



# Education Quarterly Reviews

**Dampson, Dandy George. (2019), Selection and Appointment of Basic School Headteachers in Ghana: Looking Back to Move Forward. In: *Education Quarterly Reviews*, Vol.2, No.1, 1-13.**

ISSN 2621-5799

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1993.02.01.33

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:  
The Asian Institute of Research

The *Education Quarterly Reviews* is an Open Access publication. It may be read, copied and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

The Asian Institute of Research *Education Quarterly Reviews* is a peer-reviewed International Journal. The journal covers scholarly articles in the fields of education, linguistics, literature, educational theory, research, and methodologies, curriculum, elementary and secondary education, higher education, foreign language education, teaching and learning, teacher education, education of special groups, and other fields of study related to education. As the journal is Open Access, it ensures high visibility and the increase of citations for all research articles published. The *Education Quarterly Reviews* aims to facilitate scholarly work on recent theoretical and practical aspects of Education.



ASIAN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH  
Connecting Scholars Worldwide



# Selection and Appointment of Basic School Headteachers in Ghana: Looking Back to Move Forward

Dandy George Dampson, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. Email: [dgdampson@gmail.com](mailto:dgdampson@gmail.com)

## Abstract

The study employed the exploratory sequential mixed method design involving semi-structured interviews with 12 former and 18 current head teachers, and 4 directors of Education. Structured questionnaires were further administered to 390 former and current head teachers and 4 Directors of Education. The findings of the study revealed that in the past basic school head teachers were mostly selected and appointed based on long service and experiences, while few became head teachers because of their religious affiliation. Currently, the study established that although long service and religious affiliation still remain a factor, however, academic qualification, leadership skills, and research publications are considered as an advantage. The study recommends that at least a basic school head teacher should possess a qualification in educational administration and leadership and a well-designed pre and in-service training should also be regularly organised for them based on their needs.

**Keywords:** Basic School, Head Teacher, Selection, Appointment

## 1. Introduction

Undoubtedly, the educational history of Ghana as a country has evolved from a number of reforms since 1987 to present day. Over the years, the basic, secondary and tertiary levels of education in Ghana has seen major educational reforms from the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) to Free Senior High School Education (FSHSE). The main issues addressed in these reforms have been a reduction in number of years spent in formal education from 17 years to 12 years of schooling, increase access to basic education, improving the quality of teaching and learning and most significant is the free tuition to all Ghanaian child from the basic to the secondary level of education. Specifically, the FCUBE and FSHSE programmes were meant to ensure that all school going-age children receive free and compulsory quality basic education in Ghana. These policies helped to create motivation for a coordinated sector programme providing donor support to education and a drive for educational decentralisation with greater recognition of the important role of community and other stakeholders participation in school management for school improvement. Two of the major components of these programmes are:

- Improving efficiency in management and
- Improving access and participation in education at the basic and tertiary levels

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dandy George Dampson is a Senior Lecturer and the Head at the Department of Psychology and Education, University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. His research interest falls within school leadership and management. He has 12 years experience as University lecturer and has published over 20 articles and 5 books in reputable journals. He graduated from the University of Northampton, U.K. With a degree in Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Administration

The FCUBE created the momentum for introducing the School Management Committee (SMC) and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) with the intention to enhance stakeholders' and communities' sense of ownership and participation in all school decision-making. To deliver the objectives of the FCUBE, basic school head teachers needed skills in school administration and leadership to effectively manage basic schools in Ghana (Dampson, 2015).

In accordance with section 12 and 13 of the Ghana Education Service (GES) Act 1995, section 504, the mandate is given to the Educational Council to advise the President of Ghana on the appointment of the Director-General of Education. The Director-General of Education, in turn, advises the appointment committee on the appointment of Regional and District Directors of Education. Through this Act, the District Directors of Education are mandated to select and appoint qualified basic school head teachers.

Notwithstanding these Act, in Ghana, research (Afful-Broni, 2005; Afful-Broni & Dampson, 2008; Bush & Oduro, 2006) argue that in the past majority of the basic head teachers were selected and appointed based on long service, and most of them had no formal training in the field of Educational Administration and Management. Interestingly, a study conducted in Kenya and Uganda by (Oplatka, 2004; Hoy & Tarter, 2010) revealed similar results. In Ghana, Afful-Broni & Dampson, (2008) further posit that the 1987 Educational reforms brought to bare an important modifications where only basic school head teachers with the qualification of a Principal Superintendents or, at least Senior Superintendents who had passed through interviews and a week in-service training in school leadership were selected as heads to run schools as a blander. Although Dampson (2015) posits that is a good beginning, on the whole, the major problem is that these head teachers lacked skills and knowledge in educational leadership and school management.

Nonetheless, it is generally accepted by the Ghana Education Service, Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and among head teachers themselves that in spite of the successes which some of them have attained, they would admit that they initially had to experiment with several ideas, or leadership ideology and principles, some of which may have negatively affected the quality of their decision-making and the eventual misplacement of students and teachers in the country. They would most likely admit that they would have benefited immensely from more formal training in school leadership and management.

A study conducted by Bush & Oduro (2006); Afful-Broni & Dampson (2008) and Dampson (2015) revealed that a survey at the basic schools in Ghana indicate that majority of the basic school headteachers were appointed based on long service and seniority. If the headteacher of a basic school went on transfer or retirement and another headteacher was not immediately available to be transferred to the post, one common criterion for replacement was the most senior teacher likely to be chosen for the position. If these circumstances hold, there is a substantial reason to assume that in most remote and deprived parts of Ghana, where few basic schools are scattered among communities, the teacher who gets to be the head teacher is mostly the only trained teacher at a post. It is further argued that in such isolated cases these selected headteachers may or may not go through any in-service training to equip them with the skills needed to manage basic schools. In such situations propensity of initial mistakes due to trial and error, ignorance, immaturity, and inexperience on the part of these headteachers cannot be overruled.

Indeed, while scholars stress the importance of involving staff members and teachers in a shared decision-making process for school improvement (e.g., Hoy & Tarter, 2010; Harris, 2012; Somech, 2010), head teachers ultimately control decision-making by initiating the process and ensuring the implementation of the resulting conclusion(s) (Lunenburg & Ornstien, 2000). Who should be involved in the decision-making process, how an administrator or committee arrives at a solution, and when or how that solution is put into place are, according to O'Sullivan (2011), all under the direct control of the school's headteacher. As a consequence of the head teachers' position within the educational institution and because of the organisational authority granted to them, they make decisions on an almost continuous basis (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Notwithstanding, the role of the basic school headteacher in Ghana as the key decision-maker, facilitator, problem-solver and an agent of change in the school and national development cannot be overemphasised.

Regardless of the benefits and importance of teacher preparation in school leadership and management, Afful-Broni & Dampson (2008) assertion made over a decades ago that, majority of the basic school head teachers were selected and appointed to lead schools without the required skills and certification is still relevant despite the implementation of various educational policies which calls for competency, skills and knowledge in school leadership. Additionally, the paucity of research, documentation and related literature regarding the selection, preparation and appointment of basic schools within the Ghanaian context which has created a gap in present understanding and process of how basic school headteachers should be selected and appointed for effective and efficient school leadership calls for the justification of this study.

The complexity of managing and moving basic schools toward change and transformation within a dynamic Ghanaian environment can be overwhelming and calls for effective leadership approaches within basic schools in Ghana. Even though the concept of teacher leadership and preparation has been considerably explored within both basic and higher education sector, there is still no strict policy and process generally accepted and religiously ad heard to with regards to the selection and appointment of basic school head teachers in Ghana. Thus, this paper specifically seeks to explore the past and current practices in the selection and appointment of basic school headteachers into a leadership position. To collect data for the study, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What has been the practice/process of selecting and appointing basic school headteachers in Ghana?
2. What is currently practised by the Ghana Education Service with regards to selecting and appointing basic school headteachers in Ghana?
3. At what level of leadership are the basic school headteachers managing their schools?
4. What is the way forward in selecting and appointing basic school head teachers in Ghana?

## 2. Literature Review

Allotey-Pappoe (2017) argues that for an effective and quality school system, the roles of school heads cannot be veritably unheeded because school heads are considered pillars of the school, thus their actions and in-actions greatly influence its fabric. Similarly, With the quality of teaching being one of the major requirements of school improvement and the concern that an alarming number of teachers are underperforming as evidence from the 2011-2013 Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) indicates poor performance of students (GES, 2011; MOE, 2013; MOE, 2014), the role of school heads becomes a necessity for academic productivity and excellence in Ghanaian basic schools (Somech, 2010; Harris, 2012; Kuku & Taylor, 2002;). The Ministry of Education (1999) in trying to understand the reasons for low achievements among pupils in schools suggested 10 key causes of which headteachers' knowledge and skills in school leadership and management were considered as key factors to school improvement.

In this instance, school leadership is considered extremely influential in the success of a school, and it is, therefore, essential to give thought, care, time and attention to recruitment and selection processes. Similarly, the roles of those to be recruited should be carefully defined, and consideration should be given to flexible working arrangements, such as teacher empowerment and participative leadership in order to be as inclusive as possible and to improve the academic performance of students. From the on-going discussions, it is an undisputed fact that school leaders control human and material resources of the school, and that their position is so important that the school cannot exist without it (Babayemi, 2006). Furthermore, Ibukun, Oyewole & Abe (2011) argue that the success of school to a larger extent emanates from the administrative, supervisory, managerial and leadership qualities of school heads. Maintaining quality and standards in education depends largely on the extent to which heads of schools effectively carry out their leadership responsibilities.

A decade and a half ago, Oduro (2003) differentiates recruitment from selection and argues that the former involves making an effort to attract the most suitable applicants from whom the most suitable person is chosen for the job, while the latter involves choosing the most suitable from among the attracted applicants for the job. This process means that selection takes place after recruitment, but Oduro goes on to say that both recruitment and selection have a common goal - 'hiring the most capable to lead the school' (p.298).

However, different criteria are used for recruiting/selecting/appointing headteachers in different countries. Middlewood (1997) indicates that in a country like Canada, principals are required to undergo appropriate training and obtain relevant qualification, and be allocated to schools or colleges for a specific period before being re-posted to different schools or colleges. In England, the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) course has been introduced for aspiring headteachers – the aspiring headteachers are mandated to undertake the course. Candidates for headship positions are selected by the governing bodies in a competitive situation. The criteria for recruiting/ selecting/ appointing headteachers in Canada and England differ from those used in Ghana. Middlewood (1997) notes that the authority for appointing headteachers is vested with the Directors of Education (DoE) of various districts, although they manage education with the support of the Assistant Director in charge of specific schedules and the regional manager of education units of religious organizations. The governing bodies, thus, have no role in the recruitment/selection/appointment of headteachers.

Another study conducted in Ghana by Bush and Oduro (2006) indicated two approaches used by the GES directors to appoint headteachers in Ghana. The first step is appointment through direct posting, which involves appointing newly-trained teachers to lead schools, especially in the rural areas. The unattractiveness of rural life appears to have made working in rural schools non-competitive among teachers, who might otherwise have had aspirations to be appointed as headteachers. The second strategy is appointment through selection interviews, which is largely associated with the appointment of urban school headteachers. Candidates for interviews are selected through recommendation. (Bush & Oduro, 2006).

In the past, Ghanaian basic school head teachers were required to attain the position of Senior Superintendent rank before they are considered for appointment as headteachers. During that level in their professional career, they are deemed to be experienced enough to manage schools. In 2008, a study conducted by Afful-Broni and Dampson revealed that in the majority of the rural schools the minimum requirement had been compromised to the extent that the majority of the head teacher lacked the minimum qualification of 5-year working experience as a senior superintendent.

This is no different, as the OCED report in 2003 revealed that some countries, particularly the United States and Ghana, find it difficult to attract suitable candidates for what is seen as an increasingly onerous job. In another study Grady et al., (1994) sampled all Australian government school principals and found that regardless of location, type, size or level of school, gender, or age, ninety-two percent of Australian principals expected to retire or resign from the principalship more than five years before they 'have to'. Similarly, Afful-Broni & Dampson (2008) posit that because the majority of the head teachers were appointed based on long service, most of them were close to their pension during their appointment. The implication is that, in most basic schools where teachers find the heads position to be onerous, it will be difficult to attract the qualified personnel to fill the position, hence, breaching the required laid procedure and process.

Generally, the selection, recruitment, and appointment of a basic school headteacher differ from country to country. For example in the United Kingdom, the arrangements for the appointment of a head teacher or deputy head teacher are in accordance with Section 35 and 36 of the Education Act 2002 and School Staffing (England) Regulation 2003, SI 2003, 1, 1963.

More recently, as Ghana is part of the rapidly changing world, studies have shown that among the primary prerequisites for improving the quality of teaching in basic schools are effective school leadership and strategic thinking (Dampson & Edwards 2017) and full teacher participation in the school decision-making process (Dampson, 2015). In this regard, one of the programmes that have made a positive contribution to the training of basic school head teachers in Ghana is the Leadership for Learning Programme (LfL). The LfL, the Cambridge Network was established in 2001 as a value-based network concerned with learning, leadership and their interrelationship (Jull, Swaffield & MacBeath, 2014). In Ghana, the LfL partnership with the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) at the University of Cape Coast has been able to train and organised relevant workshops for an estimated 3000 head teachers throughout the country. Additionally, the LfL's five policies: focus on learning; conditions for learning; shared leadership, dialogue; and shared

accountability has been adopted by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and included in the head teachers handbook. Such positive impact in policy implementation and training of head teachers in leadership and learning is regarded as an add-up to the selection and appointment of basic school teachers to headship positions.

In 2010, the LfL reported that through their initiative in improving leadership in basic schools, the Ministry of Education had put in place a distance education programme in 2005 to provide untrained teachers in the country with the opportunity to study for a diploma in basic education. All these initiative are only an add-up for a teacher to gain the upper hand in the selection and appointment process but not a requisite. In this regard, it is imperative that existing requirements and processes of selecting and appointing basic schools to head teachers in Ghana need a re-visitation and amendment which would require basic school headteachers to possess a qualification in School Leadership and Management or its equivalent before their appointment.

It is quite interesting to note that 18 years ago basic school headteachers in Ghana were selected and appointed based on the following criteria:

1. Qualification: the applicant must possess at least a Certificate 'A' or a diploma in education from a recognised teacher training college.
2. Rank: the applicant must at least be a Senior Superintendent.
3. Experience: the applicant should not be more than 55 years of age, with a least 3 years teaching experience and must possess good leadership and interpersonal skills. For mission schools, the applicant must be affiliated to a religious body. (Ministry of Education, 2000)

Bush & Oduro (2006) remarked that because of inadequately qualified staff the Ghana Education Service select and appoint basic school headteachers through direct posting and interviews. They concluded that headteachers in Africa are faced with daunting challenges due to the lack of formal leadership training and this has made basic school headteachers ill-prepared to meet the demands posed by the changing nature of their jobs as compared to their counterparts in developed countries such as Canada, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

### **3. Methodology**

The study adopted the exploratory sequential mixed method design. This design begins with qualitative data and then collects quantitative information (Creswell, 2009). Typically in this design, the researcher conducted the study in two phases, with the first phase involving qualitative data collection using semi-structured interviews. Twelve (12) former headteachers were sampled through snowballing and 18 current headteachers through random sampling from 129 basic school in the Central Region of Ghana. Four (4) Directors of Education were also purposefully sampled. The second stage of data collection was followed by quantitative data collection, specifically, a structured questionnaire with 195 former and 195 current headteachers who were snowballed and censused sampled from the 129 basic schools. The justification for using explanatory sequential mixed method design is to gather qualitative data to explore the past and current process of selection and appointing of basic school headteachers and then collect quantitative data to explain relationships found in the qualitative data. This was done through the identification of themes from the interview and from the findings, design an instrument to identify the relationship between what was and currently practised and suggest the way forward.

Cape Coast metropolis and the Mfantseman municipality in the Central Region of Ghana was purposely selected for the study because of the variety of basic schools in the study area. The population for the study comprised of both former and current headteachers and directors of education, and all basic schools in the Cape Coast metropolis and Mfantseman municipality.

Qualitative data collected from the 12 former and 18 current headteachers using a semi-structured were coded, categorized, and relevant themes were generated using Nvivo 10 software. To maintain confidentiality, participant identities, as well as their institutions, were concealed with pseudonyms. During the second stage, the themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews were used to construct the structured questionnaire for data collection which included 394 participants

The intent of the researcher was to use quantitative data results to refine and extend the qualitative findings by classification that developed from the qualitative findings. Guided by the research objectives, questions and descriptive picture of the data obtained from the qualitative data, the quantitative data were correlated using the SPSS version 20. The data were analysed and presented in tables and charts using simple percentages, frequency distributions, and means.

#### 4. Results and Findings:

*Research Question 1: What has been the practice/process of selecting and appointing basic school headteachers in Ghana?*

*Research Question 2: What is currently practised by the Ghana Education Service with regards to selecting and appointing basic school headteachers in Ghana?*

Research questions 1 and 2 were designed to find out the past and current practices in selecting and appointing basic school headteachers. From the available literature, basic school headteachers in Ghana are selected and appointed based on long service, rank, qualification, experience, and religious affiliation to a school. These selection and appointment are mostly done through interviews. The analysis in table 1 indicates that there has not been any significant change in the past and the current appointment of basic school headteachers.

**Table 1: Selection and appointment of basic school headteachers.**

Item	Former headteachers		Current headteachers	
	Mean	St.D	Mean	St.D
Long service	2.33	1.29	2.31	1.32
Academic qualification	2.18	1.162	2.16	1.164
Rank	2.31	1.322	2.33	1.28
Religious affiliation to a school	2.17	1.147	3.01	1.23
Advertisement	3.44	1.286	3.64	1.321
Certificate in Leadership	3.45	1.30	3.32	1.210
Interview	2.30	1.226	2.41	1.172

*Source: Computed from field data 2018, n=195: n=195*

*Scale: 5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree*

A mean score below 3.00 indicates agree and above 3.00 (disagree). The findings of the study revealed in table 1 indicate that the past practices of solely selecting and appointing basic school headteachers based on rank, qualification, experience, long service, and religious affiliation still exist in current times. The only major difference revealed in table 1 is a religious affiliation with a mean above 3.0 (3.01) signifying a disagreement. This finding indicates that currently, as it used to be in the past headteachers are not selected and appointed based on religious affiliation. This finding is in disagreement with a study conducted a decade ago by Afful-Broni and Dampson (2008) which found that 22.7% of basic headteachers became headteachers due to their religion to affiliation mission schools. Similarly, the findings of the study confirm that while countries such as Scotland, England, Australia, and the United States take into consideration professional and academic

requirement such as a certificate or a degree in school leadership and management, same is not given preference in Ghana.

Interestingly, a different dimension emerged from the interview with past and current headteachers. Out of the 12 former headteachers interviewed none of them agreed that the vacant position of headship that they applied for was advertised. However, 12 out of the 18 current headteachers interviewed indicated that they had circulars of the vacant position of headship for which they applied. Furthermore, 7 out of the 18 current headteachers confirmed that they had a masters degree in Educational Administration and school Leadership/its equivalent and had published some articles in local and international journals. These are some of the excerpts:

*'well, I think things are gradually changing with regards to how we are selected and appointed. In the past, it was solely on long service, but I was appointed because I had masters in educational leadership and I have published 2 articles. I think I also did well during the interview'* (current headteacher 5)

Current headteacher 2 echoed:

*'the interview was very competitive as the vacancies were also circulated to all teachers to apply. I think I had the appointment because of my rank, long service, publication and above all my masters in educational leadership.'*

These findings perhaps indicate that currently there is a paradigm shift from solely appointing basic school headteachers in Ghana based on long service, rank, and experience. A decade ago Afful-Broni and Dampson (2008) found that 59.1% of the basic school headteachers in Ghana were appointed based on long service and by virtue of their qualifications and experience although only 5% had certificates in educational leadership. The implication of this finding perhaps is that although some of the old practices such as religious affiliation, rank, experience, and qualification are still held in high esteem, current practices such as certification in school leadership, publication of articles and advertisement of vacant position for prospective applicant are the new directions in selecting and appointing basic school leaders. These findings contradict Amezu (1990) assertion that the Ghana Education Service who select and appoint basic school headteachers seems to be working on the assumption that a successful classroom teacher with the rank of a superintendent or above and experience necessarily makes an effect headteacher has lost its basis in the current appointment of basic school headteachers.

From the on-going discussions it worth noting that much emphasis in the selection and appointment of basic school headteachers is placed on the final stage which is the interview. This to a large extent serves as the weakness of the whole process. It is important that the whole evidence for selection and appointing of basic school headteachers should include the original application, the references, feedbacks from panels, observation, other assessment methods, and the interview. In this regard, Middlewood (1997) argues that the process of selecting and appointing school leaders should be conducted centrally through assessment centres so that those who are successful can be nominated as having reached the required standard.

*Research Question 3: At what level of leadership are the basic school headteachers managing their schools?*

The findings of the study established that basic school headteachers selected and appointed to lead basic schools in the study area have been managing their schools at 5 levels of leadership as shown in figure 1.

**Figure 1: Five levels of leadership**

Adopted from Collins (2007)

Analysis from the quantitative data indicated that 92% of the basic school headteachers managed their schools at level 1 (highly capable individual) of the 5 levels of leadership. At this level of leadership, basic school headteachers make productive contributions through their own talent, knowledge, skills and good habit gained through long service in the teaching profession. The bio-data of these headteachers indicate that majority (85%) of them have been in the teaching profession for over 15 years, while 73% of them have been in headship position for over 8 years. With regards to age, all of them were over 40 years. These are the excerpt from 2 current headteachers.

*'Well as I said earlier, I am 55 and getting close to my pension, and I have been headteacher for over 15 years. Since being appointed, I have been using my experience and knowledge gained on the job to lead my school' [headteacher 1]*

*I think I possess certain talents and traits that put me into favourable position as a leader. Although I don't have any certificate in leadership, I have been able to lead this school to improve. I mostly rely on my talent and experience.*

District Director (A) confirmed that majority of the headteachers who have no formal certification and training in leadership manage their schools through their knowledge and experience gained on the job.

*'It is difficult to have a basic school headteacher with a qualification or formal training in School Leadership or Management. Only a few have such qualifications, so most of them rely on their experience and talent to manage their school'.*

At the second level of leadership (contributing team manager), the findings of the study revealed that 63% of the current headteachers were team players where they have contributed to individual staff members capabilities to the achievement of group objectives. These basic school leaders indicated that through experiences and trial-and-error they had worked effectively and efficiently to manage both human and material resources to improve their schools as indicated in the excerpt below.

*'Well my first 2 years was filled up with trial-and-error coupled with isolation and individualism...., but now I have learned, and before I left my position as the head I was able to become a team player' (Former headteacher 7)*

In modern school leadership especially in Ghana where school cultures of collaboration in which decision-making is the no longer exclusive preserve of headteachers, and yet heads remain responsible and accountable for the school's success, a key leadership skill that these heads displayed was their ability to manage the boundaries of autocratic and democratic decision-making in their school.

Competent school leaders are very scarce in the 21<sup>st</sup> century where school leaders are expected to improve their schools with limited resources. The third level of leadership displayed by headteachers in the study was competent school leaders. Surprisingly, in spite of cultural, geographical location of schools, experience and academic qualifications of the headteachers, the challenges faced by them had more commonalities than differences. The only difference lies within the new (novice) and old headteachers (veteran). At this level of leadership, the findings of the study revealed that 45% of the headteachers were able to organize teachers and resources towards the effective and efficient pursuit of the organisational goals. Collins (2007) however, argues that leaders at this level are faced with daunting challenges such as management of time, implementation of government policies and school improvement projects. Similarly, almost all the headteachers interviewed in this study echoed similar challenges. One of the current headteachers indicated that:

*'I have been a headteacher for the past 15 years, and I still face challenges in implementing new government policies as well as school projects. (headteacher 1)*

Another former headteacher noted:

*'well when I was the headteacher, although I managed both teachers and material resource well I still found it difficult in improving my school' (headteacher 3)*

Perhaps, these challenges are encountered by the majority of the headteachers at the competent managerial level because of the way they are selected and appointed to lead basic school without any laid down formal training and qualification for the newly appointed headteachers. It can also be inferred from the findings of the study that most of the headteachers in the study area are ill-prepared to meet the demands posed by the changing nature of their jobs as compared to school heads in developed countries. This finding perhaps justifies the reason why none of the headteachers were found at the 4<sup>th</sup> (Effective Leader) and 5<sup>th</sup> levels (Executive leader) where school leaders are tasked to catalyse commitment, vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, and building enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.

These levels according to Collins (2007) are the highest level in the hierarchy of leadership, and only a few are able to reach that level. From the on-going discussions, there is no doubt that majority of the basic school headteachers who are regarded as custodian and leaders of the school are seen as 'helpless' in managing their schools. One major step towards improving their situation is by empowering them. However, Dampson (2015) argues that their basic challenge is how to tap teachers' expertise and experience to facilitate enlightened decisions and build better educational policies. It is believed that when regular in-service training and workshops that are tailored to address the needs and demands of basic schools heads are periodically organised by the GES in collaboration with the University of Education to train headteachers in school leadership and management, headteacher will become effective and executive leaders.

*Research 4: What is the way forward in selecting and appointing basic school head teachers in Ghana?*

To answer research question, 4 headteachers were asked to rank their challenges. These current headteachers were grouped into new (novice) and old (veteran) headteachers. The novice headteachers were those with 6 months to 4 years, while the old (veteran) headteachers were those above 4 years experience as headteachers.

**Table 2: Challenges are facing novice and veteran headteachers.**

<b>Novice</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Veteran</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>%</b>
Adoption of leadership style	1	51	Technology and paperwork	1	55
Financial management	2	25	Financial management	2	22
Staff management	3	8	Time management	3	9
Teacher empowerment	4	6	Teacher empowerment	4	6
Time management	5	5	School improvement	5	4
School improvement	6	3	Staff management	6	3
Technology and paperwork	7	2	Adoption of leadership style	7	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>			<b>100</b>

Source: Computed from field data 2018, n=195: n=195

No doubt the findings of the study has exposed that both novice and veteran headteachers are faced with daunting challenges. It is obvious from the rankings and percentages that majority (51%) of the novice headteachers are faced with the challenges of adopting a leadership style to suit their new environment, while in the same category only 1% veteran headteachers had such challenges. These findings confirm the study by Wildly and Clark (2011); Afful-Broni and Dampson (2008). According to Wildly and Clark (2011), novice teachers encounter feelings of professional isolation and loneliness and eventually affect their adoption of leadership style. Contrary, Afful-Broni, and Dampson (2008) found that 73.5% of the veteran headteachers were able to adopt favourable leadership style due to the resort of past experiences and trial-and-error leadership methods.

Similarly, the findings of the study that both novice (25%) and veteran headteachers (22%) are challenged with financial management concur with the findings of Bush and Oduro (2006), Liang (2011) and Gamage et al. (1996). Financial management in Ghanaian basic schools according to Afful-Broni and Dampson (2008) has been the major challenge facing basic school headteachers in Ghana. They argue that the bureaucratic nature of the Ghanaian educational administrative system where power and decision-making are centralized makes headteachers fail in their financial dispensation. Perhaps the failure of these headteachers may be attributed to their inadequate knowledge and skills in school financial management rather than the bureaucratic nature of the Ghanaian educational administrative system.

In addition to these challenges, technology and paperwork were ranked first by veteran headteachers (55%) while novice headteachers (2%) ranked the same item last. This finding may imply that the new generation of basic school headteachers is more computer literate than their older generation. Excerpt from the interview substantiate the findings.

Veteran headteacher (3) narrated:

*'honestly, my major challenge over the 18 years I have been headteacher is in relation to the use of computers and other technology to be effective and efficient. You know I'm an old school. But I still did my best.'*

Another veteran headteacher (8) echoed: '

*I don't know how to develop power points or use other software on the computer to generate broadsheet or for the workshop. It keeps slowing me down so I always have to rely on other people'*

From these findings, the way forward for the selection and appointment of basic School headteachers is to develop the knowledge and understanding of the context within which each headteacher finds him/her herself and operate from. This is particularly important for both novice and veteran headteachers because as pointed out by Pinar (2014), understanding the particularity of the place meant understanding subjectivity's reciprocal relation to reality, simultaneously constructed by and contributing to the creation of place. With regards to context, Webber (2013) distinguished between two approaches for novice and veteran headteachers. One, a standardised programme designed for application in all settings regardless of the cultural context and characteristics of the group of leadership and two, design programmes for headteachers with regards to the context in which they operate from. Additionally, studies indicate that most human interactive which form part of the selection process, the interview, is particularly prone to prejudices. Norris (1993) and Riches (1997) argue that interviewers often make up their minds about a candidate within the first five minutes of the interview and consciously or unconsciously spend the rest of the interview trying to justify their judgement. This situation to a large extent affects the selection process. The need for consistency and objectivity in selecting and appointing basic school headteachers in Ghana is paramount. In moving forward, a structured approach which involves who will be involved in the process (personnel); the standard by which candidates will be assessed (criteria); what should be important in the criteria (weighing); how will the candidates performance be assessed (Instruments) and lastly, making the decision (matching) should be considered before an appointment is effected. It is equally important to include professionals and lay people such as students and other stakeholders in education to be part of the final decision.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations:**

In conclusion, there is no doubt that looking back most of the practices and procedures for selecting and appointing basic school headteachers are still in use. Moving forward, the findings of the study indicate that although some of the old practices and procedures are still in use, new practices and procedures such as a degree/certificate in Educational/school leadership, attendance conferences, and publication of articles serves as an add-up in selecting and appointing basic school headteachers in Ghana.

Based on the findings the researcher recommends that the Ghana Education Service invest much time and energy in the selection of appropriate candidates to lead basic schools in Ghana. For members of staff to be appointed they must subscribe to the school philosophy and ethos, have the commitment and potential to develop as individuals and make a valid contribution to the school community. No appointment should be made at any level without the candidate being observed in teaching and research. In addition, candidates should be subjected to a range of leadership activities such as mentoring, class management, leadership traits, presentation, group management, chairing of meeting and involvement in school and community activities. Outside the normal interview process, other methods that can be employed to secure high-quality staff for headship position include; formal and informal networking with colleagues within and beyond their locality, building links with local universities and colleges where appropriate.

Once appointed, the school and the local education office should be committed in the professional development of basic school leaders. Much emphasis should be placed on promoting leadership and responsibility at all levels in order to create a team approach to school improvement. Additionally, increasing the amount of reflective and sharing of good practices among basic school headteachers will enhance their leadership skills. Basic school headteachers should be mandated to observe each other in their leadership role and form a networking platform and reflect among themselves their leadership roles.

It is further recommended that the preparation programmes of basic school headteachers should reflect upon their the difficulties and strategies headteachers face when they challenge directives, policies or stakeholders that undermine their commitment. Lastly, the preparation programmes of basic school headteachers should include

the development of entrepreneurial skills to identify opportunities to learn in both public and private settings, embrace cross-cultural relationships, especially in their Ghanaian communities and this to a large extent will enrich the leadership skills of both novice and veteran school leaders in Ghana.

## References

- Afful-Broni, A. and Dampson, D. G. (2008). A Study of the selection and appointment of Basic School head teachers in Ghana. Faculty of Education, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria; *Nigerian Journal of Counselling and Applied Psychology*. 4(1), pp. 57-69.
- Afful-Broni, A. (2005). *Critical issues for educational leadership in Ghana*. Accra; Type Company Ltd.
- Allotey-Pappoe (2017) *Inefficacy of the Ghanaian Basic Educational system: The selection and Appointment of head teachers*. (Assessed on desmondpappoe.wordpress.com)
- Amezu, K. (1990). *Educational administrators preparation: Survey of training needs of headmasters*. Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
- Babayemi, A. (2006), "Principalship." In J. B. Babalola, A. O. Ayeni, S. O. Adedeji, A. A. Suleiman & M. O. Arike Wuyo (Eds.), *Educational Management: Thoughts and Practice*. Ibadan: Codat Publications 242-261.
- Collins, J. (2007). Level 5 leadership. In: M (ed.) *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). 27-49. Jossey-Bass.
- Creswell, J.W. (2009) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. London and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications (IEPA). UCC.
- Dampson, D. G. (2015) Teacher participation in decision making in Ghanaian basic schools: a study of some selected basic schools in the Cape Coast Metropolitan area and Mfantseman Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. Volume 1 and 2. Doctoral thesis. *The University of Northampton*
- Dampson, D. G. (2010). Teacher Participation in Basic School Administration and Management: A study in the Cape Coast Municipality. Faculty of Educational Studies, University of Education Winneba, Ghana; *International Journal of Educational Leadership*. 3(3), pp 103-111.
- Dampson, D. G. and Edwards, A. K. (2017). The Unheard Voices: Challenges Facing Teacher Participation in Ghanaian Basic Schools; A Study of Basic Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. *The International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*. 5(11), pp-241-248. [www.theijhss.com](http://www.theijhss.com)
- Bush, T., and Oduro, G. K. T. (2006). New Principals in Africa Perceptions, inductions, and practice. *Journal of Educational Administration*. 44(4), pp. 359-375.
- Hallinger, P. and Heck, R. H. (2010). "Collaboration leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning," *School Leadership and Management*, 30(2), pp.95-110.
- Harris, A. (2012). "Distributed leadership: implications for the role of the principal," *Journal of Management Development*. 31(1), pp.7-17.
- Hoy, W. K., and Tarter, C. J. (2010). Swift and smart decision making: heuristics that work. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 24(4), pp.351-358.
- Grady, N., et al. (1994), Australian school principals: Profile 1994, Australian Principals Professional Development Council, Somerton Park, Commonwealth of Australia.
- Ibukun, W. O., Oyewole, B. K., & Abe, T. O. (2011), "Personality characteristics and principal leadership effectiveness in Ekiti state, Nigeria," *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, 6 (2), 247-262.
- Jull, S., Sawffield, S., and MacBeath, J. (2014). Changing perceptions is one thing...: barriers to transforming leadership and learning in Ghanaian basic schools. *School Leadership and Management*. 34(1), pp.69-84. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2013.849679> [Accessed 20th May 2014]
- Kuku, S.M. and Taylor, J.W. (2002). Teacher participation in decision-making: A comparative study of school leader and teacher perceptions in North Philippine. *Academics*. 5(1), pp.19-46.
- Liang, X. (2011). I want to do de best job that I can. So I worry: A novice principal in China reflects on the responsibility and complexity of leading an urbanizing rural school. In: Cowie M (ed). *New Primary Leaders: International Perspectives*. London: Continuum, 112-123.
- Lunenburg, F. C., and Ornstein, A. C. (2000). *Educational administration: Concepts and practices*. (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.
- Middlewood, D. (1997), 'Managing recruitment and selection,' in Bush, T., and Middlewood, D. (eds), *Managing People in Education*, London, Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Ministry of Education Ghana (1999). Basic Education Sub-Sector Improvement Programme: Implementation Progress Report 1996-1998, March. Accra.
- Ministry of Education Ghana (2014). Ghana 2013 National Education Assessment Technical Report (May 2014). Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service. Ghana: Accra.
- Ministry of Education, Ghana (2013). Education Sector Performance Report. August 2013. Ghana: Accra.

- Mulkeen, Chapman, Dejaegare, Leu & Bryner (2005). Recruiting, retaining and retraining secondary school teachers and principals in sub-Saharan Africa. GCE Working Series.
- Norris, K. (1993), 'Avoidable inequalities?', *Management in Education*, 7 (2), 27–30.
- Oduro, G. K. T. (2003). "Perspectives of Ghanaian headteachers on their role and professional development: the case of KEEA district primary school," unpublished Ph.D. thesis. University of Cambridge, Cambridge.
- Oplatka, L. (2004) The Principalship in developing countries: Context, characteristics, and reality. *Comparative Education*, 40(3) pp441-445
- O'Sullivan, A. (2011). "At the heart" *Decision Making in Educational Leadership and Management*. Available from: [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) [Assessed 15th June 2012]
- Pinar, W.F. (2014) *La teoria del curriculum*. Madrid: Narcea.
- Riches, C. (1992), 'Developing communication skills in interviewing,' in Bennett, N., Crawford, M. and Riches, C. (eds), *Managing Change in Education*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Somech, A. (2010). Participative Decision Making in Schools: A Mediating-Moderating Analytical Framework for Understanding School and Teacher Outcomes. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. 46(2) pp.176-209.
- Webber, C.F. (2013). Template versus awareness. In: Slater CL and Nelson S (eds). *Understanding the Principalship: An international Guide to Principal Preparation*. Vol. 19. Bingley, UK: Emerald, 71-94.
- Wildy, H. and Clarke, S. (2011). At the edge of the silent centre: An Australian principal's reflection on leading an isolated school. In: Cowie M (ed.) *New Primary Leaders*. London: Continuum, 19-30.