

Attaining School and Educational Goals: Duties of Headteachers of Public Basic Schools in Ghana

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Abstract

Education forms the foundation for the development of human resource, making it critical for national development. To ensure that children attain a minimum period of schooling, the government of Ghana has committed itself to a number of international protocols to provide basic education for all Ghanaian children. Hence, many basic schools have been built throughout the country to increase access and participation. These schools are administered in most cases by experienced teachers who serve as leaders. The subject of 'leadership' has gained considerable attention, discussion, and extensive study by theorists and researchers in a number of disciplines. This is so, especially in modern times when the concept has become complex as a result of globalization and technological advancement. School leaders are considered as pillars of the educational system, and also seen as the major agents in the promotion of school effectiveness. This is clearly seen in the numerous functions that they are expected to perform daily and often simultaneously, thereby showing the crucial role of school leaders in establishing, monitoring and maintaining the quality and standards in education. This paper examines the duties of headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana in attaining school and educational goals, and the challenge(s) they face in executing their duties. The paper recommends among other things that headteachers need to improve on their knowledge and skills in school and financial administration through learning and experience, and they must be effectively monitored, supervised. Again, the Capitation Grant (CG) policy should be evaluated, reviewed and revised so that its implementation could meet changing and current trends.

Keywords: Educational goals, school goals, headteachers, duties, public basic schools, Capitation Grant (CG)

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has seen an increased acknowledgment of the significance of effective leadership, management and administration for the successful operation of educational institutions (Bush, 2011). This implies that the issue of leadership is very crucial in management and administration, especially human resources management and development, since the art of leadership transcends all aspects of life (Ojo & Olaniyan, 2008). Yukl (2006) states that 'leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives' (p. 8). This definition includes efforts not only to influence and facilitate current work of the group or organization, but also to ensure that it is prepared to meet future challenges.

According to Robbins (2003) leadership is seen as a process of influencing a group towards the achievement of goals and the leader is the one who has the capacity to influence others and possesses managerial authority also (Bodla & Nawaz, 2010; Hariri, 2011). Educational leaders are considered as pillars of the educational system and also the major agents in the promotion of school effectiveness. Educational leadership therefore is a term applied to school administration that strives to create positive change in educational policies and processes since such leaders are trained to advance and improve educational institutions. According to Gunter (2004), labels used in defining this field has evolved from 'educational administration' to 'educational management' and more recently, to 'educational leadership' (Bush, 2011:5).

Maintaining quality and standards in education depends largely on the extent to which heads of schools effectively carry out their leadership responsibilities (Ibukun, Oyewole & Abe, 2011). School leaders administer their institutions with other teaching and non-teaching staff. Hence, they are considered the chief executives of their various educational institutions, and are responsible for whatever goes on in the schools (Oyedemi & Fasasi, 2006). Even though school leaders are held accountable for all that happens in their schools, they assign various duties to other staff members who could perform them. For Ojo and Olaniyan (2008), the role of the school head is seen in all facets of the general duties of school administration. They rally students, teachers, parents, community members and other stakeholders around a common goal of raising students' performance. They also possess leadership skills and knowledge to exercise the authority to pursue strategies that help in the effective running of schools. As an administrator and leader, the school head determines the success or failure of the educational institution. According to Babayemi (2006), school leaders control human and material resources of the school, and that their position is so important that the school cannot exist without it. Thus, school leaders are seen as supervisors, managers, school climate developers and change facilitators.

In Ghana, basic education is the minimum period of schooling for children's acquisition of basic literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills as well as skills for creativity and healthy living. This sums up the importance of basic education as a right of every Ghanaian child. In view of this, the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana makes it mandatory for every Ghanaian child to have access to quality basic education. Basic education in Ghana is therefore free, compulsory and universal. The current basic education system of eleven (11) years is made up of 2 years kindergarten, 6 years primary, and 3 years Junior High (2-6-3). The administrative heads of basic schools in Ghana are referred to as headteachers who are expected to ensure that school and educational goals are achieved. This paper therefore seeks to discuss the various duties expected to be performed by headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana, and the challenges they face as they try to perform their duties. Also, the paper seeks to contribute to existing body of knowledge on duties or roles of educational leaders especially in the context of public basic schools in Ghana.

2. Duties of Headteachers of Public Basic Schools in Ghana

The importance of educational leaders (headteachers) in ensuring effective schools cannot be overemphasised since they have significant influence on the success of schools by playing a key role as the leader, and hence influencing all aspects of the school's functions with their behaviours and personal characteristics. As such, they are expected to perform a wide range of duties to ensure that effective teaching and learning take place in their schools to achieve the set objectives and goals (Ghana Education Service, 2010a; Ghana Education Service, 2010b). Some of the duties are discussed below:

Planning

This role, according to Ojo and Olaniyan (2008), is perhaps the most important role of a school principal since the essence of planning is to prepare for and predict future events. Planning goes beyond trying to attain stated organizational objectives. It involves developing strategies and procedures for effective realization of the whole plan. This includes determination of objectives and goals, control of resources, direction, and methods of achieving the overall objectives of the organisation. Planning, which is considered a blue print for action is done to avoid wasting money and other resources both in the short-term and long-term. Failing to plan or postponing planning is dangerous because it results in ineffectiveness, undirected action and waste of resources. However, good planning could bring about good results. Planning is seen to be pervasive and primary in the sense that it is necessary for performing other management functions such as organizing, staffing, directing, co-ordinating, reporting, and budgeting. It helps to identify the philosophy, policies, programmes, procedures, practices, and challenges of the organization (Atta, Agyenim-Boateng & Baafi-Frimpong, 2000; Mankoe, 2007; Ojo & Olaniyan (2008).

Since the introduction of the Capitation Grant (CG) in 2005 in Ghana, all basic schools are mandated to develop and implement a School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) which enables public basic schools to identify priority activities to be implemented in order to improve their performance. The SPIP which is also known as the Action Plan for School Improvement is determined from each School Performance Appraisal Meeting (SPAM) and serves as a blueprint which outlines the specific activities with time frames, and persons responsible for implementation which the school/community intends to undertake with the aim of achieving objectives.

Headteachers in public basic schools in Ghana therefore must understand the format and structure of SPIP, and the specific component of the structure of SPIP (setting objectives, targets, tasks, activities, time-frame, responsibilities and indicators of success). They are also to understand and identify materials and resources needed, people responsible for facilitating the implementation of SPIP, indicate the names of people who may be assigned responsibilities for tasks and activities, set realistic time-frame including start and finish dates, and identify specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound indicators. To draw a very good SPIP for basic schools, headteachers are to consult with school-community stakeholders to determine the appropriate date for preparation of the SPIP, encourage all stakeholders to show interest and participate in planning SPIP, organize consultative meeting of stakeholders to identify issues, prioritise the issues or problems that need attention, identify specific actions to address the problems, identify resources needed to address the problems, and assign responsibilities for various actions to be implemented.

Effective School-community Relationship

The educational system as an open and a social organization thrives on effective interrelationship within it and with its relevant publics. This implies that the headteacher needs to know the community, in which the school is situated, takes active part in the development of the community and encourages the staff to do same. He or she ought to encourage and facilitate community participation in the activities of the school, and explain the activities of the school to the community. The school head is also to find out the occupational practices, values, aspirations and norms of the community to enable the school formulate policies, goals and strategies for the education of the students. This will make the education of the students to be functional since it will suit the desires and aspirations of the community members.

The knowledge of the challenges and needs of the community by the school head will enable him or her to tailor education to equip students with the skills that will make them become responsible members of the community (Atta, Agyenim-Boateng & Baafi-Frimpong, 2000). The school derives its teaching and learning materials from the community. As part of the duties in ensuring good school-community relationships, the headteacher needs to have a thorough knowledge of the community in order to advise teachers as to what they can do to obtain appropriate teaching and learning materials for effective teaching and learning. The headteacher is to develop and administer policies and procedures for parents and community participation in school issues. With this, the headteacher is to confer with parents and handle complaints of parents.

Another function of the headteacher is to find means of keeping the community informed about the school concerning issues such as new approaches to teaching, new educational programmes, new subjects of the curriculum, and guidance and counselling services available in the school. The school head needs to represent the school by participating in community activities to help develop and implement plans for the improvement of community life. He or she must work with the community agencies such as the home, churches, public libraries, and mass media to shape the behaviour of students. The headteacher also ensures total involvement of the school in community development activities such as clean-up campaigns and tree planting. The community could also occasionally be involved in school programmes including open days, speech and prize-giving days, exhibitions, and games.

In Ghana, there are various reference groups who take part in formulating decisions of public basic schools. These reference groups include the School Management Committee (SMC); Parent Teacher Association (PTA); chiefs, elders and Unit Committee; Metropolitan/Municipal/District Education Oversight Committee (MMDEOC); Religious Bodies; Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs); Association of Past Pupils. It is therefore the duty of the headteacher to ensure good relationship with these reference groups to ensure the smooth running of the school. This can be achieved through mutual respect between the headteacher, teachers and the reference groups, regular interactions and consultations between the school and the reference groups (through visits and meetings), and respecting decisions taken at meetings. Again, good relationship may be achieved when the headteacher, teachers and reference groups are conversant with the policies of Ghana Education Service (GES) and Ministry of Education (MOE), as well as being aware of the code of discipline for teachers and pupils. This will help the reference groups to eliminate negative sentiments when their wards are punished.

Staff Personnel Services

The educational leader is expected to attract, select, motivate, supervise, develop and maintain teaching and non-teaching staff. The educational leader needs to identify and indicate the staff needs of the school, as well as the specific type of staff needed to meet the needs. In Ghana, teaching and non-teaching staff are posted to public basic schools by GES. Hence, such school heads have no choice but to accept the staff posted to the schools. It is the duty of the headteacher to see to it that new staff members are properly oriented into the school system, and its general way of doing things. The headteacher is to involve the staff in developing and operating the regular and proper personnel policies such as working conditions and schedules of staff assignments.

The headteacher must create good conditions in the school for the staff to enjoy their work. Thus, the resources needed for work must be made available by the headteacher, and also involve the staff in making decision that fall within their domain. He or she is to ensure that clear communication channels are established and made known to the staff members, and help resolve challenges they face, diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of the staff, evaluate their performance through observation and daily supervision, and appraise their effectiveness for promotion. He or she is supposed to write confidential reports on the staff based on performance rather than personal characteristics of particular staff members. The headteacher is therefore expected to be fair to all staff members, and provide room for staff development through regular in-service training and seminars, and encourage staff to join and attend subject association workshops.

In public basic schools in Ghana, school-based and cluster-based in-service training programmes are organized for teachers. A school-based in-service training programme may be organized for teachers. Such in-service training programmes thrive on sharing of ideas, self-help and co-operation among teachers to find solutions to their own teaching challenges, and the learning problems of the pupils they teach. These problems may be identified by the teachers themselves or by the headteacher (through the vetting of teachers' lesson notes). A school-based in-service training among other things, seeks to improve upon teachers' professional competencies, techniques and skills in specific areas of teaching and learning, to address common needs facing teachers with regards to teaching and learning of literacy, numeracy and problem solving; provides professional support to colleague teachers in specific subjects, and provides a forum to discuss new methodologies to improve teaching and learning.

A cluster-based in-service training programme on the other hand may be organized for teachers from a group of schools that form the cluster with a minimum of three and a maximum of five schools. Decisions to organize

cluster meetings are taken by the headteachers of the schools that form the cluster, and issues to be addressed are cluster needs. This form of in-service training seeks to update professional competencies of teachers, address common and specific issues arising from school-based in-service training, enable the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Director of Education and the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Teacher Support Team to identify teachers' training needs and train teachers in new skills and knowledge in a cost-effective way, brainstorm to find solutions to problems identified, teach demonstration lessons, and share methodologies to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Subjects associations in Ghana include Mathematics Association of Ghana (MAG), English Association of Ghana (EAG) and Science Association of Ghana (SAG), and through workshops and seminars, they seek to identify challenges faced by teachers in teaching these subjects, and brainstorm to find solutions to them. The headteacher is not only concerned with the professional problems of his staff, but also their personal concerns are of importance. He or she should know that a member of staff who is sad as a result of personal issues is likely not to work at his or her maximum. Thus, educational leaders must ensure proper employment, placement, motivation, development, welfare, and professional growth of staff.

Pupil Personnel Services

The headteacher's administrative tasks here are provided to encourage or supplement regular classroom instructions. This role of the principal is very important because it involves the selection, orientation, placement, as well as guidance and counselling of students which constitute an essential aspect of educational administration (Atta, Agyenim-Boateng & Baafi-Frimpong, 2000; Ojo & Olaniyan, 2008).

In Ghana, headteachers of public basic schools are to ensure that pupils are adequately motivated and given the opportunity to learn. As such, headteachers must organize their teachers to see to the welfare of students. They are also to promote guidance services by ensuring that material assistance is given to the guidance co-ordinators to work in co-operation with teachers to achieve a smooth running of guidance programmes in schools. The headteacher ought to institute procedures for the orientation of pupils, especially the new ones on the school rules and regulations, discipline, moral and civic issues, adequate interpersonal relations, selection of subjects, and career guidance. Headteachers are to see to it that schools are secure and safe for pupils. As such, the heads are to make sure the school environment is friendly, physically safe, emotionally secure and physically enabling. They are also to put in place measures to avoid physical assault (caning, hitting, fighting etc.), verbal (insults, shouts, intimidation etc.), and sexual abuses (harassment, aggression, defilement, rape, coercion etc.), and encourage victims of such atrocities to report to the appropriate authorities for redress. On health, headteachers are to regularly screen food vendors before they are allowed to sell food in schools, organize periodic health checkup and lectures for pupils and teachers, provide 'first aid' and organize regular first aid training for teachers and pupils for them to know the basics of resuscitation.

The headteacher must encourage the formation of a school health committee or club to organize health fairs through the collaboration of local health workers to enable the pupils and the whole community to learn and practice good health, especially on the issue of HIV/AIDS. The HIV Alert School Model Programme which is a mixed package of interventions aimed at harmonizing all HIV and AIDS interventions in public basic schools in Ghana could be used to educate teachers and pupils to achieve and sustain a positive behaviour development and change to reduce the spread of HIV among school pupils. The headteacher must therefore orient new teachers posted to his or her school on HIV Alert School Model. The headteacher needs to ensure that student inventories such as records on continuous assessment and conduct of students are kept, and policies and procedures for dealing with pupils' conduct problems established, and pupils' disciplinary cases handled with the co-operation of SMC and PTA. The headteacher must develop, co-ordinate and encourage extra-curricular activities such as organization of clubs, games and sports, entertainment programmes, and student councils. All these are needed for the mental and physical health needs of students.

Curriculum and Instructional Development, Improvement and Appraisal

This duty of the school heads includes all activities that are planned, implemented, supervised, and evaluated. Such activities aim to develop the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of the students' personalities. The curriculum is not a record of what has happened but a plan of what is to happen (Ojo & Olaniyan, 2008). It involves what students are to do in the learning situation, and it also deals with the learning outcomes to be achieved through the experiences and opportunities exposed to the students. The school curriculum is thus, all the learning experiences and opportunities designed for the students in the school. Curriculum development which mostly starts with establishment of educational goals is based on the dynamic needs of the society, hence, change from time to time. This means that a curriculum which is considered adequate today may not be adequate when the needs and values of the society change tomorrow.

Headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana therefore have the duty of noticing, understanding and making good judgement about the needs of the society and how they will affect the curriculum. The implication is that the headteacher must be aware of the basic curriculum theories in order to adequately influence the determination of instructional goals and objectives, the selection and organization of subject matter and the

learning experiences. As a result, the school head must secure the appropriate syllabuses for his teachers and take them through the objectives related in the syllabuses. He or she must ensure that time tables and textbooks are in readiness for use, and that other learning materials such as manila cards, pieces of chalk, dusters, notebooks for lesson plans, forecasts and record of work are supplied or purchased where necessary.

The basic school headteacher in Ghana ought to encourage his or her teachers to attend subject association meetings at least once in a year. Such subject associations like English Teachers' Association of Ghana, Mathematics Association of Ghana, and Geography Teachers' Association of Ghana influence the curriculum by working in close relationship with the Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) of the Ghana Education Service (GES), National Teacher Training Council (NTTC), Institute of Education of University of Cape Coast, and West African Examination Council (WAEC) who plan the curricula.

The ultimate goal of educational administration is the improvement of learning and learning opportunities. In view of this, the headteacher must work with the teachers, students and supervisors in the selection of appropriate curricula or school activities, subjects, textbooks, work schedules, teaching aids and facilities, teaching methods, and methods of evaluating school and student progress. It is also expected of the headteacher to organize frequent school-based in-service training for the teachers. He or she is expected to evaluate the result of teaching, implying that the headteacher needs to arrange for periodic self-evaluation of the school programme through commonly accepted survey guides, standardized tests, and action research projects. Evaluation of teaching and learning help to measure students' ability and to diagnose their weakness, and also help to measure the school's activities to determine if the school is meeting the developmental and educational needs of the students. Aspects of teachers' performance evaluated include lesson planning, knowledge of subject, lesson delivery and class management, work output, attitude to work, punctuality and attendance, personality and social traits, human relations and communication.

Thus, the headteacher must appraise instruction by ensuring that class exercises, class tests and examinations are conducted, scored and recorded. He or she must assist teachers to examine lesson objectives, subject content, methods of teaching and to evaluate procedures in order to correct weaknesses. The headteacher is to also ensure that records on students' overall performance, be it academic, social, health, etc. are kept in students' report books to be sent to parents or guardians. Again, it is the role of the basic school head in Ghana is to systematically supervise the work of his staff by devising attendance sheets on which subjects and periods are indicated and against which teachers have to sign their names each time a lesson is taught in a class.

Financial and Business Administration/Management

This role is considered one of the most crucial roles of the school principal. The duty here is for the principal to provide and disburse funds for the attainment of educational goals. The school head has limited control over the source of funds for the school even though many of these school heads influence the provision of funds by careful and studied budgetary system, accounting, reporting, and effective negotiations. Budget making is therefore important because it is the central focus in administering a school. The budget is a planning and a control tool. It is a financial statement that deals with the proposed revenue and expenditure of the school. It shows the proposed programme for the school, hence the school principal needs to prepare a budget because a comprehensive budget allows for maintenance of control of expenditures of the limited income.

The school head thus has the duty of preparing the school's programme considering what activities are to be undertaken in a term or in the academic year. He or she is to provide for a system of internal accounting. The principal is to administer school purchases, account for school monies and properties, and keep the school's administration running smoothly. The educational leader is to ensure that money that belongs to the school is properly lodged in a bank or invested, and that expenditure proceeds according to what is estimated. Again, he or she must ensure that proper quarterly and annual accounts are prepared and all audit reports and queries are answered.

Since 2005, the Capitation Grant (CG) has replaced all sorts of funds that used to be charged at the public basic schools. This does not mean PTAs and other individuals and corporate bodies cannot contribute to the development of the school. The CG is in fulfillment of the Ghana government's commitment to provide free education for all Ghanaian children in the public basic schools. In public basic schools in Ghana for instance, headteachers are to spend their share of the Capitation Grant (CG) on activities outlined in their Schools Performance Improvement Plans (SPIP) such as stationery, sanitation maintenance, correspondence, teaching and learning materials, and materials for minor repairs and work, sports equipment, tools for agriculture and work on the school compound, and tools for Creative Art and Basic design and Technology (BDT) lessons. Such grants are not to be utilized without authorization of the District/Municipal/Metropolitan Educational Directorate and the approval of School Management Committee (SMC) (Ghana Education Service, 2010a; Ghana Education Service, 2010b).

Headteachers are to keep proper financial records such as GES receipt books, cash book, Capitation Grant Analysis Cash Book, Capitation Grant Monthly Expenditure Returns, School Bank Accounts (savings and

current), Bank Reconciliation (Statement of Account). Apart from this, heads of public basic schools in Ghana are to write monthly, quarterly and annual financial reports, and with the SMC chairman, make available their financial documents for auditing at the Education Directorate in their Districts, Municipality and Metropolis. Headteachers are also to update themselves on the rules that govern procurement (Public Procurement Act-Act 663 of 2003) even though basic schools are not big institutions like the senior high schools and tertiary institutions (Ghana Education Service, 2010a; Ghana Education Service, 2010b). In sum, the educational leader must be transparent and prudent in making use of the funds provided for the running of the school.

Physical Facilities (School Plant) and Educational Materials

Murphy and Amanda (2003) contend that there is no question over the supervision of infrastructural facilities which they consider as the most important role every school principal must play. Physical facilities of the school include school buildings (school plant), school grounds, laboratories, equipment, libraries, workshops, school buses, and instructional equipment needed for effective teaching and learning. These facilities are provided by the government, communities, corporate bodies, philanthropists and non-governmental organizations. The school plant is seen as a controlled environment that enhances teaching and learning while protecting the physical well-being of learners (Ojo & Olaniyan, 2008).

Headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana are expected to make their school environment child-friendly to ensure that the pupils are physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling. To avoid unnecessary intrusion, heads of public basic schools are to see to the fencing, walling or hedging of the school site to make it secure and safe. Leaking school roofs, and broken down tables and chairs must be repaired. The heads are also to maintain conducive school environment by planting trees as wind breaks and for provision of shade, promoting floral rock beautification of the school compound to raise their aesthetic value and prevent erosion. Recreational facilities and space for sports, games, physical education and the use of gender disability friendly playing equipment must be provided. There is also the need for toilets and urinal to be provided for pupils and teachers.

The public basic school headteacher in Ghana is expected to identify ways of providing, expanding and maintaining these facilities to achieve the goals of the school. He or she must ensure that the physical structures of the school are safe, neat, attractive and in good shape for teaching and learning. It is the duty of headteachers to ensure that materials such as library books, textbooks, pieces of chalk, footballs, among others, which are necessary for effective teaching and learning, are procured and well kept. It must be emphasized that without good buildings and clean environment the comfort of the students will be affected and this can hinder their ability to learn. It is therefore the responsibility of headteachers to manage these facilities by taking good care of them and ensuring that they are fully utilized.

Record Keeping and Management

Record keeping is viewed as one of the essential roles of the school principal. At every point in time, important information is demanded by educational authorities and other stakeholders from the school leader. The pieces of information which are either in the form of data returns, or evaluation reports must be factual and reliable. Such information can be obtained from record keeping. Hence, record keeping is not only desirable but imperative to every school principal, and as Ojo and Olaniyan (2008) put it, 'a school administrator who fails to keep desirable records may only perform like a rambler who is purposeless and blind to the real essence of this job' (p. 176).

Record management on the other hand is the application of systematic and scientific control of recorded information needed for the operation of the school. Such control is exercised over the creation, distribution, utilization, retention, retrieval, preservation, and final disposition of all types of records within the school. The purpose of record management is to achieve the best retrieval and exploitation of the data held in these media and systems, reduce the cost and improve the efficiency of the record making and record keeping processes, thereby saving money for the administration of the school (Ojo and Olaniyan, 2008). Record management assists in controlling the quality and quantity of information created so that it effectively serves the needs of the school. An adequate record management programme co-ordinates and protects the school's records, sharpens the effectiveness of records as management memory, controls the time equipment and space allocated for records, and helps to simplify intra-organisational communication challenges. It is therefore prudent that every school principal or educational leader takes record keeping and management serious and ensure that all major and relevant activities in the school are recorded.

In Ghanaian public basic schools, all letters addressed to the headteacher need to be properly and carefully kept in appropriate files, and records of dates of receipt of letters clearly indicated on the said letters. Heads of basic schools are to make copies of all letters and documents sent out. Sometimes heads of basic schools receive letters from the GES, Teacher Associations, Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assemblies, SMC, Unit Committee, PTA, individual parents, teachers, colleague headteachers, philanthropists, Corporate Bodies, NGOs, Association of past Pupils, etc. If such letters are meant for the information of all teachers, it is the duty of the headteacher to circulate them to staff members and ask them to sign on them to indicate they have read them.

Other records to be kept by headteachers of basic schools in Ghana include Movement Books which are used to record movement of teachers and pupils out of the school during instructional hours. This is to ensure that instructional hours are not misused. The Visitors' Book which is used to record the names, signatures of visitors and their purpose of visit must also be kept by the head. The Log Book is used to record all important events in the school. Admission registers, inventory books, movement books among others need to be kept. It is also the duty of the basic school head in Ghana to prepare reports for the Metropolitan/Municipal/District educational Directorates on issues such as enrolment, pupils' and teachers' performance, the nature of the school plant, as well as the school's achievement and failures.

General Tasks

Apart from the administrative duties of the school principal discussed earlier, headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana perform other general tasks. These general tasks include organizing and conducting meetings, publicizing the work of the school, handling interpersonal situations, responding to correspondence, preparing reports for local or district school boards, attending principals or headteachers' meetings, and attending school functions, among others.

3. Challenges Faced by Headteachers in Performing their Duties

Interview with some headteachers of public basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana reveal that they are aware of the duties they must perform to achieve school and organizational goals, and they do their best to perform these duties. They however admit that in performing their tasks, they face certain challenges which make it difficult to accomplish their responsibilities. The key challenge is that the CG is inadequate, and its release to the schools is delayed. This makes it difficult for headteachers to buy the necessary items needed for school activities for the academic year. The situation also compels some headteachers of public basic schools to charge some other fees to support their activities. Statements made by some of the headteachers on this issue include the following:

"For headteachers to perform their duties, and ensure effective and smooth running of their schools, adequate funds must be available. In Ghana, the CG is woefully inadequate, and its release to basic schools is unduly delayed. With this, how do we expect headteachers of public basic schools to effectively and efficiently perform their duties?" [A female headteacher, Kasoa].

"It is very frustrating for headteachers to ensure smooth running of their basic schools when CG is released to the schools very late. This contrasts what is stipulated in the CG implementation guidelines which call for timely release of the grants to all districts and schools. Some headteachers have no other alternative than to charge fees because of the delay in releasing the CG for public basic schools" [A male headteacher, Ajumako].

"The CG for public basic schools is fixed for every pupil in the school for every year and this result in inadequate funds for schools with smaller population while schools with larger population get more funds. This makes it difficult for schools with lesser enrolment to meet their basic essential needs as compared to schools with larger population" [A female headteacher, Winneba].

"It is important for the government and GES to reconsider the fixed amount of CG for each pupil for every academic year because it raises the issue of social inequality. As it stands now, there is the potential of widening the inequality gap between schools with larger population and those with smaller population. In my opinion, equity and needs should be used in calculating CG for public basic schools in Ghana" [A male headteacher, Saltpond].

On whether the CG is used for procuring approved items outlined in the SPIP, and also ensure transparency, most of the headteachers interviewed answered in the affirmative and indicated that they mainly use the CG for sports and cultural activities, hygiene and sanitation facilities, furniture and fittings, infrastructural works, and teaching and learning materials. Few of the headteachers were however quick to add that they spend part of the CG on unapproved items. This is deduced from a statement from one of the headteachers that:

"Headteachers are aware of the approved items to spend the CG on. However, it becomes extremely difficult for some headteachers to avoid spending on some unapproved items. Will it be nice to refuse refreshing SMC/PTA executive after a meeting? When you send some teachers on errands on behalf of the school can you refuse them transport and travels (T&T)? This is an indication that some portions of the CG will definitely be spent on unauthorized activities" [A male headteacher, Breaman Odoben].

Considering financial record keeping, some headteachers, especially those newly appointed or transferred to other schools acknowledge that, they face some challenges. The findings from the interview shows that there are poor records keeping and this make auditing of accounts difficult. The statement below from one of the

headteachers interviewed confirms this.

“It is difficult to blame some headteachers for poor financial record keeping. Imagine a newly appointed headteacher preparing financial records when no orientation/workshop on financial administration has been given. Such a headteacher will definitely be found wanting. The complex nature of the SPIP and its attendant numerous paper works bring a lot of work for headteachers. This results in keeping of poor financial records by headteachers” [A newly appointed female headteacher, Agona Asafo].

Another challenge pointed out by some of the headteachers who were interviewed was that power and role conflict exists between them and SMC members. From the data gathered from the interview, the power dynamics are sometimes collusive. This, the headteachers interviewed attribute to situations where most members of SMC in schools, especially those in rural areas, are not well educated and as such do not have the technical knowledge on financial administration. This is reflected in a comment from one of the headteachers that:

“I almost always have difficult times with some members of my SMC in agreeing on issues, especially those that bother on finances of the school. Sometimes this misunderstanding leads to serious conflicts which make the administration of the school a challenging one. You see, since most of them are not well educated and do not have the technical knowledge on managing school finances they always think the headteacher manipulates to embezzle school funds” [A male headteacher, Ochiso].

4. Conclusion

It could be concluded that for educational and school goals to be attained, headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana must effectively perform certain key functions including planning and policy making, financial administration, staff and pupil personnel services, effective record keeping and management, ensuring effective school-community relationship, improving school facilities and educational materials. It is also concluded that headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana are fully aware of these functions and they do their best to perform these duties even though they face certain challenges. These challenges include inadequate and irregular release of CG, conflicts and power dynamics between headteachers and some members of SMCs, and poor financial management and records keeping. Even though the school head has certain functions to perform, it does not mean he or she can do everything by himself or herself. The headteacher can achieve much mainly with the assistance of other teachers through delegation of work.

It must be noted that it is inadequate for headteachers to simply possess essential teaching skills. They must internalize and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and experience of effective classroom practice in order to make effective and right evaluation, decisions, and give useful feedback to the staff with whom he or she works. Headteachers are seen to be responsible for the success or failure of the school. Thus, effective managerial and administrative skills are required of them to ensure the success of educational policies, programmes and goals. These could be acquired through learning and experience. As indicated by Ojo and Olaniyan (2008) a major leadership role of school administrators (headteachers) is one of marshaling both human and material resources that classroom teachers need to effectively perform their tasks. Hence, headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana must be good teachers, change agents, evaluators, great disciplinarians, and lovers of progress for effective teaching and learning, and for attainment of school and educational goals.

5. Recommendations

Based on responses from interviews with some headteachers of public basic schools in Ghana, the following recommendations are made:

- The GES, MOE and the Ghana government should see to it that the guidelines for implementing the CG which call for timely release of grant to all Metropolis, Municipals and Districts, as well as the schools should be strictly enforced to ensure the effectiveness of the policy.
- The GES and MOE should evaluate, review and revise the implementation guidelines of the CG to meet the changing trends, and consider addressing the issue of equitable allocation of funds which should be based on needs assessment of the public basic schools.
- In-service training programmes on school and financial administration should be organized by GES for headteachers of public basic schools. These training programmes should be strengthened and made regular to assist headteachers to effectively implement the policy on CG, and keep proper records.
- There should be continuous supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the policy to see to it that challenges faced in the implementation of the CG are quickly addressed.
- With the knowledge conflict and power dynamics between headteachers and SMC members, PTAs

could be made signatories to the CG account of various public basic schools in Ghana with the aim of ensuring transparency and accountability.

- The GES should consider establishing SMCs for cluster of schools just as it is done for cluster-based supervision. This arrangement will bring well educated and technical people to serve on the SMCs to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the SMCs in performing their oversight responsibilities of public basic schools in Ghana.

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