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## HEAD TEACHERS KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR LEADERSHIP CURRICULUM: A CASE STUDY OF THE KUMASI METROPOLIS, GHANA

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**ABSTRACT:** The study results assessed head teacher's knowledge and understanding of their leadership curriculum: a case study of the Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana. The case study research design is used. Quantitative research approach was used. The population for the study was fifty-five (55) respondents comprising of head teachers in the selected schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. Census method was used to select 55 respondents for the study. Questionnaire was the main instrument used to gather primary data. Illustrative representations of the statistical summaries of the result would be presented in the form of frequency tables, mean and ranking. The study results indicate that, 66% of the respondents agreed that head teachers to be able to operationalize curriculum leadership knowledge of their curriculum improvement designs for school enhancement is vital, which has mean score of 4.38, ranked 1<sup>st</sup>. Moreover, 54.7% agreed that proficient skilled-development programs designed for head teachers should essentially focused on their understanding of curriculum values, models, and procedures (mean score of 4.21, ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>). The study recommended that Ghana Education Services (GES) in connection with the local educational directories should include heads teachers in the planning and designing of the curriculum activities of the metropolis. Also, the head teachers of selected Senior High Schools (SHSs) in the Kumasi Metropolis should continue to be sensitive to teachers concerns and assist teachers to deal with change in curriculum design and planning in the schools.

### I. INTRODUCTION

In this article, the term of curriculum is commonly used to refer to instructional plans or designs developed by an educational institution to direct student learning (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Taba, 2012; Wiles, 2009). These plans need to be detailed and discuss various characteristics of the teaching-learning procedure, mitigating prospective issues during the execution of these plans. Van den Akker (2013), proposes an extensive list of Ten (10) components of the program, including justification, aims, content, learning experiences, position of teachers, materials and resources, grouping, place, time, and assessment. The curriculum is usually expressed in three major representations (Goodlad, Klein, Klein, & Tye, 2009), thus the planned or the official curriculum as labeled in the academic plans for the course description; the enactment of the curriculum thus implementation of the actual curriculum; and the actualization of the curriculum thus the outcome of the students learning experiences. According to Van den Akker, (2013), curriculum design or development can be defined as a long-term procedure of preparation, designing, applying and evaluating the learning experiences of the learners to yield positive results.

Parker & Day (2017), suggests that the headmasters are the leading experts in learning and teaching. During the 1980s, headmasters were clearly encouraged to become the teaching leaders and were directly in charge of supervising the teaching process and improving academic performance among students and teachers. This role of teaching and learning expect mains significant today. As pointed by Johnson (2017), Head teachers are now expected to become not simply learning experts, but also knowledge-based specialists. Terry (2009), suggests that head teachers should be experts of learning nowadays and not just school leaders. Head teachers should have precise personal learning philosophy and able to utilize the conception to understand contemporary learning theories. In other words the head teachers will have to consider key educational ideas, issues and be able to initiate or encourage these concepts that are suitable for their school community. This phenomenon highlights and refers to the prominence of heads in the contemporary school as continuous learners in the areas of curriculum planning.

Hill (2016), stated that the previous decade, the central role of head teachers was to improve teaching and learning. Currently, head teachers are mandated to devote their time in setting the correct preconditions and

taking steps to improve teaching and learning (Johnson, 2017). According to Hill (2016), these fields of expertise include: detailed knowledge of individual and collective learners progress; detailed understanding of the learners in the local context and background characteristics; detailed understanding of the learning styles of learners; and knowledge of various types of interventions and their impact on of teachers and learners learning outcomes.

Essentially, the role of the heads in the new education dispensation reflects a balance between leadership in instruction and management (Portin, Ottevanger, Van de Grint, & Ana'am, 2010). According to these authors, leadership is concerned with areas such as supervising the curriculum, developing the school's educational program, collaborating with staff to define the school's vision and mission, and establishing close relationships with the community. On the other hand, administration covers considerations such as budget control, the care of school buildings and grounds, and compliance with educational policies and laws. Given the headmasters' evolving position in factors such as school-based management, it is often believed that the headmaster is merely a figurehead (Terry, 2009). New educational conditions and expectations can create new challenges and perspectives for the professional head teacher's responsibility.

The task for successful headmasters in the ever-changing educational dispensation is to redefine leadership roles, as this is essential to reform and developing democratic schools (Gultig & Butler, 2009). Creating schools where there are more people involved in making decisions is vital for positive teaching and learning results. It is essential to develop the requisite representative knowledge and skills for democratic management and leadership in order to ensure progress (Portin et al., 2010). Articulating strategic intentions requires a high level of understanding and knowledge. Caldwell (2013) emphasizes the need for future school leaders to be knowledgeable about the effectiveness of classroom and school, as well as research for improvement. We will need to consider the cost consequences of taking different approaches for teaching and learning.

In Ghana, the issue lack of successful curriculum leadership in the educational system has a longstanding history. Since the country gained political independence in 1957, the rapid formation of public high schools has exacerbated the problem with incompetently trained and inexperienced heads or directors. Various attempts by stakeholders to mend the standard of teaching and learning in schools, it seems that curriculum leadership issues in these schools remain a major problem. While there are few studies on head teacher's knowledge and understanding of their leadership curriculum in the Kumasi Metropolito authenticate the above statements, stakeholders would attribute the change in leadership approach for inadequate training and heads preparation for the leadership issue faced in Ghanaian schools. The following research question guided the study: How can the head teacher's knowledge and understanding influence their curriculum leadership responsibilities in the Kumasi Metropolis?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Curriculum leadership

As decentralization of education takes on boost and as all stakeholders shifted responsibilities and roles, the pressure on educational leaders of various institutions to achieve higher educational standards (The European Center of Professional Training Development, 2011). Educational heads are projected to provide more than administrative function, participate in curriculum role as heads: to plan education programs, to maximize students' learning experiences, and to deal with external and internal syllabuses (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Neumerski, 2012). Leadership of the program can be described as an instrument to urge the headship to work collectively to attain a mutual objective, increase group efforts and to establish the operational procedures to combat curriculum (Wiles, 2009). According to Wiles (2009), the basic task of school leaders is curriculum planning and development of the system. All other functions at a school are specified by the curriculum. The achievement of exceptional training outcomes is fundamental condition on the leadership of academic managers whose production of the program is dynamic.

In addition, Stark, Griggs, & Rowland-Poplowski (2012), found that academy divisions deemed to be engaged in successful curriculum design activities by senior management had heads of departments carried out management tasks such as: recognizing challenges and opportunities in curricula, creating frameworks for teacher cooperation and proposing curriculum reform proposals. The literature overtly stresses the ongoing professional support of university managers in order to assume successful curricula leadership and understand the critical role that academic managers play in sustaining and advancing curricula (Neumerski, 2012). Conceptualizing instructional leaders' regular leadership practices into climatic activities (e.g. the development of a encouraging positive learning setting, the promotion of instructor learning, and the reduction of non-learning interruptions) and technology behavior (Wiles, 2009). The academic leaders engaging in careers are more competent, optimistic and engaged in successful practices than those not involved in these professional opportunities (Hallinger, & Heck, 2016). The absence of training opportunities and insufficient support and encouragement, in particular for mid-level managers will inhibit successful realistic management curriculum (Stark et al. 2012).

### Curriculum leadership and internal and external consistency

Achieving curriculum stability is the key component of the curriculum value, simultaneous accomplishment of systemic and relation-structural approaches to curricula design (Kessels, 2009). When there is internally and externally consistency in the curriculum design activities, the program is considered coherent. The perceived continuity of the program relates to the congruity of the stakeholders' expectations of the curriculum outcomes and how these can be accomplished (Stark et al., 2012). Although the external continuity of the curriculum is clearly defined in literature, the internship of the curriculum is conceptually diverse. Kessels (2009) hypothesizes coherence as a rational connection among three key components: the necessary improvements (obtained from assessment needs); the learner skills required for these improvements; and the learning circumstances (conducive to improving these skills, such as learning materials and instructional instructor), from the corporate educational perspective.

With a pursuit of education (S HSs and higher learning), the concepts of internal cohesiveness of the curriculum are McKenney, Nieveen & Van den Akker (2016), a relationship between the curriculum modules such as: rationale, objectives, contents, training strategies and evaluations, and coherence between the illustrations of the curriculum the proposed and the approved curriculum. If the conceptualization is applied to the SHS context, it would then refer to internal coherence, harmonization between 1); competencies of SHS students needed to satisfy these expectations; 2). conducive learning setting to enable the higher outcomes; and 3). results or the expectations of the SHS (as specified by the various stakeholders, for example the local authority and the general public). The internal consistency articulation of Kessels indicates and implies the importance of consistency between stages of the structural design process, in particular between the analytical stages (e.g. learning objectives and the various aspects of the curriculum design).

The writers argue the internal aspects of consistency that is the standardized program can have a major influence on curriculum execution. The internal consistency of the curriculum can be achieved by using the systematic method effectively, while the external consistency of the curriculum can be achieved by implementation of a relational approach (Kessels 2009). All forms of coherence are central to the quality of curricula and contribute greatly to the successful implementation of curriculums as mentioned above. Practical proof points to progressive curricular consequences of the implementation of structural and relational approaches to these aspects of curriculum continuity (Akomaning, 2012; Bakah, 2011). These results include better alignment of curricula with a SHSs local curriculum, enhanced syllabi and practice for the school internship and the successful update of school lessons.

### III. COLLABORATIVE CURRICULUM DESIGN

The reality that professional curriculum leaders would not necessarily result in successful curriculum design activities, and yielding results without the involvement and the cooperation of unit teachers in curricular design issues. *Teacher Collaborative Curricula Design* (TCCD) is a well-recognized strategy for curricular design, due to the substantial contributions in areas like knowledge and systemic curriculum design skills to professional development of teachers (Voogt, Westbroek, Handelzalts, Walraven, Pieters, & De Vries, 2011). This approach can also enhance the compatibility of the structured curriculum with the curriculum, increase teacher control and encourage teacher curriculum collaboration (Hallinger, & Heck, 2016). The considerable influence of TCCD on the improvement of curricula and professional teacher development explained three basic hypothetical philosophies that underlined TCCD, which are the setting of work, action, and the recurrent description of education and transformation (Voogt, Laferrière, Breuleux, Itow, Hickey, & McKenney, 2015).

The collaboration between teachers must extend in the school environment, to ensure external regularity in the curricular program (Kessels 2009). While the peripheral consistency of school curricula in emerging nations is often vulnerable because of inadequate structured collaboration between schools and businesses, analyses carried out in this framework shows TCCD's excessive prospective to increase nature of the curriculum stability. Akomaning (2012), examined how the internship program in Ghana's polytechnics enhanced by TCCD, with industry representatives associations. The internship activities by the students has been enhanced and that the newly developed internship program pleased all stakeholders concerned (teaching, polytechnic management, students and businesses), as the TCCD plan offered a working forum to build a common vision and consensus regarding new internships. Bakah (2011) also reported on TCCD's improvement in teachers' learning and teaching practices, involving industrial visiting instructors to be up breast in their knowledge on fresher developments and technologies, as well as the significance of collaboration and restructuring of their courses.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employed case study research design with a quantitative research approach. The population for the study was fifty-five (55) respondents comprising of head teachers in the selected schools in the Kumasi

Metropolis. Census method was used to select 55 respondents for the study. Questionnaire was the main instrument used to gather primary data. Illustrative representations of the statistical summaries of the result were presented in the form of frequency tables, mean and ranking.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Head teacher's professional knowledge on curriculum development

Statement(s)	1	2	3	4	Mean X	Rank
In order for educational leaders to operationalize curriculum leadership, knowledge about curriculum development is vital.	14 (26.4)	35 (66)	4 (7.5)	0	4.38	1 <sup>st</sup>
Specialized programs designed for educational leaders should address the importance of curriculum concepts, ideas, and procedures.	20 (37.7)	29 (54.7)	4 (7.5)	0	4.21	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Four key strategies are essential when planning proficient training programs for the head teachers.	26 (49.1)	24 (45.3)	3 (5.7)	0	4.18	3 <sup>rd</sup>
There is a need to contextualize the planning and content of the curriculum programs to focus on knowledge and skills to be developed by the head teachers.	25 (47.2)	25 (47.2)	3 (5.7)	0	4.12	4 <sup>th</sup>
Curriculum scheme should take into account the organizational background and formation.	23 (43.4)	27 (50.9)	3 (5.7)	0	3.82	5 <sup>th</sup>
There is a need to include head teachers at the beginning stages when designing the professional development programs for the schools.	19 (35.8)	28 (52.8)	6 (11.3)	0	3.54	6 <sup>th</sup>
The head teachers needs to be part of the formative processes of the curriculum thus goals, content, and organization.	23 (43.4)	29 (54.7)	1 (1.9)	0	3.24	7 <sup>th</sup>
The duration of the curriculum training programs should be continues and adequate process to enable the participant time to prepare their thought and inputs.	22 (41.5)	28 (52.8)	3 (5.7)	0	3.22	8 <sup>th</sup>
The curriculum training sections should be offered through multiple methods, series of hands-on activities and appropriate material should be provided.	23 (43.4)	29 (54.7)	1 (1.9)	0	3.24	9 <sup>th</sup>

Strongly disagree = 4; Disagree = 3; Agree = 2 Strongly; Agree = 1

Source: Field survey, 2019, n = 53

The table above indicated that 35 respondents representing 66% agreed that, educational leaders to operationalize curriculum leadership, their knowledge about curriculum development are vital, 14 (26.4%) strongly agreed, 4 respondents representing 7.5% disagreed (mean score of 4.38, ranked 1<sup>st</sup>). Moreover, 29 respondents representing 54.7% agreed that, specialized programs designed for educational leaders should address the importance of curriculum concepts, ideas, and procedures, 20 participants indicating 37.7% strongly agreed, whereas 4 respondents characterizing 7.5% disagreed (mean score of 4.21, ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>). It emerges from the study that, heads engaging in professional elaboration are more competent, positive and engaged in successful practices than those not involved in these professional opportunities (Hallinger, & Heck, 2016). The absence of training opportunities and insufficient support and encouragement, in particular for mid-level heads will inhibit successful realistic running prospectuses (Stark et al. 2012).

To add more, 26 respondents representing 49.1% strongly agreed that besides addressing these content aspects, four key strategies (preparation, action plan, actual design and evaluation processes) are essential when planning proficient training programs for the head teachers, 24 respondents representing 45.3% agreed, while 3 respondents representing 5.7% disagreed (mean score of 4.18, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>). Furthermore, 25 respondents representing 47.2% strongly agreed and agreed that there is a need to contextualize the planning and content of the curriculum programs to focus on knowledge and skills to be developed by the head teachers, while 3 participants representing 5.7% disagreed (mean score of 4.12, ranked 4<sup>th</sup>). Leadership of the program can be described as instruments to urge the headship to work collectively to attain a mutual objective, increase team efforts and to establish the operational procedures to combat challenges (Wiles, 2009). Stated additional by Wiles (2009) the essential task of school headship is curriculum development design.

Also, 27 respondents representing 50.9% agreed that curriculum scheme should take into account the organizational background and structure, 23 participants indicating 43.4% strongly agreed, whereas 3 respondents signifying 5.7% disagreed (mean score of 3.82, ranked 5<sup>th</sup>). Furthermore, 28 respondents representing 52.8% indicated that there is a need to include head teachers at the beginning stages when designing the professional development programs for the schools, 19 respondents representing 35.8% strongly agreed,

while 6 respondents characterizing 11.3% opposed (mean score of 3.54, ranked 6<sup>th</sup>). To realize curriculum reliability, which is a central item of curriculum attribute, concurrent application of complete and relation-structural methods to curricula strategy, is the very important as discussed by (Kessels, 2009).

The study results also held that 29 respondents representing 54.7% agreed that the head teachers need to be part of the formative processes of the curriculum thus goals, content, and organization, while 23 respondents representing 43.4% strongly agreed (mean score of 3.24, ranked 7<sup>th</sup>). Moreover, 28 respondents representing 52.8% agreed on the duration of the curriculum training programs should be continued and adequate process to enable the participant time to prepare their thought and inputs, 22 respondents representing 41.5% strongly agreed, while 3 respondents representing 5.7% disagreed (mean score of 3.22, ranked 8<sup>th</sup>). The study results held that 29 respondents representing 54.7% are in agreement that the curriculum training sections should be offered through multiple methods, series of hands-on activities and appropriate material should be provided while, 23 respondents representing 43.4% strongly agreed (mean score of 3.24, ranked 9<sup>th</sup>).

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study results indicate that, majority of the respondents approved that the training operational training in curriculum leadership for school heads and obtaining knowledge about curriculum improvement is a dynamic phenomenon. Moreover, most respondents agreed that professional advancement programs intended for head teachers and other stakeholders should tackle fundamental consideration of curriculum development values, notions, and procedures the study area. The study additionally discusses that majority of the participants strongly agreed that notwithstanding concentrating on these content aspects, four main proposal features need to be contemplated when planning specialized advancement programs for school leaders. Furthermore, high proportion strongly agreed and agrees that the content and proposal characteristics of the curriculum packages need to be driven by the practical and knowledge based for the heads. This will enable positive result driven by both teaching and learning in the educational system in Ghana.

Also, the curriculum design as most respondents agreed needs concentration to the administrative background and organizational values and principles. The inclusion in the design and the development for the onset of the head teachers, as well as the other stakeholders is dynamic. The study results held that, the head teachers should be attentive of the curricula and effectively given the opportunity in formational processes of the objectives, content, and arrangement of the curriculum plans of the nation. The study recommended that to enhance teaching and learning outcomes of the educational system in the study area the following steps should be taken;

1. Ghana Education Services (GES) should in connection with the local educational directories of heads teachers in the planning and designing of the curriculum activities of the metropolis.
2. Continued professional development based on the curriculum implementation and its continuous rejuvenation should be the one of the key component of the metropolis.
3. The educational directories through GES should apply for grant to provide their heads with training and logistics for their curriculum leadership needs in the study area.
4. The head teachers of selected SHSs in the Kumasi Metropolis should continue to be sensitive to teachers concerns and assist teachers to deal with change in the school.
5. Also, the head teachers should provide feedback to teachers about how to improve instruction and supervise teacher's instructional practices to improve teaching and learning.

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