

Preparation and Role Performance of Heads of Secondary Schools in the Ashanti Region of Ghana: Lessons to Draw

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how Senior Secondary School heads were prepared for their roles and if their preparation have bearings on their role performance. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. In all, a sample of 51 heads of Senior Secondary School in the Ashanti Region of Ghana were purposively selected and assessed. A 21-item questionnaire consisting of both open and close ended items was used. The data was analysed using percentages and chi-square. Analysis of the data showed that majority of the heads have not had any advanced preparation for their roles and that they faced challenges in their day to day performance of their roles. The recommendations made among other things are that there should be succession plan for prospective heads of institutions so that when they eventually assume heads positions, they are not found wanting. More so, there should be manuals for heads of institutions to guide the newly appointed. Lastly, it is recommended that regular seminars and in-service training be organised for heads of institutions so that they share ideas and learn from best practices.

Keywords: Heads, Institution, Performance, Preparation, Roles

INTRODUCTION

The roles of heads of secondary school institutions are very crucial because they occupy frontline position of their respective institution. There is belief among academics and educationists that heads can improve the teaching and learning environment by providing conducive atmosphere improved curriculum management (Kiat, Tan, Heng, & Lim-Ratnam, 2017). If the institution's performance is outstanding or otherwise, it can be attributed to the leadership roles played by the head. The role of heads of secondary schools across the world and Ghana for that matter is complex and hefty. For academic work to go on well, heads need to plan, direct, co-ordinate, manage both human and physical resources at their disposal. This therefore implies that the heads' role in educational set up is enlarged than before (Cuban as cited in Bayar, 2016). It is held that effective leadership of heads provides an antidote to the challenges of how to organize collective efforts, a key element in organizational enhancement (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Louis (2010) says leadership in totality is about organizational improvement in which there is establishment of collective worthwhile directions for the organizational improvement and support of people to move in those directions. Preparation of

an individual for any task is one of the most critical factors which can determine the person's achievements on the task. Heads as academic and administrative leaders at the senior high school level are strategic to the fulfillment of the second circle institutions goals and the need for thorough preparation for them cannot be ignored. This is so because heads are required to carry out different assignments which demand skills and consideration. Within this context, Young (2006) asserts that the ever-increasing responsibilities of school leaders for ensuring the quality of schools, school leadership has recently become one of the central concerns of educational policy makers in many countries. The pivotal role of the school leader as a factor in effective schools has been corroborated by findings of school effectiveness research over the last two decades. Huber, (2004) citing (Sammons et al., 1995) regarding a meta-study of the University of London, indicated that other factors for school effectiveness mostly fall within the influence of the school leader because a prepared leader acquired skills such as sharing vision and goals, unity of purpose, consistency of practice, collegiality and collaboration. The prepared leader provides among other things an orderly atmosphere, which attracts good working environment concentration on teaching and learning time, academic emphasis, focus on achievement and clarity of purpose, which lead to the attainment of organizational goals.

The critical role played by heads of secondary schools in Ghana has been called into action with the recent introduction of free senior high school. Many are those who think that challenges of heads of secondary schools have increased due to increment in enrollment. There has been scanty study with regard to finding out challenges faced by heads of secondary schools in the Ashanti region. Given the significance of the preparation in effective job performance and the fact there is no known study on the preparation of heads of secondary schools in Ghanaian senior high school institutions in Ghana, the choice of this topic becomes crucial. In the context of this, attempts has been made to find out (i) the level of preparations head of senior high school institutions have? (ii) identify the relationship between preparations of the heads and their role performance? This study sought to contribute to literature as far as challenges faced by heads of secondary school in Ashanti region are concerned.

The study was guided by the following research question and two hypotheses:

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What challenges do heads of secondary schools in Ashanti region face?

Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant association between years of experience of academic heads and the challenges faced.
2. There is no significant relationship between preparations of the heads and their role performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been established that when individuals assume the position of headship, experience drastically changes in their work life adding to the tensions of academic life (Wescott, 2000). The change in roles sometimes goes with extra burden which demands some preparations to enable the school leaders to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and values in order to maintain efficiency and effectiveness (Yan & Ehrich, 2009). Bowman (2002) stresses the fact that headship preparations impart leadership capabilities such as problem-solving skills,

cultural management skills and coaching skills in leaders. This follows that individuals who are prepared to ascend headship positions must acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will be necessary for their leadership activities. On the part of Siccoone, (2012), educational leaders need to be trained in communication skills to enable them build positive relationship with both outside and within the school. This means that with good communication skills, leaders can create a shared vision and promote team work for the attainment of organizational goals. When subordinates realize that their leaders value them and recognize their expertise as such, they give off their best and it goes a long way to promote their creative thinking skills which is necessary for problem solving and thoughtful decision making.

The government of Ghana (GoG) considers school leadership as important because of the fundamental roles it plays in the country's education development strategies. This is evident when the ministry of education stresses the enhancement of the quality of leadership among managers of education institutions as one of the qualities of leadership among managers of education institutions as one of its objectives in the strategic plan. Against this background, the government of Ghana in the 1970s obtained assistance from UNESCO to establish a permanent training institution in Ghana for the training of educational planners, administrators and other specialist. Eventually, the institute for Educational Planning and Administration was established in 1975 at the University of Cape Coast to train educational leaders through the joint efforts of the Government of Ghana and UNESCO (Vice Chancellor's Annual Report to the 48th Congregation, 2015).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework upon which the study is founded.

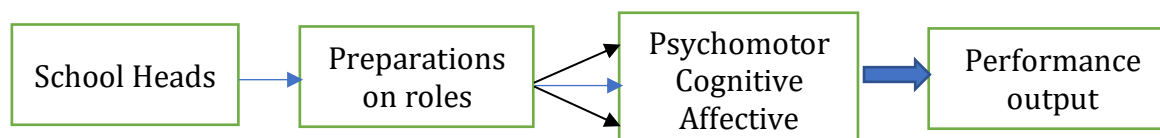


Figure 1: Authors' construct on preparation of Head

The study is based on four key assumptions that when school heads are provided with an enabling environment through their preparations on their roles they will be equipped with the necessary cognitive, psychomotor and affection required for them to perform creditably. This view was echoed by Okoko, Scott and Scott (2014) where they admitted in their study that school heads are backbone for successful schools because they see to the teaching and learning environment in order to boost students' outcomes. And that heads need appropriate cognition, affection and psychomotor domains to be effective heads and that they should not be de-emphasised.

Challenges heads faced are the concerns of researchers, administrators, policy makers as well as academics globally. A study was conducted by Abdulrasheed and Bello (2015) in Nigeria to examine challenges secondary school principals encounter. The study revealed that heads/principals of secondary schools in the northern Nigeria faced challenges in the area of funds and infrastructural facilities. The finding also corroborate with the study by Olujuwon (2013) who also found same challenges. A study conducted by du Plessis (2014) in South Africa

to investigate into problems and complexities in rural schools revealed among other things that logistical or resource constraint was a major headache to heads in the secondary schools.

There is raging debate concerning whether heads who are experienced have less difficulties in handling challenges compared to less experienced heads. Contributing to the discourse on the topic, Kimani (2013) conducted a study in Kenya to examine school factors influencing students' discipline in public secondary schools in Kinangop District, Kenya. The study found that head teachers with long experience were capable of handling discipline problems with ease unlike the less experienced ones. This implies that heads who were less experienced probably were not prepared for the challenges associated with the headship. So with time, the inexperienced heads develop skills and strategies in handling human, physical and capital resources. It goes to firm the assertion in organisational set up where people should be prepared before occupying position so that they become effective.

Wekhuyi (2014) conducted a study in Kenya to examine influence of in-service training on public secondary school principals' management of finances and human resources in Busia County, Kenya. Among other things the study revealed that the preparatory or training programme had influence on the performance of heads. Specifically, it was established that the preparatory programme for heads effectively addressed management of teaching staff, the budgetary process, management of staff discipline, and management of support staff. Other needs the programme addressed were budget control, recruiting process, handling of disadvantaged groups like HIV positive staff, staff appraisal, handling of the staff welfare, auditing, management of income generating activities, staff training and development plan, resource mobilization, and the general running of the school. This means that when heads are prepared for the job, it has influence their role performance.

Australia and other countries have relied on an apprenticeship model where aspiring leaders move through the ranks from classroom teachers- master teacher – head of department – deputy principal prior to becoming school principals (Wildy & Clarke, 2008). Studies have revealed the usefulness of leadership preparation programmes in various contexts. Findings from the International Study of the Preparation of Principals (ISPP) described how school leadership preparation programmes, especially those delivered in institutions of higher learning in the USA and in Canada were useful even when participants did not feel adequately prepared in some technical aspects of their work (Webber & Scott, 2010). Upon the demands of the school heads and the critical managerial role they are faced with, Peters (1994) observed that it is unbelievable that little attention is paid to the manner in which they are selected and trained, as new heads are picked from within the academic staff ranks with no consideration on their managerial skills. This view seems to have similar semblance with the situation prevalent in the Ghanaian educational system. Depending on the rank, the non- elective succession system for the position of head of schools allows for the next academic staff whose turn it is to become the head of schools. The key issue that arises is the preparedness of these individuals to successfully head institutions. Check to integrate into the doc.

METHODS

The researchers adopted descriptive design to carry out the study. The population includes all heads of secondary school in the Ashanti region. **How many????** In all, sample of 51 heads of senior secondary schools were purposively sampled for the study. A 21-item questionnaire was

designed based on their preparation and performance. The population of the study comprised 102 academic heads from various senior secondary schools in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The schools were purposefully sampled to comprise both old and new head masters. However, 4 of the head teachers did not answer the questionnaires. Out of the 47 heads, 33 were males and 14 females.

With respect to their ages five (5) were below the age of 30, 13 were within age bracket of 30-40, 20 were within the age bracket of 41-50, while 9 were of 51. In terms of experience as Head of Departments, 6 have served between 1-3 years, 14 for 4-6 years, 17 for 7-9 years whilst 10 have seven years of experience. The research instrument was questionnaire. A 21-item questionnaire was designed to elicit views from respondent. The heads were reliably informed about the intent and purposes of the research and they could opt out if they needed to do so. In all, out of the 51 copies of questionnaire given to heads 47 were retrieved.

The hypothesis tested in the study was as follows:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between years of experience of academic heads and the challenges faced. A spearman's rho correlation coefficient was used to analyze hypothesis one. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Challenges faced as head

The views of the respondents were also sought on the challenges they faced as head. Their views have been presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Challenges faced as a head

Challenges	Frequency	Percent
Student absenteeism	3	6.4
Payment of fees by students	5	10.6
Inadequate facilities	7	14.9
Financial constraint	11	23.4
Logistical constraint	12	25.5
Delay in the payment of capitation grant	2	4.3
Lack of cooperation from staff	3	6.4
Lack of cooperation from communities	4	8.5
Total	47	100

Source: Field data 2021

Results from Table 1 showed that the major challenge heads faced was in the area of logistical constraint 12(25.5). This means that the greatest challenge faced by heads was logistical constraints. Moreover, financial constraint was indicated as the second highest 11(25.5) hurdle heads have to face in carrying out their roles. The result in Table 1 further indicated that delay in the payment of capitation grant was the least challenge 2(4.3).

H₀: There is no significant association between years of experience of academic heads and the challenges faced.

Research hypothesis 1 sought to find out if there is any relationship between years of experience of academic heads and the challenges they faced. A spearman's rho correlation

coefficient was run to find out if there is an association between the two variables and if such relationship is significant. Table 2 presents a summary of the analysis.

Table 2: Relationship between years of experience and challenges faced

			Years of experience	Challenges
Spearman's rho	Years of experience	Correlation coefficient	1.000	-.489*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	47	47
	Challenges	Correlation coefficient	-.489*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	47	47

***Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)**

From Table 2, a Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient of -.489 indicates a moderate negative association between years of experience of academic heads and the level of challenges that they have to deal with. This implies that, the more experienced the academic head is, the less the challenges he or she faces in the line of duty. That is, there is an inverse association between the level of experience of academic heads and number and nature of challenges they encounter on the job. The association is significant at the .05 alpha level ($.000 < .05$). The nature of challenges that confront academics heads are such that, as they continue to occupy that position, they are able to think through to provide some level of solutions to the challenges because they are recurrent. This makes the more experience academic head able to handle such challenges than the less experienced ones.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between preparations of the heads and their role performance.

The views of secondary schools heads with regard to their preparation and the role performance was hypothesized as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationship between preparations of heads and role performance

			Preparation of HoD	Performance of work
Spearman's rho	Preparation of HoD	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.489*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	47	47
	Performance of work	Correlation coefficient	.489*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	47	47

***Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)**

From Table 3, a Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient of .489 indicates a moderate positive association between preparations of heads and their roles performance. This implies that, the more prepared the academic head is, the more effective s/he will perform on the roles. In other

words, there is positive or direct association between the preparations of heads and their roles performance. The association is significant at the .05 alpha level ($.000 < .05$). The nature of challenges that confront academic heads are such that, they need to be prepared for their roles in order to perform their roles well to improve teaching and learning.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Objective one of the study was intended to establish challenges heads of secondary schools in the Ashanti region of Ghana faced. Analysis of the results revealed that heads of secondary schools faced challenges such as logistical constraint, financial constraint, and inadequate facilities. These findings are not surprising because if heads are to function effectively, they need logistics, money and adequate infrastructural facilities. These challenges can break the neck of even the most effective heads because without logistics to move goods and staff, funds to run the institution and adequate facilities to accommodate both students and staff, it would be almost impossible for the school to function. Analysis of the results further indicated that delay in the payment of capitation grant was the least challenge. This means that delay in the release of capitation grant was not problem to heads probably because they could plan ahead for it before government releases it. The finding that heads of secondary schools in the Ashanti region faced financial constraints and inadequate facilities was consistent with the study by Abdulrasheed & Bello (2015); Olujuwon (2013) who found in her study that heads faced challenges such as funds, infrastructural facilities. Again it was revealed that logistical constraint was a major headache to heads in the Ashanti region of Ghana. This finds expression in the study of du Plessis (2014) in South Africa who found that logistical or resource constraint was a major headache to heads in the secondary schools.

On the other hand, objective two of the study sought to determine whether there is association between years of experience of academic heads and the challenges they faced. In other words it was to examine whether both old and new heads faced similar challenges. The results of the study showed that the nature of challenges confront heads are such that as they continue to occupy headship position, they are able to think through to provide some level of solutions to the challenges because they are recurrent. This makes the more experience heads able to handle such challenges than the less experienced ones. That is why in simple terms, it is said that experience is the best teacher. However, to enable both new and old heads perform effectively and efficiently, it is imperative for the initial preparations on their role to enable them get the rudiments of the work for effective performance. This finding was consistent with the work of Kimani (2013) who found in a study that head teachers with long years of experience were capable of handling discipline problems with ease unlike the less experienced ones. This implies that the more experience a head, the more effective s/he can handle any challenge being confronted.

Finally, objective three of the study was to examine whether there is relationship between preparation of heads and their role performance. Regarding their preparations and role performance, the data revealed positive relationship which indicates that preparations of the heads impacts positively on their work and thus, the more they are prepared for their work, the more effectively they perform their roles. On their role preparation, it was revealed that quite a number has not received preparation but gained experience with time to get on well with their roles because of recurring situations. This suggests that they tend to struggle on their roles at the initial stage with 'try and error' approach which could make them mess up things to be

ineffective on their roles. The finding that there is relationship between preparation of heads and their role performance was confirmed in a study by Wekhuyi (2014) who revealed that preparatory or training programme had influence on the performance of heads. Specifically, it was established that the preparatory programme for heads effectively addressed management of teaching staff, the budgetary process, management of staff discipline, management of support staff, staff appraisal, handling of the staff welfare, and staff training and development plan, resource mobilization.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion drawn in the study is that heads at the senior high schools in the Ashanti region of Ghana were not sufficiently prepared before they ascended to their headship positions. And that heads acquire skills on them to solve problems. The fact that heads will not remain on their jobs for ever and that no thorough provision is made leaves much to be desired. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that steps should be taken by Ghana Education Service to train heads for their roles so that they can effectively tackle challenges they face. It is further suggested that Ghana Education Service provides heads on secondary schools manuals to serve as source of information to guide them in the discharge of their work.

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PREPARATION AND ROLE PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC HEADS

Biographical Information

This section presents biographical data of academic head from various Basic schools used for the study from 47 schools in the Ashanti Region. Tables 1 – 4 present a summary of the responses.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	33	70.2
Female	14	29.8
Total	47	100

From Table 1, it can be observed that the male academic heads used for the study, 33 (70.2) exceeded the female academic heads, 14 (29.8) by 19 (40.4). This implies that most of the academic heads used for the study were males.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 30	5	10.6
30 – 40	13	27.7
41 – 50	20	42.6
51 and above	9	19.1
Total	47	100

Table 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents. It is obvious that most of the academic heads were between 41 – 50 years, 20 (42.6) while only 5 (10.6) were below 30 years. This means that, most academic heads are above 41 years with 13 (27.7) between the ages of 30 to 40.

Table 3: Years of Experience as Head

Years	Frequency	Percent
1 – 3	6	12.8
4 – 6	14	29.8
7 – 9	17	36.2
10 and above	10	21.2
Total	47	100

Table 3 represents the years of experience as heads. It shows that heads with years of experience ranging from 7-9 had the highest percentage of 36.2(17) while the heads with years of experience 1-3 had the lowest percentage of 12.8(6). This means that, most heads' years of experience are above 7 years with 17(36.2) between the years of 7 to 9.

Table 4: Area of Specialisation

Area	Frequency	Percent
Home Economics	6	12.7
Business Management	7	14.9
Social Studies	9	19.1
Catering	3	6.4
Mathematics	5	10.6
Ghanaian language – Fante	3	6.4
Guidance and Counselling	5	10.6
Educational Psychology	6	12.7
Science	3	6.4
Total	47	100

Table 4 shows that Social Studies is the area with the highest specialization of 9(19.1) whiles Ghanaian language – Fante, Catering and Science are the areas with the lowest specialization of 3(6.4). This means that, the area where teachers’ specialize the most is Social Studies.

Becoming the Headmaster

Table 5: Period of being with GES

Years	Frequency	Percent
1 – 10	13	27.7
11 – 20	27	54.4
21 and above	7	14.9
Total	47	100

Table 5 represents periods of being with GES; this shows that, the period of being with GES ranging from 11-20 had the highest number of 27(54.4) whiles the period ranging from 21 and above had the lowest number of 7(14.9). This means that, becoming a headmaster mostly takes years ranging from 11-20.

Table 6: Changed jobs since entering GES

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	47	100
No	-	-
Total	47	47

Table 6 shows that, all the respondents have not changed jobs since they started working with GES.

Table 7: Method of ascending to the headship

Response	Frequency	Percent
By Appointment	42	89.4
Election	-	-
Replacement	5	10.6
Community choice	-	-
Total	47	100

Table 7 represents the method of ascending to the headship; it shows that, most of the respondents ascended to the headship by appointment with the percentage of 89.4(42) whiles

10.6(5) ascended to the headship by replacement but no respondent ascended to headship by either Election or Community choice.

Table 8: Nature of job

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Permanent	45	95.7
Temporary	2	4.3
Total	47	100

Table 8 shows the nature of job; it shows that 45(95.7) respondents are permanent while 2(4.3) are temporary. This means that, most respondents' nature of job is permanent. Majority of those who indicated that, the nature of their jobs was permanent further indicated that, they were employed by GES and unless anything untoward happens, they will be there till retirement. The minority that indicated that the nature of their job was temporary, stated that they were in an acting capacity.

Table 9: Reasons for becoming the head

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Native of the community	3	6.4
Assistant headmaster	18	38.3
The most experienced	22	46.8
Long serving teacher	15	31.9
Transferred	5	10.6
Highest academic	13	27.7
Highest qualification	9	19.1

Table 9 represents the reasons for becoming the head; it shows that, the highest number with 22(46.8%) whose reason for becoming the head is because of their level of experience while the lowest number with 3(6.4%) whose reason for becoming the head is because of being a native of the community. This means that, the main reason for becoming the head is because of one's level of experience.

Table 10: Received preparation before assuming the headship

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	18	38.3
No	29	61.7
Total	47	100

Table 10 shows that 61.7(29) of respondents received no preparation before assuming the headship while 38.3(18) of respondents received preparation before assuming the headship. This means that, most respondents did not receive preparation before assuming the headship.

Table 11: Responsibilities of the school head

Responsibilities	Frequency	Percent
Supervisory role	18	38.3
Decision making	12	25.5
Managing finances	8	17.1
Reporting to the district directorate of education	9	19.1
Total	47	100

Table 11 represents the responsibilities of the school head; it shows that, the supervisory role of 18(38.3) is the highest responsibility of the school head while managing finance of 8(17.1) is the lowest responsibility of the school head. This means that, the main responsibility of the school head is the supervisory role.

Table 12: Changes experienced since becoming head

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Transforms to academic and administrative leader	24	54
Accountable to the regional director of education	38	80.9
Providing vision	32	60.1
Management of resources	21	44.7
Managing staff problems	26	55.3
Managing students concern	39	83
Becoming public figure	18	38.3
Mouthpiece of the school	33	70.2
From solitary to social	12	25.5
From focused to fragmented	16	34
Autonomy to accountability	24	54
Client to custodian	17	36.2

Table 12 represents the changes experienced since becoming head; it shows that, managing students concern of 83(39) is the highest change experienced since becoming head while from solitary to social 25.5(12) is the lowest change experienced since becoming head. This means that, the managing students is the most change experience respondents face since becoming

Table 13: Skills needed in the headship role

Skills	Frequency	Percent
Communicative	40	85.1
Problem solving	43	91.5
Conflict – resolution	40	85.1
Cultural management	25	53.2
Coaching	37	78.7
Human relation	42	89.4
Transition manage	31	66

Table 13 represents the skills needed in the headship role; it shows that, problem solving of 43(91.5) is the highest skills needed in the headship role while communication and conflict – resolution both of 40(85.1) follows the skills needed in the headship role and cultural management of 25(53.1) is the lowest skills needed in the headship role. This means that, the skills needed most in the headship role is to solve problem.

Experiences

The experiences obtained as a result of being the head included:

1. Role model
2. Management of resources
3. Problem solving skills

How the role of head impacted on personal life

Respondents indicated that, the role of head has impacted on their personal lives. It came out that through their involvement as heads they can now take up leadership roles, their human relationship skills have improved, their accommodating capacity has improved as well as their communication skills:

1. Take up leadership roles
2. Human relations skills
3. Improved accommodating capacity
4. Improved communication skills