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New principals in Africa: preparation, induction and practice

Tony Bush
University of Lincoln, Lincoln, UK, and
George K.T. Oduro
University of Cape Coast, Accra, Ghana

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the challenges facing new principals in Africa.

Design/methodology/approach – Based on recent research and literature, the paper analyses the experience of principals and proposes an induction model for principalship in Africa.

Findings – School principals in Africa face a daunting challenge. They often work in poorly equipped buildings with inadequately trained staff. There is rarely any formal leadership training and principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership potential. Induction and support are usually limited.

Originality/value – The paper provides an overview of the limited literature and research on new principals in Africa and develops a grounded conceptualisation of their role.

Keywords Principals, Selection, Induction

Paper type Literature review

Introduction

Principals in Africa face a daunting challenge. They often work in poorly equipped schools with inadequately trained staff. There is rarely any formal leadership training and principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership potential. Induction and support are usually limited and principals have to adopt a pragmatic approach. Learners are often poor and hungry and may also be suffering the consequences of HIV/AIDS. In this article, we examine the challenges facing new principals in Africa, drawing on the limited research and literature on this topic, which both determine and constrain the countries that can be included in the discussion. Most of the available literature relates to sub-Saharan Africa and this is also the main focus of this paper.

The close relationship between successful leadership and effective schools is widely recognised (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996; National College for School Leadership, 2001; Bush, 2003). There is also increasing understanding that "leaders are made not born" and that management development is essential if schools are to have the high quality leadership that their learners, educators and communities deserve.

The Commonwealth Secretariat (1996) stresses the importance of the principalship in Africa and also points to the difficulties of managing in such difficult contexts:

> The head [. . .] plays the most crucial role in ensuring school effectiveness [. . .] without the necessary skills, many heads are overwhelmed by the task.

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Kitavi and van der Westhuizen (1997) refer to the problems experienced by school leaders in Kenya:

> Beginning principals in developing countries such as Kenya face problems that differ drastically from problems faced by their counterparts in developed countries such as the USA, UK and Australia. [...] The most serious problems facing beginning principals in developing countries like Africa include: students who cannot pay school fees and buy books; shortage of school equipment; shortage of physical facilities; lack of staff accommodation; lack of playgrounds; students travelling long distances; and use of English as a medium of instruction (p. 251).

These authors add that "entering the principalship is an emotion-laden situation and the school principal is the key ingredient for success in school". They note that little is known about school principals in developing countries and are critical of the current limited arrangements to support school leaders:

> Despite the importance of the principalship, the means by which most principals in developing countries like Kenya are trained, selected, inducted and in-serviced are ill-suited to the development of effective and efficient school managers (Kitavi and van der Westhuizen, 1997, p. 251).

Africa is unique in that almost every country can be categorised as "developing". Even South Africa, the most advanced country in this continent, has thousands of schools without power, water, sanitation or telecommunications. Oplatka (2004) provides a definition of developing countries:

> These countries were ruled by Europeans for a long time, their economy is more agriculture-based, and they are usually characterised by high mortality rates, high birth rates, high levels of poverty and large gaps between rich and poor (p. 428).

Despite these common features, there are inevitably significant differences in the colonial and post-colonial experience, and the wider social, political and economic context, of the various countries in this vast continent. These differences also influence the preparation and induction of school principals.

Harber and Davies (1997) provide an overview of the educational context in developing countries, focusing on six dimensions:

(1) demographic;
(2) economic;
(3) resource;
(4) violence;
(5) health; and
(6) culture.

The discussion below also includes insights from other authors.

The demographic context

In most African countries, many children do not receive education. In 2001/2002, only 62 per cent of children were enrolled in primary education (*The Guardian*, 28 June 2005) and in Ethiopia the figure is only 40 per cent (Tekleselassie, 2002). The problem is particularly acute for girls "where the traditional view that a girl does not need an

education to be a wife and mother still persists" (Harber and Davies, 1997, p.11). In most Ghanaian communities, parents following a traditional gender role stereotype still prefer educating their male children at the expense of the female child (Inkoom, 2005). As Brew-Ward (2002) puts it, "most parents have low aspirations for their daughters as far as academic endeavours are concerned. Most of them wish their daughters to marry and become good wives" (p. 89).

The problem is exacerbated by high drop-out rates, caused by an inability to pay fees and teenage pregnancy. In Ghana, rural headteachers encounter difficulty in obtaining fees from parents because most of them are peasant farmers and fishermen whose sources of income are seasonal. Failure of headteachers to collect fees promptly resulted in the Ghana Education Service (GES) laying an embargo on the payment of headteachers' monthly salaries (Oduro, 2003, p. 125).

Drop out rates are particularly high for girls. In Ghana, 84 per cent of males and 81 per cent of females attend primary school. Participation rates in secondary schools are 83.3 per cent for males and 76.8 per cent for females, a doubling of the gender gap (Girls' Education Unit, 2002; Osei, 2003).

The economic context

Harber and Davies (1997) point out that, in 1990, expenditure per student in OECD countries was 40 times that of countries in sub-Saharan Africa: "The economies of developing countries are also particularly fragile and exposed to global economic changes" (p. 12). In Ghana, as in many other African countries, child labour is often seen as a necessary evil for the survival of poor families (Agezo and Christian, 2002, p. 139).

The resource context

Harber and Davies (1997) paint a bleak picture of the human and material resources available in developing countries. They refer to Lulat's (1988) view that the Zambian education system faces "wholesale systemic decay". They say that most children in certain African countries have no textbooks, while school buildings are often inadequate with overcrowded classrooms. In the Oyo State of Nigeria, Fabunmi and Adewale (2002) report that "most secondary schools lack the basic educational resources that can make instruction effective and productive [. . .] Adequate furnished classrooms are often not available in schools [. . .] This accounts for classroom congestion in most secondary schools" (p. 47). Similarly, Owolabi and Edzii (2000) report that headmasters in Ghana who participated in their study "confessed that they had quite insufficient quantities of books and stationery" (p. 7).

Harber and Davies add that, in parts of Sudan, 20 per cent of schools have no water and 57 per cent have no latrines. The majority of schools in rural areas in Africa do not have electricity. Schools often have to function with unqualified or under-qualified teachers. In ten sub-Saharan countries, the majority of primary school teachers had not completed secondary education (pp. 15-16).

The context of violence

Much of Africa has been plagued by war and violence, and children are often directly affected by the conflict. The genocide in Rwanda in the 1990s (Hammond, 2004) provides one stark example of the horrific impact of conflict on adults and children, but

Harber and Davies (1997, p. 17) note that women and children account for 92 per cent of war-related deaths in Africa (Harber and Davies, 1997, p. 17). These problems often result in school closures.

The health context

Millions of African people live in absolute poverty. Thirty three per cent are living with hunger (The Guardian, 28 June 2005) and "children cannot learn effectively if they are weak from hunger" (Harber and Davies, 1997, p. 19). Millions of children and teachers also suffer from killer diseases, including malaria and HIV/AIDS. In Zambia, the number of primary school teachers who died from HIV/AIDS in 2000, "is equivalent to 45 percent of all teachers that were educated during that year" (Nilsson, 2003, p. 6), while about 30 per cent of teachers in Malawi are reported to be infected (World Bank, 2002).

There is also the threat of drought in many countries, leading to malnutrition. In the West African country of Niger, the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reports serious drought leading to a food crisis: "Some 3.6 million people, including 800,000 children, are facing acute malnutrition, which at any moment could turn into a famine" (AlertNet, 2005).

The cultural context

In developing countries, the values and beliefs of traditional cultures coexist, often uncomfortably, with imported Western ones. One example relates to the widespread corruption and nepotism in developing countries. Many teachers also have more than one job, leading to frequent absence and lateness. School management may also be affected by cultural politics. Oduro (2003) notes that the management of Ghanaian schools is influenced by the "Ghanaian cultural orientation towards the exercise of authority and power, the value for old age and language" (p. 203).

This overview gives a flavour of the difficult yet diverse contexts within which school principals exercise their leadership roles. The situation is immensely challenging for many principals. They also rarely receive appropriate preparation for this demanding role.

Preparation for new principals

Level of provision

Throughout Africa, there is no formal requirement for principals to be trained managers. They are often appointed on the basis of a successful record as teachers with an implicit assumption that this provides a sufficient starting point for school leadership. In Kenya, for example, "deputy principals as well as good assistant teachers are appointed to the principalship without any leadership training [. . .] good teaching abilities are not necessarily an indication that the person appointed will be a capable educational manager" (Kitavi and van der Westhuizen, 1997, pp. 251-2).

Similarly, headteachers in Ghana are often appointed without any form of preparatory training. "The Ghana Education Service seems to be working on the assumption that a successful classroom teacher necessarily makes an effective school administrator" (Amezu-Kpeglo, 1990, p. 5). The appointment of headteachers is largely based on a teacher's seniority in "rank" and "teaching experience". Oduro (2003, p. 310)

notes that "commitment to the provision and maintenance of facilities, salaries and others were given priority over headteachers' professional development" (p. 310).

This problem is not confined to Africa. Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 408) observe that "training in many countries is not a requirement for appointment as a principal and there is still an (often unwritten) assumption that good teachers can become effective managers and leaders without specific preparation".

Oplatka (2004) points out that even teaching experience may not be necessary. "In some African countries (e.g. Nigeria, Botswana), principals are not even appointed on criteria of quality regarding their own performance in teaching. Many of them have never been in a classroom, since political connections may be a dominant factor in their appointment" (p. 434). Herriot *et al.* (2002) make a similar point in respect of Kenya. "Many headteachers had been identified as leaders in schools on the basis of dubious qualifications often of a personal nature rather than relevant experience and proven skills in the field of management" (p. 510).

This is not the case in Ghana where Oduro (2003) notes that teaching experience, or acquisition of a professional qualification in teaching, is a necessary condition for one's appointment to leadership positions in basic and secondary schools. Even where political pressures influence the appointment of a headteacher, the appointee must necessarily be a trained teacher. Kitavi and van der Westhuizen (1997) make the wider point that:

> The means by which most principals in developing countries are trained, selected, inducted and in-serviced are ill-suited to the development of effective and efficient school managers [...] neither the old nor the new educational system [in Kenya] gives attention to either formal training or induction of beginning school principals (p. 251).

This argument also applies in South Africa:

> In many instances [...], headteachers come to headship without having been prepared for their new role... As a result, they often have to rely on [...] experience and common sense [...] However, such are the demands being made upon managers now, including headteachers, that acquiring expertise can no longer be left to common sense and character alone; management development support is needed (Tsukudu and Taylor, 1995, pp.108-9).

Subsequent research in the Gauteng province (Bush and Heystek, 2006) shows that 66 per cent of principals "have not progressed beyond their initial degree while almost one third are not graduates". Similar findings arise from van der Westhuizen *et al.*'s (2004) enquiry in the Mpumalanga province. "Wide-ranging changes in the education system have rendered many serving school principals ineffective in the management of their schools. Many of these serving principals lack basic management training prior to and after their entry into headship" (p. 1). Bush *et al.*'s (2005) systematic literature review, for the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance, concludes that "most school principals have not received adequate specialist preparation for their leadership and management roles" (p. 13).

One significant exception is the Seychelles, where the Ministry of Education has entered into a partnership with the University of Lincoln (UK) to provide training at Master's level for up to 100 principals and senior managers over a five-year period (2004-2008). This is a significant step for a small education system with only 33 schools and reflects its wider interest in leadership for school improvement (Bush, 2005a).

Quality of provision

Because preparation for new principals is limited, there is inevitably little literature on the nature and quality of provision. One exception is the work of Tekleselassie (2002) in Ethiopia. He reports on a "major focus on the professionalisation of educational management" (p. 59). However, most principals attend only a one month in-service course on school management. Such short-term training "has never been popular among principals [. . .] short-term training has less impact and is less motivating to trainees since such training does not lead to certification and salary improvements" (p. 59). The limitations of the training are perceived to be (Tekleselassie, 2002, p. 60):

- irrelevant and repetitive curriculum;
- unresponsive and ill-prepared trainees;
- incompetence of trainers;
- lack of nexus between the training and the kind of profile the Ministry of Education seeks; and
- short duration of training and thus undue strain on trainees' time.

An additional weakness is that the training occurs after appointment, leaving new principals unprepared for their responsibilities. This is also the case in Ghana where the training is "in service" and usually provided by international agencies for selected schools, mostly drawn from urban and semi-urban areas. These agencies, including the World Bank, Unesco, DFID, USAID and CIDA, often determine the number and category of schools to be involved. Oduro (2003, p. 309) notes that "the training programmes cease once the project is accomplished because the Ghana Education Service complains of lack of money to sustain them". All 30 participants in Oduro's (2003) study complain that the training was not organised at the right time and should have preceded their appointment as headteachers.

Herriot *et al.* (2002) report on the development of headteacher support groups in Kenya. Such groups emerged as part of an in-service training programme for primary schools (PRISM). These groups were seen as "central to the sustainability of good management in schools" (p. 514) and their main purposes are (Herriot *et al.*, 2002, p. 518):

- a forum for sharing ideas;
- the development of school materials;
- addressing and solving management problems;
- generating income;
- staff development and sensitisation for heads, committees, teachers and the community; and
- improving the delivery of education and examination performance.

These authors conclude that "the networking that is beginning to develop has had a 'rippling effect' across schools and clusters but there is a long way to go" to ensure its continued success.

There is more evidence about the quality of leadership and management development in South Africa. Bush and Heystek's (2006) survey provides detailed perceptions from the 34 per cent of principals who have taken specialist honours or

Master's degrees in educational management. They give positive ratings to several aspects of their courses, notably "management of teaching and learning", "learner management" and "human resource management". They are less satisfied with "the management of physical facilities" and "management of finance". This latter point is particularly significant, as the post-apartheid government has decentralised many responsibilities to the school level, including budgeting, fund-raising and fee setting.

The majority of principals without specific qualifications in management have limited opportunities for leadership development. Most attend short in-service events, lasting only a few days, organised by the provincial departments of education. McLennan's (2000) assessment of training in the Gauteng province is that such workshops are "often poorly organised and irrelevant" (p. 305). Bush and Heystek (2006) conclude that training should be extended and recommend that "management development for principals should take place *before* appointment".

Bush and Heystek (2006) advocate an expansion of university provision but caution that knowledge-based programmes need to be modified to ensure that they are directly relevant to participants' schools. The Government's Task Team on Education Management (Department of Education, 1996) was critical of much university provision. "Management development practices [. . .] have tended to focus on the collection of qualifications and certificates with little attention being paid to actual ability to transfer this newly acquired knowledge to the institutions in which managers work" (p.24). Van der Westhuizen *et al.* (2004) make a similar point in concluding their evaluation of management training in the Mpumalanga province:

> The design and content of training programmes should be geared towards developing requisite skills and knowledge to enable trainees to transfer their skills and knowledge [. . .] to the school situation (p. 717).

Selection and induction

In the absence of formal requirements for leadership qualifications or training, administrators and/or communities require alternative criteria for recruiting and selecting principals. As we noted earlier, these are often related to the length of teaching experience, sometimes coupled with candidates' perceived competence as teachers. While a management qualification would provide a sound starting point for the appointments process, the criteria used in Africa are varied and unreliable. We noted earlier that personal considerations often influence the appointments process. These personal factors often include gender, and males dominate in Kenya with 93 per cent of primary school headteachers being male:

> A gender dimension in education management in Kenya is a subject that has not attracted many studies. It has been established nevertheless that women are not well represented in senior positions [including] headteachers. There are many factors which contribute to low representation of women in key positions, not least patriarchy (Herriot *et al.*, 2002, p. 512).

Bush and Heystek's (2006) research shows that 66 per cent of Gauteng principals are male. Buckland and Thurlow (1996), referring to South Africa generally, say that "serious [. . .] gender distortions in the management cadre place [. . .] women at a significant disadvantage".

In Ghana, women are acutely under-represented in school headship, especially in rural areas. This is largely attributable to the cultural context. Women are considered

to be weak and are discouraged from taking up teaching posts in deprived areas. This "has wider effects on girls' attitudes to learning. Some girls felt that it wasn't worth studying hard or even coming to school because the female role models they encountered in the villages were either farmers, seamstresses or fishmongers and housewives who 'give plenty birth'" (Oduro and MacBeath, 2003, p. 445).

Tekleselassie (2002) reports on a change in the "placement" process for new principals in Ethiopia. Before 1994, "the assignment of principals was largely conducted on the basis of the applicants' degree or diploma in educational administration" (p. 57). The new process involves teachers electing principals from among the teachers at the school. Initially, this is for two years and a re-election must be preceded by "performance evaluation. Colleagues, students, parents and the district office will assess the principal biannually to determine re-election for the second term. Then the district office must approve the election" (p. 59). Tekleselassie (2002, p. 59) concludes that "elected school principals are the ones who are either outstanding in their teaching assignments, or those who are popular among colleagues or their superiors". The process appears to include bureaucratic, democratic and political aspects, leading to unpredictable outcomes.

Oduro (2003) identifies two main strategies employed by the Ghana Education Service (GES) in the appointment of headteachers. The first is appointment through direct posting, which involves appointing newly trained teachers to lead schools, especially in the rural areas. The unattractiveness of rural life appears to have made working in rural schools non-competitive among teachers, who might otherwise have had aspirations to be appointed as headteachers. The second strategy is appointment through selection interviews, which is largely associated with the appointment of urban school headteachers. Candidates for interviews are selected through recommendation. The selection, according to the headteachers in Oduro's (2003) study, is largely influenced by a teacher's seniority in "rank" and "teaching experience".

Harber and Davies (1997) say that headteachers in Africa "are chosen because they are good at one thing (teaching) and then put into the managerial role which can demand quite different skills" (p. 77). They also report on the appointments process in Botswana where heads are allocated to schools by the "Unified Teaching Service". They add that heads also face "frequent and compulsory" transfer which "could happen at very awkward times, thereby creating extra workloads for those left behind" (p. 67).

Induction

There is only limited literature on the induction of principals in Africa. This is almost certainly because there is little evidence of formal induction occurring in almost all African countries. As Kitavi and van der Westhuizen (1997, p. 260) put it, "too often, and without consideration, principals in developing countries like Kenya are tossed into the job without pre-service training, without guarantee of in-service training, and without support from their employers". They report that most experienced principals overcame their problems through trial and error. However, "beginning principals in developing countries like Kenya need well-structured induction strategies that will make them effective and efficient educational managers. Without special attention to the entry year problems of beginning principals [. . .] other attempts at improving the quality of education in developing countries may yield few results" (p. 260).

These authors advocate eight induction strategies for new principals (Kitavi and van der Westhuizen, 1997, pp. 261-2):

(1) assign a veteran principal to assist the new appointee;
(2) provide manuals for new principals;
(3) ensure a smooth transition by involving the outgoing principal;
(4) orient the new principal to the school and its community;
(5) encourage networking with other principals;
(6) encourage principals to allow their deputies to "shadow" them to gain experience;
(7) visits to other schools; and
(8) provide courses in educational management.

In Ghana, Oduro (2003) reports that it is common practice, especially in rural schools, for headteachers to be left unsupported after appointment. Most headteachers assume duty with little or no knowledge of their job descriptions. One comments that:

> I was appointed all of a sudden to be the head, which I wasn't expecting. I didn't know many things involved in it. For instance, I didn't know keeping financial records or preparing for auditing was part of the headteacher's job (p. 298).

The result is that headteachers tend to depend principally on experiential learning in carrying out their leadership tasks.

The experience of new principals

It is evident from the discussion so far that, when new principals take up their posts, they have not been adequately prepared for their responsibilities and cannot expect any meaningful induction. Tekleselassie (2002, p. 60) refers to the "overload" affecting principals in Ethiopia.

Requiring principals to embark on such a demanding career without specific preparation "is a recipe for personal stress and system failure, and also has serious ethical implications" (Bush and Heystek, 2006). Kitavi and van der Westhuizen (1997, p. 253) describe the world of novice principals "as one filled with considerable anxiety, frustration and professional isolation [...] an increasingly clear picture shows new principals who cannot serve as instructional leaders, who tend to seek moral and ethical identities and suffer from feelings of stress associated with their new roles".

These authors surveyed 100 new principals from all eight Kenyan provinces and achieved a 65 per cent response rate. One question related to the "most serious problems facing beginning principals". The main responses are shown in Table I and indicate that the problems facing new principals are primarily to do with practical issues related to students, parents, resources and staff. Only the issue of "English as a medium of instruction" relates to the school's supposedly core function of teaching and learning. This suggests that the new leaders are preoccupied with these obstacles rather than focusing on their educational role. These issues are similar to those facing more experienced leaders but "beginning principals seemed to experience them with greater intensity" (p. 260).

Rank	Item
1	Students who cannot pay school fees
2	Shortage of school equipment
3	Students who cannot buy books
4	Shortage of physical facilities
5	Staff residential accommodation
6	Installing telephones
7	Parental illiteracy
8	Students travelling long distances
9	Lack of playground
10	Use of English as a medium of instruction
11	Clean water problem
12	Locating suitable social club
13	Inaccessibility of parents

Table I.
Most serious problems facing beginning principals in Kenya

Source: Adapted from Kitavi and van der Westhuizen, 2002, p. 255

The expectations of principals in Ethiopia are similar to those indicated for Kenya. Table II summarises the responsibilities delegated to the school principal. The activities indicated in Table II are prescriptive statements and may not represent the incumbents' practice. Tekleselassie (2002, pp. 60-1) notes that "the roles assigned to the principal portray the ones in bureaucratic and traditional organisations in which rules and procedure, rather than collaboration, teamwork and shared decision-making, govern action". Despite this critical comment, the activities seem to provide for a more substantial instructional leadership role than that indicated in the Kenyan research.

Oduro (2003) explains that, in Ghana, the workload of primary headteachers depends on whether they are *attached* or *detached*. Attached headteachers are obliged to teach and handle all subjects on the school timetable alongside administrative and management tasks, while detached headteachers perform only administrative and management tasks. His study of 20 new headteachers in the Komenda-Edina-

Area of responsibility	Number and type of responsibilities
Planning	Eight activities relating to planning, budgeting, teacher performance and the organisation of learning
Leading	Twelve activities relating to teaching and learning, finance, staff deployment and monitoring, parental links and teaching
Controlling	Eight activities relating to instructional leadership, student records and teacher assessment
Research	One activity relating to research on teaching and learning
Evaluating	Three activities relating to the evaluation of school objectives, teacher performance and the school curriculum
Reporting	One activity concerning reports to parents, teachers and the district education office

Table II.
Responsibilities delegated to the school principal in Ethiopia

Source: Adapted from Tekleselassie, 2002, p. 61

Eguafo-Abrem district shows that all attached headteachers complained about a heavy workload. In rural areas, a shortage of teachers compelled some headteachers to handle more than one class. One headteacher notes that:

> I have 231 pupils in my school with only four teachers. I'm handling Primary 3 and Primary 5. Quite recently, one of the teachers fell sick and I had to handle that class too. So one person handling three classes and doing administration at the same time . . . how can I be effective? (Oduro, 2003, pp. 122-3).

Oduro (2003) identifies four clusters of competences that headteachers require to accomplish their leadership tasks. Table III ranks these competences. The "professional capacity" cluster includes several items related to instructional leadership but these are normative constructs and do not necessarily represent leadership practice.

The South African Task Team on Education Management (Department of Education, 1996) stressed that management is important because it provides a supportive framework for teaching and learning:

> Management in education is not an end in itself. Good management is an essential aspect of any education service, but its central goal is the promotion of effective teaching and learning [. . .] The task of management at all levels is ultimately the creation and support of conditions under which teachers and their students are able to achieve learning [. . .] The extent to which effective learning is achieved therefore becomes the criterion against which the quality of management is to be judged (p. 27).

Despite this authoritative comment, which would be echoed in many other countries, there is only limited evidence of principals being developed for instructional leadership. Oplatka (2004, p. 434), for example, states that "in most developing countries [. . .] instructional leadership functions are relatively rare in schools, and principals are likely to adopt a stance in favour of administration and management". Bush and Heystek's (2006) research shows that most principals want training in finance and human resource management. Only 27.2 per cent of their respondents

Rank	Cluster	Competence indicators
1	Administrative capacity	Ability to keep school records, e.g. maintaining school finance records, keeping admission records, the log book, filing documents, etc.
2	Professional capacity	Ability to manage pupil assessment, knowledge of teacher appraisal techniques, knowledge of pupil teaching techniques, skills for teaching adults, ability to vet teachers' lesson notes, knowledge about leadership, skills for managing people, acquisition of higher academic knowledge, ability to counsel
3	Personal capacity	Fairness and firmness, tolerance, patience, commitment to work
4	Interpersonal capacity	Ability to relate well with staff, pupils, parents, the School Management Committee (SMC), circuit officers. Ability to promote teamwork, ability to conduct successful staff meetings, and possession of lobbying skills

Source: Adapted from Oduro, 2003, p. 211

Table III.
Main clusters of competences required by headteachers in Ghana

identify the management of teaching and learning as a development need. These authors conclude that:

> Principals are not conceptualising their role as "leaders of learning". Given the radical changes in school governance and management, it is understandable that principals wish to give priority to financial and staff management, and to relationships with school governing bodies. However, school improvement ultimately depends on school leaders accepting their responsibility for developing learning.

Kogoe (1986) claims that headteachers in Togo "need to adopt leadership roles by closer instructional leadership" but he adds that, while teachers expect leadership, "heads may prefer to see themselves as just administrators". The emphasis on educational leadership is also noted in the National Policy document for education in Botswana:

> The heads as the *instructional leaders*, together with the deputy and senior teachers, should take major responsibility for in-service training of teachers within their schools, through regular observations of teachers and organisational workshops, to foster communication between teachers on professional matters and to address weaknesses (Republic of Botswana, 1994, cited in Pansiri, 2006; emphasis added).

As noted above, policy prescriptions are not always fulfilled in practice. Pansiri's (2006) research with 240 teachers shows that 70 per cent say that they receive constructive feedback on their teaching but 71 per cent add that SMT members do not give demonstration lessons or provide coaching on how to handle certain topics. He concludes that "there is an urgent need for MoE to develop an in-service module for SMTs and teachers on instructional leadership".

Conclusion: a new approach to school leadership in Africa

The evidence presented in this article shows that school principals in Africa lead and manage their schools in very difficult circumstances. Almost every country can be classified as "developing", with severe economic, social, health and educational problems. Principals are usually appointed without specific preparation, receive little or no induction, have limited access to suitable in-service training and enjoy little support from the local or regional bureaucracy.

There are many reasons for this unsatisfactory situation. Most countries have very limited educational budgets and headteacher preparation is seen as a low priority. Donor countries and international agencies have introduced training initiatives but these are rarely sustained beyond the initial funding period. While the need for principalship training is widely recognized (e.g. Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996), translating perceived need into effective provision has proved to be elusive.

Another problem is the lack of capacity amongst those responsible for appointing, training and supporting headteachers. Many of these officials are no better qualified than the principals and they are also handicapped by limited resources. The long distances, and inadequate infrastructure, mean that principals in rural areas are rarely visited, increasing their sense of isolation. Shortages of teachers and material resources exacerbate this problem.

It would be easy, but facile, to advocate improved processes based on models in developed countries. What is more likely to succeed is a set of recommendations firmly grounded in the realities of African education. Even then, such prescriptions could be

achieved only through meaningful and long-term partnerships with governments, international agencies and universities in Western countries. A recent (2005) G8 African initiative provides the possibility of generating sufficient resources to address the many problems set out in this paper. The recommendations below are based on the assumption that funding would be provided to ensure effective implementation and long-term development.

Preparation

It is evident that preparation for school principals is inadequate throughout Africa. Most heads are appointed without any specific management training and few receive appropriate in-service training following appointment. While pre-service provision is highly desirable, this is inevitably more expensive because it is not always possible to identify those who are likely to be appointed as principals. Targeting the limited resources at newly appointed heads is much more cost-effective. This can also be seen as an important part of their induction, this is explained further in the next section.

The other advantage of in-service provision is that it can relate directly to the specific context facing the beginning principal. Crow (2001) distinguishes between professional and organizational socialization. The former relates to preparation to enact the role of principal while the latter concerns adaptation to the particular school context. In-service preparation enables these two phases to be linked.

There is an emerging consensus on the content of leadership development programmes in developed countries:

> The content of educational leadership programmes has considerable similarities in different countries, leading to a hypothesis that there is an international curriculum for leadership preparation. Most courses focus on leadership, including vision, mission and transformational leadership, give prominence to issues of learning and teaching, often described as instructional leadership, and incorporate consideration of the main task areas of administration or management, such as human resources and professional development, finance, curriculum and external relations (Bush and Jackson, 2002, pp. 420-1).

These elements are often contained within formal programmes delivered by universities, governments or other agencies, are usually sustained over many months or years, and typically lead to an academic or professional qualification. There are several problems in applying this approach to Africa. Budgets are unlikely to be sufficient to fund such a lavish model at an appropriate scale to meet the need. There is also limited capacity to develop, lead and facilitate such programmes. It would be sensible, therefore, to aim at more modest provision for the new principals accompanied by a "train the trainers" course at a higher level. The training should include an element of "instructional leadership" as it is clear that this is desired in many African countries even if they have experienced difficulty in turning aspiration into reality. Linking the training to a qualification is likely to motivate participants (Tekleselassie, 2002) and to raise the status of principals in their communities. A proposal under consideration in South Africa is for an Advanced Certificate in Education (Management) (Bush, 2005b). A similar approach could be adopted throughout Africa with a core component and customized elements to meet local requirements.

Table IV.
A model for leadership preparation in Africa

Component	Western countries	Africa (current)	Africa (proposed)
Educational budgets	Good	Very limited	Limited but to be augmented by systematic funding
Preparation capacity	Good	Very limited	Limited but to be developed through a "train the trainers" programme
Nature of preparation for principals	Variable but increasingly pre-service	Limited and usually in-service	Coherent in-service preparation
Qualification	Variable but often leading to an academic or professional qualification	Variable but usually no accreditation	Certificate in school leadership
Funding	Government and/or candidate funding	Very limited, *ad hoc* and episodic	Long-term donor funding
Appointment	Based on formal qualifications	Based on teaching experience and competence plus political and/or cultural factors	Based on teaching experience and leadership potential assessed by trained principals
Induction	Often linked to further specific preparation and may include mentoring	Little formal induction	To include in-service preparation (see above), networking and mentoring from an experienced principal

Selection and induction

In the absence of a pre-service management qualification, the recruitment and appointment processes cannot be underpinned by formal prerequisites. Developing a clear job description, and linking candidates' experience to these requirements, provides a useful starting point. As more principals experience training, they may also be able to nominate suitable candidates based on job-related practice in their current schools. As we noted earlier, however, such rational processes are often affected by political and cultural factors. One of these relates to gender and it is important that women have equal opportunities for promotion to senior posts, including headships.

The in-service training suggested above should make a valuable contribution to principals' induction. It also provides the potential for networking that could be sustained beyond the life of the course. Developing effective networks for both experienced and beginning principals may reduce their isolation.

Towards a model for leadership preparation and induction in Africa

The ideas and recommendations discussed in this paper provide a starting point for the construction of a model for leadership preparation and induction in Africa. Table IV presents a normative model alongside an overview of the current position in Africa and in Western countries.

The normative model in column three of Table IV is underpinned by the twin assumptions that schools are more likely to be effective if they have good leadership and that leaders are "made not born". Specific preparation is required if teachers, learners and communities are to have the schools they need and deserve. The model assumes that international funding will be made available for the development of a preparation programme grounded in the realities of African schools, that such funding will be sustainable, and that capacity will be developed by a "train the trainers" programme.

The model also assumes that the appointment of principals will be based on a systematic assessment of leadership potential linked to judgments about "acceptability" within local communities.

Appropriate training, recruitment and induction do not ensure that principals are equipped with the requisite skills, attitudes, knowledge and motivation to lead their schools effectively, but the model provides the potential for a significant improvement on the current position in most African countries. Further support from their superordinates, and their local communities, is essential if their schools, and the students they serve, are to succeed and help their countries to compete in an increasingly challenging global economy.

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Corresponding author
Tony Bush can be contacted at: tbush@lincoln.ac.uk