, the headteachers were able to provide additional vital information, which served as supplementary data during the analysis stage. Distance and financial constraints could not however allow me to extend the same opportunity to the remaining headteachers. I attempted to reduce the effect of this validating omission by engaging the services of some research students in Cambridge to listen to samples of the tape recordings and study their corresponding transcripts for validation purposes. Yet, the element of offering the interviewees themselves the chance of studying transcripts of their recorded interviews for confirmation and possible additional information was missing.

These are some of the lessons I have learnt which I believe will prove valuable to me in any future research I undertake.



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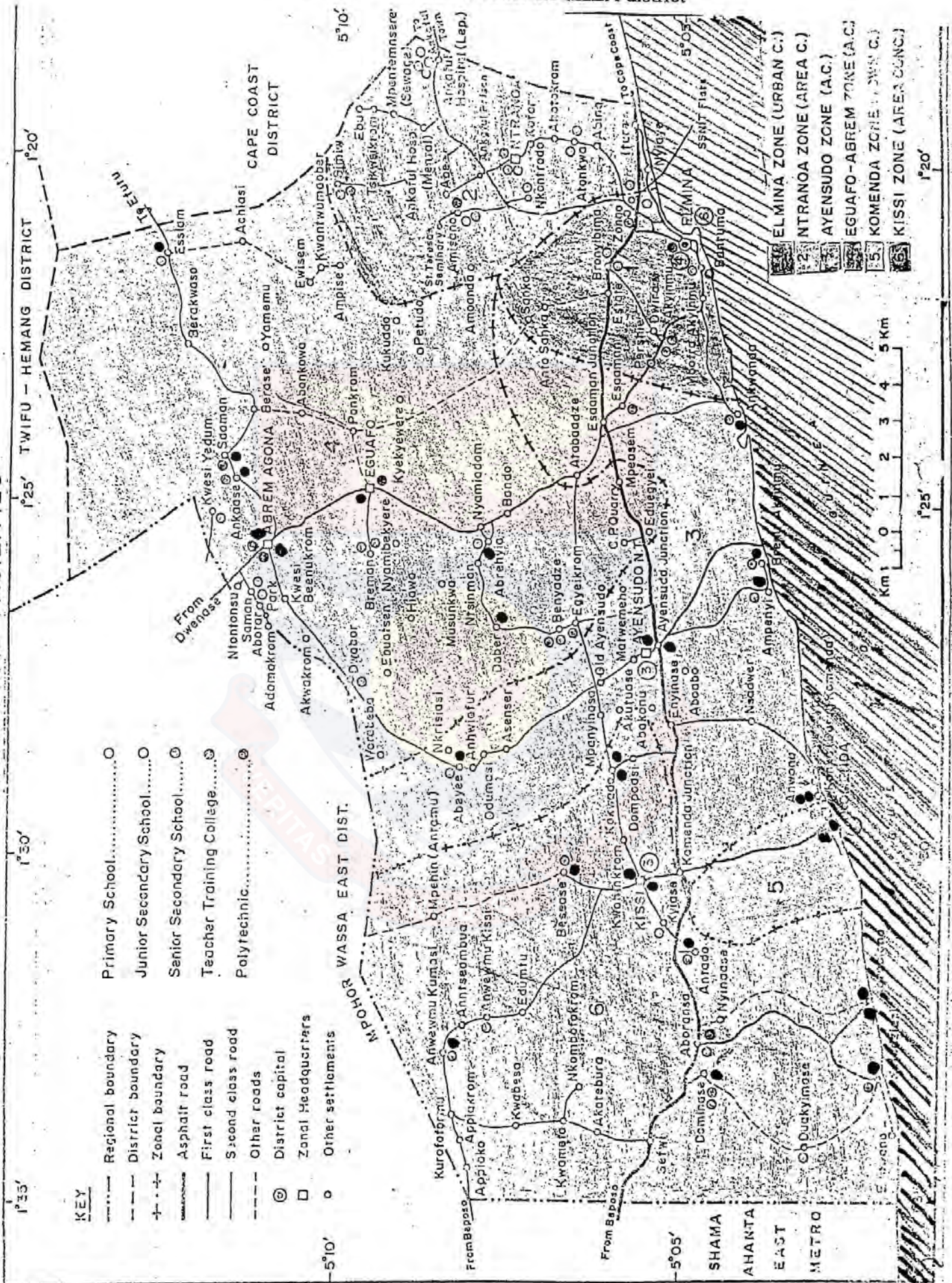
APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR HEADTEACHERS		
<i>Estimated time: 60 minutes</i>		
Part A		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Probe/Prompts</i>
<b>Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greetings and self-introduction</li> <li>▪ Purpose of meeting and seeking interviewee's consent for recording interview on audio-tape.</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Part B</b> <b>Questions</b> (To change in style and order depending on situation of interviewee)</p>		
<b>School background</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you, please, tell me a little about your school? (It's origin, achievements and problems etc.)</li> <li>2. Would you say the community is interested in your school?</li> </ol>	<b>Probe:</b> based on response. e.g. If yes, in what ways?
<b>Concept of 'headship'</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Headship means different things to different people. If you were to explain, using one Word how you personally view the concept of headship, what would you say?</li> <li>4. Does your personal understanding of headship differ from what the Ghana Education Service prescribes for primary school headteachers?</li> <li>5. Are there any similarities between the way you understand 'headship' and the way the Ghana Education Service (GES) requires you to head a school?</li> <li>6. The New Educational Reform has brought many changes to the school system. Have any of these changes affected the way you view headship? parents, circuit officers etc.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Prompt</b> (Q.3) where interview does not mention either <i>administration or management or leadership.</i> <i>Use flashcard</i></p> <p><b>Probe</b> e.g. relations with school management committees, district oversight committees,</p>
<b>Tasks and vision for school</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Could you, please, describe the tasks involved in being a headteacher in the school you head? (<i>Probe: daily, termly, occasional tasks</i>)</li> <li>8a. Are these the official tasks that the GES expects that you perform?</li> <li>8b. If not, which of these do you consider to be unofficial tasks?</li> <li>9. What from your experience as head, do the following people expect of primary school headteachers:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Pupils?</li> <li>ii. Teachers?</li> <li>iii. Parents</li> </ol> </li> <li>10. What is your vision for your school?</li> <li>11. Do you encounter any problem in the course of carrying out these tasks?</li> <li>12. Would you say you knew the nature of the</li> </ol>	<b>Probe</b>

	<p>tasks you were currently performing before you assumed duty as head?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Competences</b></p>	<p>13. Considering the problems associated with the tasks you perform as headteacher, what competences do you think a prospective head teacher would need to carry out his/her headship tasks successfully? (<i>Probe: skills and ability, knowledge and understanding</i>).</p> <p>14. Reflecting on your first week's experience on assumption of duty as headteacher, would you genuinely say you found it easy tackling all the challenges with which you had to grapple? (Probe further)</p> <p>15. Was there any specific knowledge, understanding, ability or skills you required but which you didn't have prior to assumption of duty? (Probe further).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<p><i>Probe: in what ways...?</i></p> <p><i>Hmmm?</i></p> <p><i>How, will you explain further? etc.</i></p>
<p><b>Professional development</b></p>	<p>16. Which of the tasks you perform as head, would you say, required some sought of training prior to your assumption of duty</p> <p>17. Could you, please, tell me the number of headship related training you've had since you were appointed as headteacher?</p> <p>18. In what ways, if any, have these training programmes helped you in developing the competencies required for carrying out your daily headship tasks?</p> <p>19. Presently, the Ministry of Education has provided a Handbook to guide headship practices in the Primary School. To what extent would you say this handbook has helped you in developing the competencies you require for your daily tasks? (Probe: to be determined by nature of response).</p> <p>20. Apart from the training you have received, are there any other forms of training by which you think your performance could have been improved?</p> <p>21. Should the Ministry of Education make professional qualification in educational leadership a condition for appointing people to head primary schools in Ghana? (Probe: nature to be determined by response)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<p><i>Probe as above</i></p>
<p><i>Thank the interviewee and respond to any related request or queries he/she makes</i></p>		



KOMENDA - EDINA - EGUAFU - ABREM DISTRICT  
 EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES





In case of reply the number and date of this letter should be quoted

My Ref. No. GES/CR/ED/EP.43/

Your Ref. No. ....



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

DISTRICT.....EDUCATION OFFICE

P. O. BOX.....13,.....

ELMINA.

6TH NOV., 2000. 19f.....

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A .. . STUDY IN  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITHIN THE KEEA EDUCATION  
DISTRICT


A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer, Mr. George K.T. Oduro, is a research student conducting a research on the professional development of primary school headteachers in Ghana.

Mr. Oduro has chosen schools within the K.E.E.A. District Education Directorate, including your school for the project.

He is accordingly being introduced to you by this office to enable you give him all the support he will need in the course of his work in your school.

We are kindly asking for your maximum co-operation on behalf of Mr. Oduro.

  
.....  
( P. L. MENSAH )  
for: DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION  
ELMINA.

ATTN.:

✓ HEADS OF SELECTED  
SCHOOLS CONCERNED.

cc:- Mr. George K.T. Oduro

\*plm/pn+

*C. Backey*



## APPENDIX 4

© University of Cape Coast <https://ir.ucc.edu.gh/xmlui>  
Sample essay written by the pupils- opportunistic data



### WHAT I WANT MY HEADTEACHER TO DO IN THE SCHOOL.

I want my headteacher to do many things in the school and some of these things are as follows.

- 1) Sports items like footballs, football jerseys, athletic jerseys, football boots etc. for sport club, Physical Education.
- 2) Suggestion boxes so that when the pupils have suggest a problem it can be put in the boxes.
- 3) Educational Materials like books, pens, pencils, sharpeners, erasers etc. So that if pupils need some of these things they can easily buy some.
- 4) To make sure spoilt things in the school are repaired for example lights, ~~pe~~ desks etc.
- 5) And to make <sup>sure</sup> there are good teachers in the school, for example ~~Good~~ French teachers.
- 6) Also I want my headteacher to tell the teachers to have patience in all things. Especially when teaching.

# APPENDIX 5

Teaching time table for basic schools(primary) in Ghana

## TIME TABLE FOR BASIC (1-3.)

Period		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9
Days	8- 8.20	8.25 8.55	8.55 9.25	9.25- 9.55	9.55- 10.25	10.25 10.55	10.55 11.30	11.30 12.00	12.00 12.30	12.30 1.00	1.00 1.30
Monday	B	Mathematics		Fante	Music & Dance	Env- .Std	<b>Break</b>	RME	English		Fante
Tuesday	E	English		P.E		Maths		Maths	Fante	Env. Studies	
Wed' day	S	RME		Fante	English		<b>Break</b>	Mathematics		Env. Studies	
Thursday	S	English		P.E		Maths		Maths	Env.Std	Fante	
Friday	A	Music & Dance		Mathematics		RME	<b>Break</b>	Fante		English	

**Keys:-** 8-8.20 = (Assembly)  
 RME = Religious And Moral Education  
 Env. Std = Environmental Studies.

## TIME TABLE FOR BASIC (4 - 6.)

Period		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9
Days	8- 8.20	8.25 8.55	8.55 9.25	9.25- 9.55	9.55- 10.25	10.25 10.55	10.55 11.30	11.30 12.00	12.00 12.30	12.30 1.00	1.00 1.30
Monday	B	Mathematics		Environmental Studies.		Music Dance	<b>Break</b>	English		Fante	
Tuesday	E	Mathematics		P.E		Fante		Env. Studies		English	
Wed' day	S	RME		English		Integrat ed Sci.	<b>Break</b>	Mathematics		Fante	
Thursday	S	Mathematics		Integrated Science		P.E		English		RME	Env. Std
Friday	A	Worship		Mathematics		Fante	<b>Break</b>	Integrated Science		English	

**Keys:** Integrated Sci. = Integrated Science.

## APPENDIX 6

### SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

#### INTERVIEWEE – UBS9

- KEY:** 1. 'Intvr' stands for *interviewer* (researcher)  
2. 'UBS9' refers to the 9<sup>th</sup> urban school headteacher interviewed.

**Intvr:** Good morning, Madam. I thank you for consenting to take part in this interview and I also thank you for responding to the questionnaire that I gave you. As I said in my introduction to the questionnaire, this programme is purely an academic research into the professional development of headteachers. Before we go on can you please tell me how you want me to address you?

**UBS9:** Oh! Sir, just call me by any name.

**Intvr:** Please, don't call me, Sir. You know, we're now colleagues (laughter).

**UBS9:** Well, just call me 'Eku' (laughter),

**Intvr:** Eku, can you tell me a little about your school?

**UBS9:** The school was established in 1976 by the Methodist Church and was taken over by the GES on partnership basis in 1978. I have been here for almost ten years .

**Intvr:** Can you mention some of the achievements of the school?

**UBS9:** The children are very good and do well in everything. A number of our children enter the JSS and obtain good grade in the BECE and enter very good SSS.

**Intvr:** What about problems?

**UBS9:** Our problems are numerous. Thieves disturb us a lot. Though we're in the SSNIT area, security is not the best. Some parents do not also help us because they don't attend PTA meetings. However, when there is any money to be paid they pay.

**Intvr:** Would you say the community is interested in your school?

**UBS9:** Yes, they are very interested because it is through the efforts of the PTA that those new structures are being put up. They have also provided the school with some tables and chair and have provided desks for the teachers too. Apart from that some of the parents at times visit the school to find out how things are going. I must however mention that because the community is made up of government employees, it is difficult getting the attention of the parents always but on the whole they are very interested in the school.

**Intvr:** Headship means different things to different people. If you were to explain in might be one word how you personally view the concept of headship what would you say?

**UBS9:** To me I'm a manager.

**Intvr:** What exactly do you mean by a 'manager'?

**UBS9:** By that I mean the GES wants me to ensure that every pesewa it spends in training the teacher and in building the classrooms yield the required goals. I have to make sure that the teachers come to school regularly and punctually and also do actual teaching. I have to make sure that the materials that the teachers are given to teach they actually use them in teaching. You see, as a manager, I must also make sure that the classrooms are used properly for the teaching of the children and that the children also they do their work well. In short I'm to ensure that anything that the teachers or the pupils or the parents or myself will do which will waste money is not encouraged, That is what I really mean by manager and that is what the GES wants me to be as a headteacher. So, I manage the teachers to work well.

**Intvr:** I see. Now can you tell me the visions or expectations that you have for your school?

**UBS9:** I wish that from primary when they go to the JSS they achieve 100% success and also I want that my children will behave very well. I also want that my school gets the best-qualified teachers who will be committed to their work so that the school can achieve its goals well.

**Intvr: Will you say your personal understanding of headship differ from what the Ghana Education Service prescribes for you as headteacher?**

**UBS9:** Not anything different because the GES is very concerned about results. They want the headteacher to ensure that school achieves good results academically and you need to manage to achieve that goal. But now heads are loaded with so many things, you see the head leaving the school for a meeting, the head doing so many different things without any incentive. This affects the management but they are the same.

**Intvr: So from your personal opinion what should have been the role of a head specifically?**

**UBS9:** You care for the school, you are a mother to the school, to both the teachers and the pupils so the in and out of the school will depend on you the head. Therefore you should always be in the school to manage things well.

**Intvr: The new educational reform of 1987 has brought many changes to the school system. Have these changes affected the way you view headship in anyway? For instance, the introduction of the school management committees (SMC), the district education oversight committee (DEOC) and others, do you think they affect you?**

**UBS9:** Well, these bodies are there to help you manage the school very well. But in most schools they tend to exist by name. You only see the SMC chairman but not the members. But if what I'm hearing from my friends in other schools is true, then some of them are not helping the heads to manage properly because they interfere in the work too much. But as for me I think if they were working in my school it will help me.

**Intvr: If you were to describe your life as a headteacher during the day what are the things you will you say?**

**UBS9:** I have to come to school very early, open the office and allow the girls' prefect to collect the keys and open the classrooms. Then I supervise the teacher on duty to ensure that the pupils clean the compound nicely. Then I move round to ensure that the pupils they are all observing the silence hour. Also at assembly, I go there to give announcement then I return to the office, if it is Monday to vet the teachers' lesson notes. They are 12 in number. Sometimes I'm able to finish but at times other activities like parents visiting the school or some officials coming to the school or a meeting being held does not allow me to finish. Now some students from the university of Cape Coast, Primary Education Department are doing attachment here and I have to move round explaining things to them leaving my management duties. Also I have to move round supervising the classrooms, checking the pupils' exercise books, and advising teachers where there is the need. At times when a teacher is not in I have to teach the class.

**Intvr: Will you say all that you do constitute your official duties as head?**

**UBS9:** Yes, they are all official duties.

**Intvr: What from your experience do the following people expect from a primary school headteacher, one the pupils?**

**UBS9:** They expect the headteacher to live exemplary lives. They want you to lead a life that they will be proud to say you are their headteacher. They want to see you speak English to them and also they are happy when you call them by their names instead of saying 'Hei, hei! They also want you to make sure that they always get teachers to teach them well. But the first thing is that they want you to be an example for them.

**Intvr: What about the teachers, what do they expect of you?**

**UBS9:** The teachers expect many things from me even maybe what I am doing some of them are learning. They expect that I will respect them and talk to them as human beings. Especially the women they expect that I understand them when they are late to school and also when they're not teaching and selling some things in the school they expect that I understand them because they think I am also a woman and I know the problems of women. Some of the teachers too want me to give them professional guidance when they are not clear about anything concerning the teaching work. All of them however expect me to be flexible with them but the moment you relax discipline will become low so I think I have to always insist on discipline so that the work of the school will go on well.

**Intvr: What about the parents and the community?**

**UBS9:** They expect the headteacher, with the assistance of the teachers, to help their children to learn and pass examination and enter the JSS. In fact, they are always prepared to pay for extra classes so that teachers will teach their children so if there's no improvement in the children's performance then there I problem. So as the head I have to make sure that I meet the community's expectations.



**Intvr: Do you encounter any problem in the course of carrying out your duty?**

**UBS9:** Yes, as for that every school head has problems. Problems with the teachers, problems with the pupils, problems with the parents, problems with the circuit supervisors and problems with the office. You see, because you the head you're on the ground and you see things in the real sense, there at times that you'll want to do something and the office will not understand and when you don't do it too you have problem with your teachers. For in stance, the imprest given to us you are not to use it for loans but the teachers, some of them when they're hot they want you to give the imprest money to them as loan and if you don't do it they will not understand and will be calling you name. So, it is a problem especially when I came here first.

**Intvr: Would you say you knew the nature of the duties that you are performing before you took over as head?**

**UBS9:** How could I? I had heard heads complaining but I did not know until I became head myself and it wasn't easy.

**Intvr: Considering the problems associated with the duties you perform as headteacher, what competencies do you think someone who wants to become a head teacher should have before he can succeed?**

**UBS9:** You must know how to manage people so that you achieve the aim of the school. If he knows how he can handle his teachers, how he can handle his pupils, how he can handle the parents so that they will co-operate with him then that he will succeed. If not there will always be confusion and the work cannot go on so you have to have the right attitude for dealing with people: parents, teachers, the SMC and the pupils. You must also know how to keep records, especially financial records.

**Intvr: Reflecting on your first week's experience on assuming duty, would you genuinely say that you found it easy tackling all the problems that you had to grapple with?**

**UBS9:** It wasn't easy at all. I had to depend on the Headteachers Handbook and on the experiences of old heads. In some cases, it was just trial and error and then I will succeed.

**Intvr: Was there any specific knowledge or understanding you think you required but you didn't have prior to your assumption of duty that made it uneasy for you?**

**UBS9:** Yes, how to prepare for auditing- it was really a problem. I had to chase some headteachers who reluctantly helped me. Also how to manage people, especially the parents.

**Intvr: Could you tell me the number of headship-related training you have had since you were appointed as headteacher?**

**UBS9:** I've had a number of training, especially in school -community relations, which were organized by the WSD and the Ministry of Education.

**Intvr: Would you have liked it if you had this training long before you assumed duty as head?**

**UBS9:** Actually, I'll have preferred that because the work would have been made easier for me. That would have also made me more confident and the mistakes I made at first when I became head will not have been much.

**Intvr: Apart from the training you have received, are there any other forms of training by which you think your performance would have improved?**

**UBS9:** Emmm, what we've had so far is workshops and in-service training. But these alone do not help us very much because it is very short. You see, I was trained as a teacher and I was made to go to teaching practice to get the practicals of the teaching act so I want people who are to become heads also to be trained in that way before they become headteachers.

**Intvr: Should the Ministry of Education come out to say that henceforth professional qualification in educational management should be a condition for appointing new headteachers for primary schools, what will be your reaction?**

**UBS9:** I'll strongly like it because now many headteachers are suffering. Many of them do not know what to do so they depend on the experienced ones. You see now they are saying that headteachers will be mentors for students in teacher training colleges in this in-in-out method of training teachers. Now if the headteachers are not trained well how can he make the mentoring work succeed when the student teachers come to their schools? Actually, it'll help if teachers should be given some sort of training in management before they are appointed as heads. But the Ministry should not make only certificate the only thing because that will not help us. The experience and character of those who want to be appointed should also be looked at before they are appointed.

**Intvr: If you were to give any advice as to how headteachers' performance could be improved, what advice will you give?**

**UBS9:** The GES should train people for primary school headship well just as it is doing for SSS heads. They shouldn't think anybody at all can be a good primary school head just because the person has a long teaching experience; they must be trained before they are allowed to head. They should train people before they are made heads.

**Intvr: Yoo, Eku, me da wase papaapa. (literarily meaning Thanks so much, EKU)**

**UBS9:** Oh! Menndaase. (It's a pleasure)



## APPENDIX 7

### PROFILE SURVEY

#### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS

##### Introduction

The following questions are part of an academic study being conducted on how primary school headteachers, as practitioners, themselves perceive the adequacy of the pre-service and in-service training they receive for meeting the day-to-day challenges they grapple with in the school. The questions aim at collecting background information on headteachers within the KEEA district. These will serve as guide for the selection of headteachers for the study. Your name is not required and your responses will be kept absolutely confidential and used solely for the purpose of this study. Your genuine responses to the questions are therefore required. The questions do not require a great deal of writing. In most cases, you are required to only make a tick in boxes against the answers you have chosen. It is anticipated that your response to these questions would help me select a small sample of headteachers for follow up interview. Thanks.

##### SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

*Instruction* In this section, you are required to provide information about yourself. Please, provide brief written answers to questions 1-3, Q. 5, Q. 8 & 9, and Q. 12 -13; and answer the remaining questions by making a tick, e.g.  in the box  against the answer you choose.

1. Name of school .....
2. No. of pupils .....
3. District .....
4. Location of school:  urban  rural
5. Grade of school:  Grade 'A'  Grade 'B'  Grade 'C'
6. Gender of Headteacher:  Male  Female
7. Age of Headteacher. ....
8. Highest Academic Qualification of Headteacher prior to appointment:  
 MSLC  
 GCE 'O'-Level  
 SSSCE  
 GCE 'A'-Level  
 Degree
9. Highest Professional Qualification of Headteacher prior to appointment:  
 'A' Post Middle  
 'A' Post Secondary  
 Diploma/PGCE  Degree  
 Others (please, specify) .....

##### SECTION B: HEADSHIP EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

10. Year of appointment as head in your present school.  
.....
11. Your total years of headship experience since you became a teacher.....
12. Your teaching experience prior to appointment as headteacher (fill in number of years)  
.....
13. Do you undertake any teaching assignment as a headteacher? (a) Yes (b) No
14. If, yes, describe briefly what you teach.  
.....  
.....  
.....
15. In which of the following geographical locations have you worked most?  
(a) Urban  (b). Rural
16. If you were given the option of choosing between leading a rural and an urban school, which would you prefer?  
.....
17. Please, explain your response in Question 16 above. ....  
.....  
.....
18. What qualification(s), if any have you gained after your appointment as head?  
.....  
.....
19. Have you received any training in school leadership since your appointment as headteacher?  
  
 Yes  No
20. If yes, please describe the nature, length of the training and the provider.  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

