Analysis of the Problematic Nature of Appointment of Public Senior High School (SHS) Head Teachers and the Governance of Schools in Ghana

Joseph Ezale Cobbinah, University of Ghana, Ghana

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5200-7093

ABSTRACT

This article examines the problematic nature associated with the appointment of head teachers in Ghanaian senior high schools (SHS) and how this is impacting the governance of schools. The Ghana Education Service (GES) is supposed to make appointments and promotions of head teachers, however there are external bodies that influence the appointment process. With data gathered from deputy head teachers, education officers, and senior teachers from selected schools, the study examined the problematic nature of head teacher appointment and the nature of school governance. The results showed that although the GES is making efforts to promote good governance through the school leadership, there are still some controversies and challenges that affect the effectiveness of their work. To address this, the study concludes that, the GES must streamline its appointments and promotion guidelines so as to eliminate any external pressures and influences to promote improvement and ensure continuity.

KEYWORDS

Appointment, Board Members, Governance, Head Teachers, Parents, Professional, Promotion, Staff, Teachers

INTRODUCTION

There have been several research studies conducted in the area of school governance and how school governance could bring about school improvement or make schools more effective. Creese and Early (2005) carried out a research to access how good governance could help schools. The researchers observed that effective school governance brought additional responsibilities to head teachers, although the benefits outweighed whatever extra load and responsibilities that effective governance could generate. School governance in Ghana although very recent has been a very controversial issue in school leadership especially at the senior high school (SHS) level. This controversy seems to be due to the involvement of many actors that are in the management of schools in the country. For instance, the appointment of head teachers in public SHS that are supposed to be under the auspices of the GES also experienced a lot of setbacks, due to external influence. Some critics view school governance as helpful influence that could bring improvement to school. However, other critics have different views. For example, Hill and James (2016) have argued that, there is little evidence that supports the assertion that effective governance could help improve the performance of schools. While the work of Ofsted also emphasized such conclusion. Although effective school governance helps strengthen

accountability, the manner in which some governors work and how teachers have to work to help schools improve, remains unclear (Ofsted, 2016). This paper is not aiming at assessing whether effective school governing system could bring about improvement in the performance of schools, but rather seeks to investigate the controversies surrounding the appointment of school head teachers and selection of governors in public senior high schools in Ghana and how these factors influence the overall leadership, management and nature of governance in schools.

CONCEPTUALISING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

School governance as explained by Gann, could trace its roots back into the Dark Ages through to Victorian Times, when the first governing bodies of schools "were the boards of trustees responsible for setting up and running of English schools from the sixth century" (Gann, 2005, p. 6). Since then, governance has become a very significant concept in educational leadership and school improvement literature (Hudson, 2007). Governance may be defined as an organizational practice that emerges from people's actions and beliefs in the response and "dilemmas against the background of conflicting traditions" (Bevir, 2011, p. 5; Fawcett and Daugbjerg, 2012). It is an organizational process that determines how resources could be effectively utilized and how any future conflicts within the organization are resolved (Mair and Mayer, 2015). Fasenfest (2010) also explained governance as a set of decisions and processes that are made to reflect expectations of individuals through the leadership of those in government. The Concise Oxford Dictionary explains governance as "the act or manner of governing." Governance shows how actors of different social and economic backgrounds interdepend on each other but lack the capacity to decide and find solutions or policies unilaterally and directly (Chhotray & Stoker 2009).

The governance debate was examined through the lenses of Micheal Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, although "Michel Foucault, having died before the re-launch of governance as a concept, has not published on governance" (Zimmer & Sakdapolrak, 2012, p. 327). Before the re-launch, Foucault looked at governance through two different lenses; governing and the governed. According to Enroth, Foucault explained governing as a means through which individuals govern themselves; how the individuals could be governed and by whom they must accept to be governed (Foucault, 1991, cited in Enroth, 2014). The act of governance therefore works within "network that presents them with the task of channeling citizen's views to a range of public policy players, but, first, they must be clear what those views are and, second, they must be prepared to act as a conduit of such opinion" (Copus, 2010, p. 571). Critics also argue that, governance must be understood as a type administrative system that explains the constituent rules and components associated with the public sphere (Brenner, 1999; Martin, McKeown, Nixon & Ranson, 2000).

Governance involves a network of players, how the players understand their situation, how it might influence their behavior and how they exercise governance (Baker & Stoker, 2013). According to Bevir & Rhodes (2007, p. 581) governance is "the social construction of practice through the ability of individuals to create, and act upon meaning". It embraces the development of institutional relationships that harmonizes relationships in a globalized society (McCann, 2017). However, for the processes of governance to be effective, the actors need to negotiate, deliberate and become decentered on the issues affecting them (Bulkeley, 2012; Baker and Stoker, 2013). But the effectiveness of governance "does not mean that citizens will be successful in achieving their objectives, because it is not about success or failure in a desired outcome; rather, citizen's opinion will be transmitted to councilors" (Copus, 2010, p. 577). Governance should therefore be seen in terms of "political and not simply in legal or procedural terms" (see Glatter, 2003, p. 47) and how it could be applied in school leadership and school improvement.

Although the work of school governors is supposed to positively impact on the performance of schools, in some countries, the work of governors differs slightly. In England for instance, the introduction of school governing bodies in 1997 was to drive improvement in schools (Prew, 2009).

12 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/article/analysis-of-the-problematic-nature-of-appointment-of-public-senior-high-school-shs-head-teachers-and-the-governance-of-schools-in-ghana/256588

Related Content

Mathematics Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Instructional Practices and Engaging the iGeneration

Elizabeth Yvonne McInnis, Linda F. Cornelious, Jessica L. Murphy, Debra Princeand Wei-Chieh Wayne Yu (2021). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development (pp. 1-18).*

www.irma-international.org/article/mathematics-teachers-perceptions-of-effective-instructional-practices-and-engaging-the-igeneration/281115

Blended Learning Strategies for Engaging Diverse Student Cohorts in Higher Education

Josh McCarthy (2018). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development (pp. 29-45).*

www.irma-international.org/article/blended-learning-strategies-for-engaging-diverse-student-cohorts-in-higher-education/204532

Impact of Interactive Online TESOL Practicum Course on EL Teachers' Professional Growth: Collaborative Cyclic Guided Online Coaching

Kim H. Song (2019). *International Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development (pp. 81-98).*

www.irma-international.org/article/impact-of-interactive-online-tesol-practicum-course-on-el-teachers-professional-growth/217460

Systematic Evaluation of Innovative Pedagogies in Teacher Education Courses and Practica

Neal Shambaugh (2020). *Handbook of Research on Innovative Pedagogies and Best Practices in Teacher Education (pp. 184-205).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/systematic-evaluation-of-innovative-pedagogies-in-teacher-education-courses-and-practica/231158

Examining Issues Concerning Teacher Effectiveness: A Kenyan Perspective

Daniel Otieno Okech (2021). *International Beliefs and Practices That Characterize Teacher Effectiveness (pp. 172-191).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/examining-issues-concerning-teacher-effectiveness/280938