

Developing Leadership for Learning in Ghana: opportunities and challenges

John MacBeath and Sue Swaffield (University of Cambridge)

Objectives or purposes

The research into Leadership in Ghana is under the aegis of The Centre for Commonwealth Education (CCE) at the University of Cambridge. The Centre aims to connect leadership with learning by developing synergy among leadership, pedagogy, and initial and continuing teacher education, through work in various Commonwealth countries. The Ghanaian strand of this work is a collaboration with the University of Cape Coast, UNICEF and the Ghana Education Service.

The Ministry in Ghana is committed to supporting this major programme aimed at improving the quality of pedagogy in Ghanaian schools through learning-centred school leadership. The focus is on Basic schools, which are the equivalent of primary and middle school. Headteachers throughout the country are participating in a programme devised and facilitated by fifteen Ghanaian educators (a headteacher, education district officials, teacher trainers, and university education lecturers). These Professional Development Leaders have been prepared for this role by working with colleagues at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, first at a workshop in Ghana and then at a summer school in Cambridge.

The research and development take as a theoretical framework the Leadership for Learning principles and framework developed through the Carpe Vitam Leadership for Learning project, that involved 24 schools in eight sites in seven countries (five in Europe, the USA and Australia) over a period of three years (MacBeath and Dempster, 2009). The five principles for practice can be summarised as: A focus on learning; Conditions for learning; Dialogue; Shared leadership; Shared accountability.

Methods, techniques or modes of enquiry

A variety of quantitative and qualitative methods were used sequentially and iteratively: school visits, questionnaires, one-to-one interviews, individual writing, and group activities. Following the initial questionnaire to 15 Professional Development Leaders the instrument was refined to be used with the first cohort of 124 headteachers. These were followed by individual and group interviews and follow-up school visits. The findings were fed back to the 15 Professional Development Leaders (PDLs) as the basis for further discussion and development . The decision to appoint a full time researcher based in Ghana for an initial three year period will allow the PDLs to engage more fully in support and critical friendship.

Educational importance of this study

This study is of great practical importance in that it brings to light both the opportunities that should be maximized and the challenges that need to be minimized in developing school leadership, pedagogy and learning in Ghanaian schools. In testing the applicability of a set of principles that emerged in seven developed and well

resourced countries to a developing and relatively poorly resourced country in Africa, it raises some of the tensions and resolutions between common principles and cultural context.

Reference

MacBeath, J. and Dempster, N. (Eds.) *Connecting Leadership and Learning: Principles for practice*. London: Routledge