

## **Educational Leadership and Quality Education in Disadvantaged Communities in Ghana and Tanzania.**

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### **Abstract**

Achieving quality in education has increasingly become crucial in strategic improvement plans of developing countries. While the concept of quality and its priority indicators may differ from country to country, it is commonly considered as a determining factor in facilitating the implementation of education for all initiatives (Boissiere, 2004; World Bank Independent Evaluation Group, 2006). Quality in education is also viewed as an influential factor in implementing plans for bridging the poverty gaps between the developing and the developed worlds. At the centre of strategies for accelerating the achievement of quality education is effective leadership at all levels of the school system. This paper seeks to examine country context perspectives of quality education and leadership challenges associated with their

implementation. It will compare existing basic education quality improvement policy initiatives within Ghana and Tanzania. Of particular interest will be the identification of some major similarities and differences in the way Ghanaians and Tanzanians educators perceive and conceptualize their school leadership roles in the context of quality education.

## **Introduction**

The nature and scope of country context initiatives that aim at enhancing quality leadership for implementing quality education in developing countries is critical to our understanding of how global quality initiatives impact on local policy practices. Unarguably, the central issue facing educational policy makers and practitioners in the developing world is one of matching the imperatives for quantitative expansion of educational provision with the need to ensure the quality of the education provided for those children who do enter the school environment. As Leu & Price-Rom (2006) have suggested:

‘Educational quality in developing countries has become a topic of intense interest, primarily because of countries’ efforts to maintain quality...in the context of quantitative expansion of educational provision...Whether explicit or implicit, a vision of educational quality is always embedded within countries’ policies and programs’ (p 2).

Policy statements emphasise the importance of attaining ‘quality’. In Ghana, the *Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE)* programme introduced in 1996, seeks, among other things, to promote quality teaching and learning for all children, especially girls, and enhance school level management capacity through active community participation. Similarly, Tanzania’s Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) 2002-2006 aims to ‘ensure that all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free compulsory primary education of good quality’ (Swai & Ndidde, 2006, p14).

While the issue of quality is, of course, not peculiar to developing countries, the implications of the Millennium Development Goals ‘massification’ of compulsory schooling through increased enrolment are more significantly faced by low income countries such as Ghana and Tanzania, where demand for education outstrips resource availability. In essence, then, policy makers in countries such as these are seeking ways to maximise the quality of education received by pupils through the use of levers at the national, regional, local and school levels. It is important, therefore, to have a clear and informed debate about the nature of ‘educational quality’ within the context of schools in developing countries. Also of significance in this debate is the need to understand the geographical contexts within which quality education initiatives are implemented; the factors which constitute priority indicators of quality education; and the leadership challenges associated with implementing quality education. It should then be possible to identify the extent to which policy initiatives match the ideas emerging from such a debate, and then to examine the implications that these issues have upon the role of school leaders in their day-to-day practice.

In this context, our paper examines existing basic education leadership and quality improvement policy initiatives within Ghana and Tanzania. Of particular interest will be the identification of some major similarities and differences in the way in which educators in Ghana and Tanzania

perceive and conceptualize school leadership roles in the context of quality education. It is based on country-based literature reviews that throw light on some quality and leadership issues in school education. The reviews were part of country context meta-analysis activity that sought to provide background material to inform a UK Department for International Development (DfID)-sponsored project on the implementation of quality education initiatives in low income countries.

Indigenous literature on leadership and quality education initiatives is limited in Ghana and Tanzania. As a result, data informing this paper draws substantially on reports on projects commissioned by bodies such as DfID, UNESCO, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and policy documents from the Ministries of Education in both countries. Government policy documents and circulars are a valuable source of determining the philosophy and indicators of leadership and quality priority areas. Secondly, unpublished postgraduate theses written by past students of Institute for Educational Planning & Administration (IEPA), University of Cape Coast and the Institute of Educational Administration, University of Dare Salaam, which have investigated educational leadership in these contexts, were also consulted.

### **Quality Education: a matter of definition**

Attempts to define ‘educational quality’ are legion, as the very concept of ‘quality’ is an evasive one. At the level of international debate and action three defining principles tend to be broadly shared. These are the need to understand quality education in terms of (a) content relevance, (b) access and outcome and (c) observance of individual rights. In much current international thinking, these principles are expected to guide and inform educational content and processes and also represent more general social goals to which education itself should contribute. This is reflected in the thinking of international bodies such as UNICEF and UNESCO:

UNICEF recognizes five dimensions of quality: the learners, the environments, content, processes and outcomes, founded on the rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation (UNICEF, 2000, in UNESCO, 2005). Similarly, UNESCO expects quality education to encourage the learner’s creative and emotional development, support objectives of peace, citizenship and security, promote equality and seek to pass global and local cultural values down to future generations. It should allow children to reach their fullest potential in terms of cognitive, emotional and creative capacities. Underpinning UNESCO’s quality education framework is a four-fold principle of learning (Delors, 1996) as illustrated below:

<b>Type</b>	<b>Principle</b>
Learning to Know	Acknowledging that quality learning provides opportunities for learners to build their own knowledge daily combining indigenous and external elements
Learning to Do	Opportunities for learners to apply what they learn
Learning to Live Together	Developing in learners attitudes free from discrimination, where all have equal

	opportunities to develop themselves, their families and their communities
Learning to develop skills	Emphasis on skills required for developing individuals' full potential

This conceptualization of education provides an integrated and comprehensive view of learning and, therefore, of what constitutes education quality.

The concept of 'educational quality' as it relates to education within the developing world has also been subjected to increasing debate, beginning initially with the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) at the Jomtien Conference in 1990. This identified quality as a prerequisite for achieving the fundamental goal of equity. While the notion of quality was not fully developed, it was recognized that expanding access alone would be insufficient for education to contribute fully to the development of the individual and society. Emphasis was accordingly placed on assuring an increase in children's cognitive development by improving the quality of their education.

In the same vein, the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action affirmed that quality was '*at the heart of education*' – a fundamental determinant of enrolment, retention and achievement. Its expanded definition of quality set out the *desirable characteristics* of learners (healthy, motivated students), *processes* (competent teachers using active pedagogies), *content* (relevant curricula) and *systems* (good governance and equitable resource allocation). Although this established an agenda for achieving good education quality, it did not ascribe any relative weighting to the various dimensions identified. Thus, the Dakar forum emphasized the need to "improve all aspects of quality of education to achieve recognized and measurable learning outcomes for all-especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills" (Dakar Framework for Action, Article 7, World Education Forum 2000). One can see here, for example, evidence of the influence of the Delors/UNESCO concept of the rounded individual emerging from having experienced a 'quality' education.

Examination of this concept within Ghana and Tanzania has also become critical in recent decades, as these countries struggle with the need to balance desired development goals of increased educational access and retention with the resource implications of these policy developments. In this context, contextual factors have become more and more recognised in the debate about 'educational quality', a focus emphasised in the Tanzanian study by Mosha (2000). He suggests that key factors affecting notions of 'quality education' are the school's contextual setting, the basic inputs into the educational process, and the processing of inputs into the outputs or outcomes of the school. Relating context with the type of environment from which a school gets its inputs and to which it supplies its outputs, Mosha argues that it is imperative to consider context when assessing quality of any educational undertaking. This has been made an even more urgent consideration for school leaders as a result of the increasingly rapid journey towards the decentralisation of educational decision-making in Tanzania (Therkildsen, 2000). While agreeing with the input factor in quality education, Gyekye (2000) writing within the Ghanaian context, argues that achieving quality in education goes beyond quantitative expansion in the number of pupils in a classroom, increase in the number of school buildings and changes in the structure of our school system. He explains that:

'The desire or enthusiasm to access school education in order to acquire knowledge, skills, and new tools of analysis, is one thing; to actually succeed in acquiring them and showing evidence in having acquired them in concrete terms is quite another ... The quality of the products of an institution or a programme is often evidenced in the quality of performance of the products' (Gyekye, 2002, p28).

In this sense, quality in education is both a quantitative and a qualitative issue. Its indicators should therefore convey notions of quantity and quality (Dare, 2005). Quality indicators of education can be seen as performance indicators that refer to a quality characteristic or objective, thus alluding to the broad context of performance evaluation in which the learners operate. In matters of indicators therefore, concepts such as efficiency, relevance, importance and adequacy cannot be ignored. Dare (2005) identifies a continuum of three factors (inputs, process, output) that are necessary for determining indicators in educational quality.

More recent studies have moved into the arena of what Barrow et al (2006) have called the "black box"—the space in which educators and others think and act in relation to project inputs and consequences for project outputs' (op cit, p 2). These authors analysed four recent USAID educational projects in the developing world in relation to the ways in which teachers conceived the concept of 'educational quality'. Though the overall sample of teachers was small in number, these studies from Ethiopia, India, Namibia and Nigeria point the way to how some interesting issues in relation to this evasive notion. In their comparative analysis of these studies, Barrow et al (2006) concluded that:

'...teachers do tend to articulate their conceptions of educational (and instructional) quality with terms normally associated with student-centered and actively learning approaches to teaching and learning ...[and] that in Ethiopia, India, and Namibia there is clear correspondence between teachers' conceptions of educational quality and the ideas expressed in policy discourses' (op cit, p 16).

This USAID study does raise some vital questions in relation to the role of government policy and school leadership practices in forging the elements that can increase educational quality. This paper will explore the extent to which the educational policy decisions taken within Ghana and Tanzania enable school leaders to articulate and practice notions of educational quality within their school contexts.

### **Policy Initiatives and the Quality Imperative**

Both Ghana and Tanzania have experienced a plethora of educational policy initiatives in recent decades, many of which are seeking to address issues related to the quest for educational quality. The aim has been to exert influence upon the key areas of inputs and process, thereby seeking to maximise pupil learning and achievement.

#### Ghana

The stimulus for an increased focus on educational quality in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century in Ghana came initially from the country's poor economic performance in the 1970s. As a result of obtaining significant financial support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government launched an Economic Reform Programme. Support from the

World Bank, in particular, focused on the need for 'sectoral reform' within the country (Thompson & Casely-Hayford, 2008), especially within the educational sector. The resulting educational reforms, adopted in 1986 and starting in 1987, placed a strong emphasis upon basic education within the country. Essentially, the aim was to provide significant extra resourcing for primary schools and, also, to ensure that pupil transition to Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) was automatic. The aim of reducing the number of years in pre-tertiary education (from 17 to 12 years) was achieved, new primary schools were constructed where needed, with a concomitant increase in access, and school contact hours were increased. Overall, the aim was to provide a context in which learning outcomes for pupils could be improved, allied with a desire to establish a more coherent approach to educational planning and management.

Following the return to civilian rule in 1993, the government committed itself to providing each Ghanaian child with free, compulsory basic education, and this saw fruition in the Free, Compulsory and Universal Basic Education Programme (FCUBE) introduced in 1996. Encouraged by the *World Declaration on Education for All* that emerged from the 1990 Jomtien Conference in Thailand, this Programme moved towards a greater degree of decentralisation within the education sector in Ghana. The emphasis here was on promoting decision-making at the local level through the development of School Management Committees comprising community stakeholders as well as educator participation (Mfum-Mensah, 2004).

Throughout these policy changes, a common indicator of quality in Ghana has been student scores on West African Examinations Council (WAEC) examinations or standardised comparable tests of achievement in knowledge, skills, behaviour, and attitudes. These tests of cognitive achievement have been felt to be good predictors of students' future earnings and, in this light, strategies for assuring quality teaching and learning have become critical in Ghana's quality education agenda. The concept of Minimum Standards of Performance (MSP), a comparable test scheme which defines clearly those competences that pupils should master in each of the subjects taught at the basic school level, has been introduced. The MSP seeks to ensure that teachers move beyond the mere coverage of syllabuses to ensuring that pupils acquire defined knowledge, skills and attitudes. There is also a Performance Monitoring Test (PMT) for measuring and monitoring performance of all subjects, especially the literacy and numeracy levels of primary school pupils. The PMT is administered to all primary level (P1-P6) and aims at finding out whether the minimum standards set have been attained or not. The impact that the need for regular pupil testing has upon the day-to-day activity of headteachers in Ghana has been illustrated in a recent study of school leadership (Zame et al, 2008). This study of headteachers in the Greater Accra region found that while:

'...head teachers recognize the importance of leadership proficiencies based on the literature, but the practice of managing and organizing the school's day-to-day functions take pre-eminence in the head teacher role' (Zame et al, 2008, p 126).

A key factor in this dissonance was the need to seek to check, monitor and examine the assessment procedures of teaching staff within their schools. Whilst this does align with notions of 'instructional leadership', many of the school leaders in this study felt that the bureaucratic aspects of this activity outweighed any possible leadership inclinations they might have in this area.

Much of the early policy thrust within Ghana had been on issues related to school resources, and especially textbooks. Pupils' access to, and use of, appropriate textbooks has been seen as a critical factor in quality education implementation. In Ghana, the Ghana Education Service textbook policy requires each basic school pupil to access a textbook in each of the core subjects (English, Mathematics and Science). Yet, lack of adequate textbooks continues to be a problem. Statistics from circuits within one municipality in the country's Central region – Cape Coast, illustrated in Table 1, exemplifies this problem:

**Table 1: Primary Pupils' Textbooks (2002/2003)**

Area		Science Textbooks		Maths Textbooks		English Textbooks	
		Available	Number Needed	Available	Number Needed	Available	Number Needed
Cape Coast	3374	1319	2055	1374	2000	856	2518
Aboom	4323	1689	2634	1982	2341	1067	3256
Bakaano	2935	1495	1440	1629	1306	922	2013
Pedu/ Abora	4771	1973	2798	2339	2432	1425	3346
OLA	2792	1166	1626	1252	1540	439	2353
Efutu	1714	755	959	975	739	482	1232
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19,909</b>	<b>8397</b>	<b>11512</b>	<b>9551</b>	<b>10358</b>	<b>5191</b>	<b>14718</b>

(GES School Mapping Report, 2003)

It seems clear from these statistics that the laudable aim of ensuring that each child in the Central Region had their own textbook was far from being achieved in 2002-2003. The situation in this region more recently also illustrates continuing difficulties, with 'core' textbooks per primary school pupil going down from 1.7 in 2001-2002 to 1.4 in 2005-2006 (Thompson & Casely-Harford, 2008, p 86). The overall national picture has seen a little more stability, with textbook availability remaining at 1.8 per primary school pupil between these dates (op cit, p 86). This does suggest that some progress has been made in this area of educational provision, yet issues of educational quality need to focus upon the use that teachers make of these resources rather than being concerned solely with the quantity of resources available. This therefore hinges on questions about teacher preparation and training within the country.

In this connection, the preparation for teaching that teachers receive is a critical factor impacting upon their potential for delivering quality education in their classrooms. Teacher quality depends not only on observable and stable indicators but also on the quality of training they receive. It also depends on the behaviour and the nature of the relationship teachers maintain with their pupils or students. The potential indicators deal with such aspects as academic qualifications, pre-service and in-service training, years of service/experience, ability or aptitude and pedagogical content knowledge.

Available data suggest that large proportions of primary school teachers in Africa lack adequate academic qualifications, training and pedagogical content knowledge. At the 2000 *World Education Forum* held in Dakar attracting and retaining qualified teachers in the teaching profession emerged as a major threat to achieving the *Millennium Development Goal* of providing *Education for All* (EFA) by 2015. The difficulties in attracting and retaining teachers in disadvantaged communities have been highlighted, for example, in a recent World Bank study

that focused on 'teachers for rural schools' (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). This study found that there were particular problems in rural communities associated with teacher housing, the employment of female teachers, teacher utilisation, and the communication difficulties related to district management of rural schools. These all provide significant challenges for school leaders working in these environments and have been accentuated by policy drives towards educational decentralisation (Crook et al, 2003; Gershberg & Winkler, 2003 ).

Specifically, in Ghana, a 2003 national study of teacher demand and supply reports 'a shortage of 40,000 trained teachers in basic schools( ie the first nine years of schooling for ages 6 to 15, comprising six years primary and three years junior secondary), with untrained teachers filling 24,000 of the vacancies' (Cobbold, 2006, p 453). Further evidence of this problematic area, impacting strongly upon the potential for the leadership of quality education initiatives, is found in the most recent figures available through the EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2007). This found, for example, that the proportion of trained teachers in the primary sector in Ghana had fallen from 72% in the school year ending in 1999 to 56% for the school year ending in 2006, whilst the total number of primary school teachers has increased from 80,000 to 88,000 between those two dates (UNESCO, 2007, p 339). This suggests that the clear impetus towards 'education for all' had lead to a need to ensure that there are increased numbers of teachers available at primary level, even though there appears to be limited capacity within the country to train them before taking up postings.

The overall figures do hide significant disparities within the country, especially with regard to a rural/urban divide. Strategies for alleviating the teacher shortage in many rural areas have been introduced within the country. In one innovative approach, deprived districts are encouraged to sponsor teacher trainees in exchange for the teacher agreeing to teach in the districts for at least three years (Cobbold, 2006). While this study does succeed in pointing out the key factors in the attempts to get quality teachers into rural schools, the writer concludes by suggesting that 'the experience with initiatives which use financial incentives to attract candidates into teaching has shown that such inducements alone have very little effect on recruitment and retention (op cit, p 464). The implications that these concerns have for school leadership, especially in rural areas, are clear—inadequately trained or knowledgeable teachers, limited retention incentives, and consequent disillusionment.

In many rural schools these leadership issues have a gender dimension, in that women are acutely under-represented in school headship. Oduro & MacBeath (2003) cite two female headteachers in their study who experienced considerable initial difficulty when they took over their posts, especially with older male teachers who found it hard to accept and cooperate with a female school leader. Similarly, a gender analysis of the informal dimensions of institutional life in schools in Ghana and Botswana (Dunne, 2007) suggested that

'In both countries, there was a dominance of male teachers in senior and management positions, even though three of the case study schools, one in Botswana and two in Ghana, were headed by females. On the whole both female and male teachers seemed happier to work under a male head...Respondents attributed the male and female resistance to female leadership to cultural expectations, which, in their stereotyped form, cast men as leaders and women as followers' (Dunne, 2007, p 504).



The highly structured day-to-day elaboration of the 'gender regime' (op cit, p 502) within the schools studied appeared as a key factor that impacted upon the behaviour and role-modeling of female teachers and also on the expectations of female pupils. While emerging from a small sample of schools, these results suggest that this factor has considerable repercussions for the development of quality education 'for all'.

Teacher absenteeism, a persistent problem in many countries, also has the potential to reduce the quality of education, results in a waste of resources, and puts additional pressures on school leaders. In 2003, a World Bank study revealed that in Uganda 26% of teachers had been absent from school in the week before the researchers' visit, with the figure for Zambia being 17%, (World Bank, 2004). More recently, a study by Chaudhury et al (2006) of absenteeism among teachers and health workers in six developing countries found that, having made nearly 35,000 observations on teacher attendance, an average of 19% of teachers were absent across the countries. This study succinctly concludes that 'in service delivery, quality starts with attendance' (op cit, p 114).

In Ghana, teacher absenteeism, especially in rural schools, has been a recurring concern for educational authorities. High levels of teacher absenteeism generally indicate severe dysfunctions in the school system, but they have many different direct causes. Lack of professional standards and lack of support and control by education authorities and cultural demands are major issues in Ghana. In a study of rural schools in one district of Ghana, Oduro & MacBeath (2003) observed that in the schools in their study most teachers absented themselves on Fridays to attend funerals. In addition, teachers often absented themselves when they needed to travel to get their monthly pay. Michaelowa (2001) attributes absenteeism to a situation where conditions compel teachers to take on a second job to supplement insufficient salaries. These issues suggest the continuing importance of resource factors in impacting upon practitioners in their day-to-day behaviour and their attitude towards their work. It is interesting to note that moves towards the decentralisation of educational provision and management have not always lead to improvements in practice or educational quality (Pryor, 2005; Chapman et al, 2002).

It is clear, then, that many of the policy developments within the Ghanaian educational environment over the last 20 years have had a significant impact upon the role of school leaders within the country. The study by Zame et al (2008) suggests that the emphasis has been largely upon bureaucratic and administrative tasks, to the detriment of the development of leadership capacities among the headteacher cadre.

### Tanzania

The policy and practice of education in Tanzania in recent years have been influenced by two major initiatives. These are the Education and Training Policy (ETP) (URT, 1995) and the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) (URT, 2001).

#### *Education and Training Policy (ETP)*

From the mid-1960s through to the early 1990s, education practice in Tanzania was guided by the philosophy of Education for Self Reliance (ESR) The early 1990s saw the need for the government in Tanzania to get a clearer focus on education policy and, hence, in 1995 the

government officially launched the Tanzania Education and Training Policy (ETP). This aimed to guide, synchronise and harmonize all education and training structures, plans and practices in order to ensure access, equity and quality at all levels. The ETP was an attempt to guide the future development of education and training in Tanzania as the country encountered the challenges of a globalizing world. It stipulated the following education and training policy objectives:

‘decentralising education and training by devolving the function of managing and administering education and training to regions and districts, education institutions and communities; improving the quality of education and training through strengthening in-service teacher training programmes; the supply of teaching and learning materials; rehabilitation of school/college physical facilities; teacher trainers’ programmes; research in education and training, and streamlining the curriculum, examinations and certification; expanding the provision of education and training through the liberalisation of the provision of education and training, and the promotion and strengthening of formal and non-formal, distance and out-of-school education programmes; and, promoting access and equity through making access to basic education available to all citizens as a basic right; institutions and resources; expanding and improving girls’ education; screening for talented, gifted and disabled children so that they are given appropriate education and training, and developing programmes to ensure access to education to disadvantaged groups’ (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995).

The ETP takes into account the historical background of the Tanzania education system and various reports and recommendations regarding the Tanzania education system. In particular, the ETP draws on the philosophy of Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) by emphasizing the need for curriculum reform for purposes of integrating theory with the acquisition of practical life skills and the linkage of education plans and practices with national socio-economic development and the world of work. The ETP, by embracing neo-liberal ideas such as cost sharing, cost recovery and cost efficiency, was cognizant of a shift from earlier policy emphases which placed a strong reliance on the state control of the economy and the public to a more liberalized economy led by market principles. This was reflected in the ETP broad policies of education and training such as:

‘enhancement of partnership in the provision of education and training, through the deliberate efforts of encouraging private agencies to participate in the provision of education, to establish and manage schools and other educational institutions; and, broadening of the financial base for education and training, through more effective control of government spending, cost sharing and liberalisation strategies’ (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995).

#### *Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP)*

Over the last decade, the Government of Tanzania has embarked on the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP), designed to focus on the problems and new challenges resulting from on-going macro-economic, social and political reforms. The ESDP was implemented within the policy framework of the Education and Training Policy (URT, 1995), Higher Education Policy (1999), the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 (URT, 1999), the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (URT, 2000), the Public Sector Reforms Programme (PSRP), the

Tanzania Assistance Strategy (TAS), and recently it has been enhanced by the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) (URT, 2005). ESDP provides a framework for achieving a greater access to the education sector and tackling equity, retention, quality and management issues and operationalises a series of policy-driven reforms covering all sub-sectors in the education sector. The Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP 2002-2006) (URT, 2001), which aimed to enrol more than 7.5 million primary school age children by 2006, was one of the first outcomes of the ESDP. The imperatives of the Millennium Development Goals 'Education for All' policy are clearly evident in this policy initiative, especially as statistics for overall primary education enrolment appear to have declined from 50% in the school year ending in 1999 to 49% in the school year ending in 2006 (UNESCO, 2007, p 290). The strategic priorities of the Primary Education Development Plan 2002-2006 included:

- enrolment expansion (enrolment and access to primary education for all 7-12 old children);
- quality improvement (optimal utilisation of human, financial and teaching and learning materials);
- capacity building (pre-service and in-service teacher training; governance and management; financial management and EMIS); and,
- institutional and operational efficiency improvement.

More recently, the government has embarked on PEDP II (2007-2011). Enrolment expansion, both at pre-primary and primary education levels, and quality improvement, continue to be given the highest priority.

Girls/women, street children/working children, the disabled, rural/remote, nomadic and mobile communities have been identified as the major groups which are educationally disadvantaged. With access being less than universal, these groups have historically been denied quality basic education. Moreover, children from different locations covering the same school level often experience different education in terms of cognitive outcomes. Policy initiatives have focused on advocacy, mobilization and partnership in order to improve access, retention and quality in line with Education for All goals.

A key issue related to educational access in Tanzania has been the affordability of households to pay part of the costs for pre-primary and primary education, and the need to balance these costs with other charges in health and taxation. The costs of education are often a significant factor in the annual income of most parents. Many parents are unable to afford these costs, and hence this has become one of the biggest causes of decrease in enrolment of children in primary schools (Dachi, 2000). The ETP emphasis is on cost sharing and cost recovery measures with private organizations private businesses, NGOs and communities. It states plainly that, '...financing education and training shall be shared between government, communities, parents and end-users' (United Republic of Tanzania, 1995, p91) and that '...school and tuition fees shall be collected and retained for use by relevant education and training institutions themselves...' (ibid).

Conversely, in order to achieve PEDP enrolment targets, one of the strategies employed by the government was to abolish school fees and all other mandatory parental contributions, therefore shifting the cost burden more directly on to communities. This was an approach similar to that employed in Malawi (Inoue & Oketch, 2008). Yet, there are still regional and district inequalities in terms of enrolment and retention of children in primary schools. It seems

likely that the abolition of school fees and obligatory parental contributions have had unforeseen consequences that have impacted upon the possibility of all pupils receiving a quality education. The household decision to enrol a child in school is not only influenced by the current costs and anticipated future benefits of schooling, but also by how parents perceive the quality of education services offered (Kailembo, 2000). The headteacher's role in linking directly with key community stakeholders is central to the development of a supportive relationship between school, families and community representatives.

In this connection, the Government, through the ETP (1995) and the implementation of the ESDP, has increasingly called for greater community participation in the management of school programmes and activities. Community micro-projects and other initiatives have been developed to encourage a sense of genuine participatory planning and bottom-up approaches to development. The focus has been on developing an emerging sense of ownership as households and communities participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of educational provision. Decentralisation and the devolution of responsibilities and ownership of initiatives to communities and schools have encouraged a commitment to capacity building at community/school level in attempts to promote effective quality provision. In summary, the success (or failure) of school and community level initiatives have been largely dependent on:

- the premium that the community attaches to education;
- the micro-economic capacity of the communities;
- households willingness and ability to support the initiative(s);
- the managerial and supervisory capacity of local education authorities and school committees;
- the level of community mobilisation and awareness creation; and,
- the political will and attitude of implementers at district, village and school towards the initiative.

Thus, the decentralisation agenda in Tanzania mirrors that found in recent Ghanaian educational policy initiatives. As such, they present the same challenges to the capacity of school leaders to develop quality education in a context that emphasises enrolment and access.

### **The Leadership Role of the Headteacher in Quality Education**

Recent decades have seen an increasing interest in examining the nature of school leadership in a range of different international contexts. As Heck (1996) has suggested: 'the investigation of leadership models...across settings is potentially a rich area for empirical exploration, in that it may both broaden and deepen our understanding of how cultural context may impact the theory and practice of school administration' (p 76). Indeed, in their illuminating study of school leadership concepts, Bush & Glover (2003) suggest that 'the most important variable may be that of culture, both societal and organisational' (p 29). They also warn of the 'simplistic assumptions that leadership styles may be universally applicable' (op cit, p 29). Similarly, Oduro & MacBeath (2003), in talking of school leadership research, argue that 'much of this work is premised on competences or individual qualities of leaders which, it is assumed travel not only across institutional boundaries but also traverse national and cultural borders' (p 441) and urge researchers to beware '...the fragility of generic competences' (p 441).

Specific studies within a developing country context are beginning to blossom within the research canon. Oplatka (2004), in an incisive review of twenty-seven papers written in this area over the last decade, has suggested that some common themes have emerged. These have coalesced around issues related to 'limited autonomy, autocratic leadership style, summative evaluation, low degree of change initiation, and lack of instructional leadership functions (p 427). For many school leaders in these studies '...basic physical and human resource requirements need to be satisfied prior to any attempt on behalf of the principal to promote quality teaching in his school' (op cit, pp 435-436). As the writer suggests, these are issues far removed from the day-to-day concerns of school leaders working within an Anglo-American context, where there is a greater emphasis on 'distributed leadership' (Bush & Glover, 2003) and a more proactive approach to school management. Oplatka's general conclusion, that 'no universal theory of educational administration is valid in all contexts' (op cit, p 442), does mirror the views of writers such as Oduro & MacBeath (2003) and should act as a welcome caveat when examining the role of school leaders in promoting educational quality within their institutions.

The detailed study of school leaders within Trinidad & Tobago (Brown & Conrad, 2007) indicates a thoughtful avenue for future research explorations. This study examined

'principals' and other senior educational leaders' perspectives on school leadership and highlights approaches adopted by principals as they attempted to effectively meet the learning needs of students in a system characterized by an overly centralized bureaucracy in a time of continuous educational reform' (op cit, p 186).

As such, it reflects the realities of school leadership for many within a developing country context (Oplatka, 2004). Located within a relatively small Caribbean educational system, the study found that 'the principals remained locked in a constricting bureaucracy even as [there was] demand that they be proactive and decisive in the leadership of their schools' (Brown & Conrad, 2007, p 194). In summary, these principals were working with different role expectations compared to colleagues within the United States or Britain where, for example, there was an expectation that school leaders would behave proactively in their attempts to meet the demands of the education system. In Trinidad & Tobago, in contrast, 'the system is prescriptive, and thus principals are expected to follow the directives as mandated by the Ministry of Education' (ibid, pp 194-195).

Thus, the clear message emerging from studies of school leadership within developing country contexts is that it would be unwise to expect that Anglo-centric ideas and concepts will transfer easily across country boundaries. Analysis of studies within Ghana, Tanzania and Pakistan provide further support for this view.

### Ghana

Findings from a number of studies on quality-related issues in education in Ghana over the last twenty years suggest that the quality of leadership and management in basic education is generally poor, especially in deprived rural areas.

Between 1987 and 1998, UNESCO's Group on Education Sector Analysis evaluated various aspects of educational quality under the following four main themes:

- improving management efficiency and management;
- improved access and equity;
- improved quality education; and,
- others, including the relevance of education to national needs.

This analysis found that the quality of education was ‘generally low, lower in rural schools than in urban ones, and lower in public than in private schools’ (UNESCO, 2000, p.25). In pinpointing hindrances to achieving quality education, the report focused on the absence of efficient and effective leadership and management, inadequate numbers of qualified teachers, a lack of management information systems, gaps in teaching and professional competence, irrelevant aspects of the school curriculum, and poor enrolment of girls.

A 2003 comparative study carried out by the Educational Assessment and Research Centre (EARC), on behalf of USAID, into the academic performance of public and private school pupils in Southern Ghana found that pupil performance in private schools was higher than public schools. The difference was attributed to the quality of pedagogical supervision in the private schools. This finding mirrors Opare’s (1999) observation that ‘monitoring and supervision of teacher’s work was more regular in private schools than in public junior secondary schools’ in Accra and Sekondi-Takoradi. A most recent study by Owusu-Ansah (2005) on time management in basic schools in Kumasi also indicated that, while there was considerable wastage of instructional time in both private and public basic schools, this problem was more serious within the publically-funded sector. These studies point to some serious issues for consideration when examining the part that school leaders might play in developing educational quality within the Ghanaian context.

Some of these concerns were explored more fully in the investigation of headteacher roles in Ghana by Oduro & MacBeath (2003). One of the purposes of this study was to explore with headteachers the normative meanings they themselves gave to their headship roles, with the aim of testing out the applicability of the Hay McBeer generic school leadership competency framework within the Ghanaian context. Analysis of the work done by these Ghanaian headteachers indicated that they were working much closer to the realm of ‘management’, perceived as being linked to systems and ‘paper’ activities (Day et al, 2008; Day et al, 2001) than to the area of ‘leadership’, associated with a focus on the development of people. So, the notion of ‘instructional leadership’ of colleagues, as a means of supporting reflection and professional development, was replaced by ‘supervision’, seen as ‘a first line of self-defence, ensuring that policies were respected and routines demonstrably observed (Oduro & MacBeath, 2003, p 448). In addition, the potential for these headteachers to secure a more ‘professional’ image was stunted by the need to carry out tasks such as acting as a kind of security officer for building projects taking place on site, monitoring the activities of food vendors at the school boundary, supervision of the cleaning and tidying of the school premises and, importantly, supporting teacher colleagues financially by travelling to regional offices to collect salaries. The headteachers in this study also spent a large degree of their time in day-to-day office work, forced on them by the paucity of administrative support available on the school site. It was also clear that many of the respondents in this study were involved in a high and regular degree of teaching, superimposed on these additional tasks. In many ways, then, they were operating within the ‘transactional’ rather than the ‘transformational’ domain, with the Hay McBeer competency framework proving not to be directly applicable. Thus, the situation of these

Ghanaian headteachers more closely mapped on to that of colleagues in Trinidad & Tobago (Brown & Conrad, 2007) than those in England. Additionally, a further ironic twist to the emphasis on 'management' rather than 'leadership' is provided by the current policy focus on 'Education for All' and the need to ensure that the Millennium Development Goal of 100% pupil access to primary education is achieved. Implied here is a need for headteachers to focus their energies on improving access figures-this, while laudable in itself, does not deliberately encourage headteachers to put a spotlight on the improvement of pupil learning. Hence, the 'supervision' role highlighted by Oduro & MacBeath (2003) becomes reinforced at the expense of a more expansive 'instructional leadership' focus.

It is evident, though, that there is a need for further focused research to investigate the reality of the headteacher experience in Ghana in terms of role clarity and expectations, and the relationship with teachers that might encourage a more proactive approach towards quality education (Osei, 2006). Brown & Conrad (op cit) have argued that, in Trinidad & Tobago, educators felt that 'too many senior officers see the role of principals and teachers not in terms of educating children but in terms of following the mandates of the MOE' (pp 188-189). Given the extensive promotion of decentralisation of educational management by the Government, it is timely to examine the extent to which school leaders in Ghana can act in a more autonomous fashion in order to meet the quality learning needs of their pupils or whether they are seen as civil servants carrying out the demands of ministry officials. Some ideas that seek to address this issue have already become evident. The EdQual project, funded by the Department for International Development (DfID) in the UK, is focussing upon the improvement of the quality of education received by pupils in a range of African countries (EdQual, 2008). The 'Leadership & Management' theme of this project specifically aims at working with primary school headteachers in Ghana and Tanzania to use a participatory action research focus to look at the impact of headteacher-initiated interventions upon pupil learning. This enables these headteachers to move beyond the 'Education for All' agenda to monitor and evaluate the ways in which leadership actions impact upon the quality of pupil learning in their schools. This opens up a potentially fruitful avenue for future research into the relationship between headship and pupil achievement within low income countries such as Ghana and Tanzania.

### Tanzania

Much of the recent research in this area carried out within a Tanzanian context suggests that very little attention is devoted in studies related to the contribution of leadership and management on the improvement of the quality of primary education (Nguni, 2005; Ngirwa, 2006).

Essentially the basic context affecting current changes in the Tanzanian education system (as in Ghana and Pakistan also) is globalization. Carnoy (1999) argues that globalization has increased competition between nations, a phenomenon which translates in many low income countries into competition for access to educational resources. In order to address these challenges a recent UNICEF study (2004) suggested that it was essential to develop and strengthen leadership skills at all levels of institutions to overcome the rigidities that very often thwart and inhibit educational innovation and reform in these contexts.

Recent policy changes in education and school management in Tanzania are consistent with the assumption that decentralisation and school-based management are likely to be an appropriate

management structure for the development of quality education (Barrett, 2007; Nguni, 2005). However, as in Ghana, questions need to be raised as to whether decentralising decision-making powers to the school level without providing headteachers with the required skills for handling the changes that are expected to flow from this policy can work in elevating the quality of education in Tanzanian primary schools. This concern has been further reinforced in a recent study of conditions that influence leadership in Tanzanian schools (Kapinga, 2004). This study emphasised the importance of culture, school context and personal relationships in affecting the nature of school leadership, and highlighted the role played by the headteacher in developing a school culture that is supportive of quality education for pupils. This re-emphasises the importance of the 'convergent synergy' between reform ideals and local cultural attitudes and values (Jreisat, 2004), an importance made even more significant by the strong decentralisation agenda underpinning much educational policy in Tanzania.

Two recent studies (Nguni et al, 2006; Swai & Ndidde, 2006) illustrate the need for caution when examining the nature of headteacher roles in Tanzania, since they offer incisive interpretations of the potential for Anglo-centric views of school leadership to be transferred across boundaries. The former study was an attempt to investigate the effects of transactional and transformational leadership styles on Tanzanian teachers' job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and what the writers termed 'organisational citizenship behavior' (Nguni et al, 2006, p 146). The writers posited a distinction between the two leadership styles as relating to whether the leader motivated colleagues by appealing to their self-interest ('transactional') or by appealing to their desire to work for goals that went beyond their own self-interest ('transformational'). The study found that the teachers were able to identify examples of these differing leadership styles within their school experience and this appeared to lend support to the claim made by seminal leadership theorists such as Bass about 'the universality of the transformational and transactional leadership paradigm across different nations and societies' (op cit, p 171). The importance of this finding is worth noting, especially in relation to the comments of other researchers (eg Oplatka, 2004) who argue strongly that universal, generic leadership styles are like the mythical Lorelei tempting researchers into deep waters. Further, the identification of 'transformational' headteacher behaviour within this Tanzanian study contrasts with the greater 'transactional' focus in Ghana (Oduro & MacBeath, 2003). This suggests that there might be some potential for headteachers in Tanzania to use this leverage to encourage classroom teachers to move beyond their own self-interest and consider ways in which pupil learning can be improved within their classrooms.

The ideas emerging from this study of leadership styles need to be balanced by the issues emanating from a detailed within-school research study of 30 schools by Swai & Ndidde (2006). The writers were able to offer valuable insights into the realities of headteacher experiences. In the area of instructional leadership, for example, they did find that as many as 26 of the 30 headteachers had endorsed teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans. Closer examination, however, found that 14 out these 26 had signed without paying attention to the content or accuracy of the plans or schemes of work. Additionally, only 12 of the 30 headteachers in the sample group were found to have checked and signed pupil workbooks. Finally in this area, the study found evidence of teacher appraisal in only 4 of the sample schools.

This study does suggest some degree of overlap with similar investigations in Ghana, with a strong emphasis on day-to-day, context-related tasks necessary to get the school to function at



the most essential levels, with little if any time available in many of the sample schools for headteacher activities that fostered a positive concern for pedagogical quality.

Thus, the situation presented by recent research studies in Tanzania is a confusing one—the potential for headteachers to provide leadership that would encourage teachers in their schools to focus on improving pupil achievement is evident, but this needs to be balanced by the encroachment on headteacher activity of accountability demands that are a feature of centralised concerns with pupil access and resources.

## **Conclusion**

Common to the educational policy initiative goals in both Ghana and Tanzania is the challenge of achieving quality in basic education. The effects of increased enrolments resulting from Education For All (EFA) goals makes it necessary for governments in both countries to continue pursuing strategies for enhancing quality at the basic educational level. Ensuring quality in basic education is critical because the quality of foundations laid at the basic educational level influences the quality of pupils' learning at the secondary and tertiary education levels. In achieving quality, there is the need for the countries to define clearly quality indicators that will meet their developmental needs and at the same time fit into global indicators. Quality indicators should move beyond inputs governments provide in terms of infrastructure, teachers and materials. Greater attention should be given to what happens in the classroom, with specific reference to teaching and learning time utilization. There is the need for policy makers to be guided by the fact that providing expanding access through the construction of classrooms and increasing enrolment as well as decentralizing decisions *per se* does not guarantee quality in education.

What matters most is how teachers and pupils make use of the resources available to promote teaching and learning. Ensuring effective utilization of human and material resources as well as school time in promoting quality education depends largely on effectiveness of leadership at both school and classroom levels. As in much of the Anglo-centric world, school leaders in developing countries are denoted as the guardians of quality for the pupils in their care and have been given apparent opportunities to exercise this role through the decentralisation of much of educational decision-making to the level of the school site. As such, their role as 'boundary-workers' has become crucial and this has raised important issues concerning the nature of 'community' and 'civil society' in many African countries (Whitfield, 2003). The study of policy development in Ghana and Tanzania suggests, however, that generally school leaders are still locked into a technicist, civil-servant transactional mode of operation. Whilst there are exceptions (for example, those headteachers carrying out action research studies within the EdQual Project), most are seen as being responsible for carrying out Ministry orders rather than acting as professional educators leading fellow colleagues in an endeavour to improve the education received by pupils (Zame et al, 2008). Studies such as that by Barrow et al (2006), which looks at ways in which educators construct notions of 'quality', are few and far between in these contexts. Similarly, focused research that looks at ways in which school leaders sees their roles (such as Brown & Conrad, 2007) is also sparse.

There is clearly a need to develop a research agenda which aids in understanding the ways in which policy ideas are enacted within the context of schools in disadvantaged areas of countries such as Ghana and Tanzania. Headteachers need to be empowered to provide the requisite

leadership for implementing quality education initiatives. Without providing headteachers with the required skills for handling the changes that are expected to flow from policy initiatives, they cannot perform. Also common to the three countries is gender under-representation in school leadership. Few women are involved in leadership, especially in rural schools. This has implications for enhancing quality learning among girls because of defects in gender role modelling (Awumbila, 2006; Oplatka, 2006; Stephens, 2000). Policy makers need to work out strategies that will enhance female participation in leadership practices in schools. They should also endeavour to make policies aimed at enhancing quality functional by investing more into implementation strategies. This is especially needed within disadvantaged communities, where educational quality developments can enhance policies for poverty reduction (Buarque et al, 2006).

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