INDUCTING NEWLY-APPOINTED JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS (GHANA): A CASE STUDY OF SUNYANI MUNICIPALITY

Dr. Hinneh Kusi
Department of Psychology and Education,
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Abstract
This study explored induction activities organised for newly-appointed Junior High School headteachers in Ghana and ways of improving such programmes. It was a case-study located within the interpretive-qualitative framework. Data was gathered in two phases. In the first phase, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 75 headteachers and 10 circuit supervisors. The second phase involved a semi-structured interview with a maximal variation sampling of 16 headteachers (5 newly-appointed and 11 experienced) and 5 circuit supervisors who had already responded to the questionnaire. The study revealed that induction helped newly-appointed headteachers to address the problems they encountered at the early headship stages, and established links with other professionals for their professional growth and development. However, many factors including absence of formal policy on induction made the programmes ineffective. Strategies proposed for improving the induction of the headteachers included the formation of newly-appointed headteachers’ working group at cluster level and the production of a manual for them.

Introduction
Induction is a key issue in leadership development in recent times. It is a process ‘which enables a newcomer to become a fully effective member of an organization as quickly and as easily as possible’ (Earley & Kinder, 1994, p.143). Induction of newly-appointed headteachers is a common practice in most developed countries. However, it has received little attention in most developing countries, including Ghana. Oduro and MacBeath (2003) indicate that newly-appointed teachers who lead schools in the rural areas of this country are often left to fend for themselves owing to the absence of induction programmes for them. Also, there is no evidence of formal induction programmes for headteachers in most countries in Africa. Some informal ones exist, but the procedures used are inappropriate (Bush & Oduro, 2006), making them ineffective for the development of competent school leaders in these countries (Kitavi & Westhuizen, 1997; Oduro & MacBeath, 2003).

Within the last decade, efforts have been made to provide a guide for inducting newly-appointed headteachers in Africa (Bush & Oduro, 2006). However, in most cases, context-specific issues are not incorporated into the design of the programmes, making the programmes ineffective in meeting the needs of the headteachers. Bush and Jackson (2003) argue for the development and provision of context-specific programmesסטרategies for school leaders because they operate in different social, political and professional settings. This study looks at the induction of newly-appointed headteachers in the Ghanaian educational context.

The study examined the induction activities organised for newly-appointed Junior High School headteachers in the Sunyani municipality, and identified ways of improving such activities. It was significant in a number of ways. In the first place, the study contributed to existing limited literature on induction of headteachers in Africa in general, and the induction of newly-appointed headteachers in the Sunyani municipality and Ghana in particular. The study also enhanced understanding of the nature of induction in the municipality, enabling the education officers in charge of professional development to design
and implement more effective programmes for newly-appointed headteachers. Also, by presenting a picture of how newly-appointed headteachers were inducted into their roles in the context of the study and how the participants thought they should be inducted, this study provided a new direction for further debate.

Relevance of Inducting Newly-appointed Headteachers

Induction is a key component of professional development of headteachers, especially the newly-appointed. Middlewood and Lumby (2008) noted that induction helps staff in the field of education to socialise, achieve competence and to familiarise themselves with their institutional culture. Socialisation function of induction encompasses many elements, including accepting the reality of the organisation, learning how to work realistically and effectively on the job, as well as developing an identity (Schein, 1978 cited in Middlewood & Lumby, 2008).

Kakabadse, Ludlow and Vinnicombe (1987) noted that in an effort to achieve competence, newly-appointed staff undergo three stages namely, getting used to the new organization, re-learning new skills that would be applied, and becoming effective member of the organisation. Induction also helps new headteachers to acquire the relevant knowledge, skills attitudes and values that enable them to carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively (Coleman, 2006).

Amos (2000) contends that induction is meant to facilitate newly-appointed employees’ settlement in their new organizational environment through giving information about the job. This, according to Amos, helps to reduce stress, voluntary resignation from the organization, and to transfer their loyalty to their new organisation. Male (2006) shares this view, adding that induction is a management function intended to facilitate personnel assimilation, development and help them work more comfortably in their new organizations.

Factors that Militate against Effective Induction of Headteachers

Despite the usefulness of induction in educational organizations, there are a number of challenges that militate against its effectiveness. One of such challenges is the one-size-fits-all approach employed in organising the programmes in some educational contexts. This approach fails to take context-specific issues into consideration. Coleman (2006) contends that headteachers operate in diverse schools, each of which has a unique culture, making the general approach to induction inappropriate for them.

The duration of induction programmes is another factor that impedes its effectiveness. The duration of the programmes vary across educational contexts. Hobson, Brown, Ashby, Keys, Sharp and Benefield (2003) indicate that the duration is generally inadequate, making it difficult for headteachers to develop repertoires of skills for effective performance.

Literature also points out that one of the factors that militate against the effectiveness of induction programmes is lack of funds to acquire induction materials such as workbooks. This is particularly common in both the developing and under-developed countries in Africa where most governments allocate insufficient funds to the education sector. The result is often the organisation of short professional development courses (Odoro, 2003), including induction for staff.

Strategies for Inducting Headteachers

Induction is one element of professional development that has been given attention in most educational contexts, especially those in the advanced countries. However, due to contextual differences the strategies employed in such professional development activity vary across educational contexts. Bush and Jackson (2003) highlight the importance of developing context-specific training programmes, including induction for newly-appointed headteachers:
Despite globalization, the striking feature is that nations and states have developed very different models to address their common need for high quality leadership in schools. This diversity undoubtedly arises from the very different political, social and professional contexts, which have led to provision being tailored to the particular requirements of each society. In learning from the experience of others, it is vital to recognise that what works well in one country may not succeed elsewhere (p.427)

In recent years, attempts have been made to propose frameworks or strategies for inducting newly-appointed headteachers in the continent of Africa, as noted earlier. The strategies proposed by Bush and Oduro (2006), for example, included in-service preparation, opportunity for new headteachers to establish links with their colleagues (networking) and mentoring by experienced principals. It is interesting that Bush and Oduro (2006) proposed generic induction strategies for headteachers in the continent despite the fact that they operate in different professional contexts. The proposals are inconsistent with Bush and Jackson’s (2003) advice for contextualisation of professional development programmes offered for headteachers.

Kitavi and Westhuizan (1997) shared the induction strategies proposed by Bush and Oduro (2006), adding that newly-appointed headteachers should be mentored by experienced principals. Other induction strategies proposed by Kitavi and Westhuizan (1997) for the induction of headteachers, especially those in Kenyan educational contexts included the organization of in-service programmes and other activities for them, and out-going headteachers facilitating transition of the newly-appointed headteachers.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of induction programmes organised for newly-appointed Junior High School headteachers in the Sunyani municipality with the aim of identifying strategies for the improvement of such programmes. Therefore, a case study approach located within the interpretive - qualitative framework was employed for the study. The approach allowed the use of multiple methods to collect data from both the headteachers and the circuit supervisors in their own socio-cultural context for the achievement of the purpose of the study. The experiences of participants in qualitative studies are shaped in their context and will be impossible to be understood if removed from that context (Kincheleoe, 1991; O’Leary, 2005).

The study required on-going data collection and analyses. The first phase involved the administration of a semi-structured questionnaire to 75 headteachers (both experienced and newly-appointed) and 10 circuit supervisors to gather their views on the usefulness of induction programmes, strategies used to induct newly-appointed headteachers as well as factors that militate against their effective induction in the municipality. The second phase of the study involved a semi-structured interview with a maximal variation sample of 6 circuit supervisors who had already responded to questionnaire to explore some key issues in the data. The interviews were conducted on face-to-face basis in the participants’ own socio-cultural context.

Sixty-five (65) representing 86.7% of the seventy-five questionnaires administered to headteachers were returned, while seven (7) out of the ten (10) administered to the circuit supervisors were returned. Both data sets were analysed thematically (Creswell, 2008) and followed the same process. The process of data analysis involved transcribing the interviews, organising both data sets on separate sheets before reading through them repeatedly to immerse myself in them. Then each data set was coded according to identified categories or themes. The last stage of the analysis involved a detailed description of each of the themes to
form a framework. Direct quotations from the participants were used to add realism (Creswell, 2008) to the discussion, when necessary.

The findings of this particular study were validated through triangulation, which involves ‘the use of two or more methods of data collection in a study of some aspect of human behaviour’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.11). Specifically, data and respondent triangulation (Bush, 2002) were employed to validate the findings. The former was achieved by comparing the findings of the semi-structured questionnaire and interview for similarities and differences, while comparing the responses of the circuit supervisors and headteachers (the respondents) helped to achieve the latter type of triangulation.

Discussion

The key issues that emerged from this study were related to the nature and relevance of induction programmes for newly-appointed headteachers, the challenges of such programmes as well as strategies for inducting the headteachers. The findings relating to each of these issues is presented and discussed below.

The Nature of Induction Programmes

It emerged from both the questionnaire and interview data that induction programmes for newly-appointed headteachers in the context of the study were informal – they were voluntarily initiated by the circuit supervisors and some education officers, especially the regional managers. However, the programmes were not accessible to all the newly-appointed headteachers. Both the respondent and participating headteachers noted that most of the newly-appointed headteachers were inducted individually by their circuit supervisors. Such meetings were an opportunity for the circuit supervisors to expose the headteachers to the knowledge, skills and competences they felt the headteachers needed to work effectively. The circuit supervisors interviewed confirmed the one-to-one basis induction for the headteachers:

Those that I appointed, yes, I inducted them myself. I sat with each of them, taught them how to vet lesson notes, keep school records, admission process, and how to enter log book. I did this myself - it was not official (A participant circuit supervisor).

The induction process involved the introduction of the headteachers to relevant knowledge and skills required for their tasks and what their role entailed. This was probably because most aspiring headteachers in the Ghanaian educational context do not undergo any pre-service training. In most cases, the appointment of headteachers in this context is based mainly on seniority and experience (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Oduro, 2003) – the relevant academic and professional qualifications are not often considered.

The headteachers who did not undergo any induction programmes, had worked under their predecessors as assistant headteachers and believed that the education officers took their background experience for granted, as commented by a respondent male headteacher:

Since I was an assistant head for a long time, I learnt many skills and did things on my own. I even used to attend management workshops before I was appointed as a headteacher. Therefore, the officers thought induction was irrelevant for me.

The circuit supervisors who responded to the questionnaire confirmed the headteacher’s view. It emerged that the informal induction programmes were inaccessible to some headteachers for two main reasons. Firstly, some of the circuit supervisors interviewed felt they did not participate in the appointment of the headteachers and, therefore, saw no need to carry out that responsibility. This suggested that the only way the circuit supervisors could induct newly-appointed headteachers would be if they participated in their appointment.
Secondly, some headteachers served as assistant headteachers prior to their appointment to such positions, so it was assumed that they did not require any induction.

This suggested that the assistant headship position served as a training ground for their headship career and implied that they were mentored by their predecessors. This 'pre-service mentoring' arrangement appeared to agree with the proposal by Kitavi and Westhuizan (1997) that experienced principals should mentor assistant heads as future headteachers. However, whereas this involved a formal arrangement, the 'pre-service mentoring' practices found by my study were informal in nature.

**Relevance of Induction**

The findings of this study indicated that induction was of several importance to newly-appointed headteachers in the context of the study. Firstly, the participants pointed out that it facilitated the newly-appointed headteacher's transition from teaching roles into headship position. A respondent female headteacher, for example, emphasised this view, citing her personal example: 'induction helped me to avoid early headship challenges so I think it is good for all new headteachers'. The headteachers noted that the absence of formal induction programmes for newly-appointed headteachers in the context of this particular study was responsible for some of the challenges they encountered in the early stages of their headship career. This view was supported by some of the circuit supervisors. One of them commented:

> Since there are no formal induction programmes for the heads, many of them could and cannot avoid problems in the early stages of their career. There is the need to develop induction programmes to support the beginning headteachers, in particular.

Literature indicates that induction programmes are necessary to expose newly-appointed headteachers to the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for better performance (Kitavi & Westhuizan, 1997; O'Neil, Middlewood & Glover, 1994). The respondent headteachers and circuit supervisors in my study acknowledged this view. They saw induction as part of continuous professional development that would compensate for the skills lost owing to the absence of formal pre-service programmes for headteachers in general. This view was also highlighted by some of the circuit supervisors. For instance, one of them expressed his view as follows:

> In the absence of training programmes for teachers with headship aspirations, the importance of induction for those teachers cannot be underestimated. It would equip them with the skills and competences required for dealing with the early headship challenges.

The respondents considered the induction of newly-appointed headteachers relevant because it would serve as an avenue to equip them with the knowledge and competencies required for addressing the early headship challenges. Similarly, Middlewood and Lumby (2008) indicated that induction programmes enable inductees to acquire knowledge and skills to perform in their new post.

It emerged from the data that well-organised induction programmes would expose new headteachers to the organizational culture and practices, where the organization is going as well as its purpose (its vision and mission), enabling them to contribute effectively towards the achievement of such goals. Literature also indicates that induction exposes newly-appointed staff to institutional culture, thereby making them transfer their loyalties from the previous workplace to their new organization (Jackson & Lumby, 2008). Organizational culture powerfully influences the character, quality and outcome of new staff's early years on the job. Therefore, they need to be inducted to get them acquainted with their new work environment (Johnson & Kardos, 2002).
The participants of the study also noted that induction enables the newly-appointed headteachers to familiarise themselves with other stakeholders of the schools and establish links with experienced headteachers for support and professional growth and development. This view is, in a sense, similar to networking, which involves developing and using contacts to secure information, advice and support for achieving set goals.

Challenges of Effective Induction

Both the respondents and the interviewees identified a number of challenges that they believed militated against successful induction programmes in the context. In the first place, they noted that lack of formal policy on induction make many education officers, especially those in the leadership position, take such practice for granted. The interviewees, in particular suggested that induction policy and activities for newly-appointed staff have to be documented if the authorities would take them seriously.

Another challenge to a successful induction identified by the participants relates to those who had the responsibility of inducting the newly-appointed headteachers. It emerged that since there was no formal policy on induction in the context, such programmes were initiated voluntarily by the education authorities, especially the circuit supervisors. The majority of the circuit supervisors interviewed said they often refused to induct the headteachers because they did not participate in their appointment, as noted earlier. One circuit supervisor, as an example, remarked:

We do not participate in the induction of new headteachers. The issue is that if I do not have any role in appointing them, what role should I play in inducting them? The person who appointed them should get them inducted! The authorities must remember that we work directly with the teachers so we know them better!

The participants also contended that the municipality lacked education officers who had the requisite expert knowledge in induction activities, making the activities boring and ineffective. A newly-appointed female headteacher interviewed, for example, commented:

The authorities always talk about our induction or orientation, but they possess very little knowledge in such activities, making the whole process or activity boring. They have to find ways of making the programmes interesting!

Hobson et al. (2003) pointed out that one of the factors that made the implementation of induction programmes in the United States of America problematic was that the programmes were designed in ways that neglected the needs of the inductees. This points to the need to assess the training needs of the inductees and factor them into the design of the programmes.

Both the headteachers who responded to the questionnaire and participated in the interviews, in particular, noted that the education officers often exposed the headteachers to the same knowledge and skills irrespective of their location in the municipality. A female headteacher interviewed, for example, commented:

The needs of new headteachers working in both the urban and rural areas have to be taken into consideration in running the programmes. They cannot just organise the same activities for new headteachers operating in both the rural and urban centres within the municipality!

This indicated that one-size-fits approach to induction was inappropriate for meeting the needs of the newly-appointed headteachers due to differences in social and professional contexts in which they operated. This implied that differentiating the induction programmes was necessary in an attempt to meet the needs of the headteachers.
Inducting Newly-appointed Headteachers: Strategies

The circuit supervisors and headteachers interviewed proposed a number of strategies for inducting newly-appointed headteachers in the setting of the study. To begin with, they felt that a working group should be formed at cluster level for the new headteachers. A similar study conducted in the United Kingdom and some developed countries in North America suggested that newly-appointed headteachers in local areas were organised to support each other (Hobson et al., 2003). The formation of a working group by the newly-appointed headteachers could serve as a platform for them to share knowledge, ideas, and experiences and address problems together.

The interviewees also proposed that a link should be established with university professionals for them to help beginning headteachers in addressing their problems, implying that the support provided by 'local experts' was inadequate or less effective. This suggestion appeared to be similar to mentoring (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Hobson et al., 2003; Kitavi & Westhuizen, 1997). However, whereas mentoring strategy allows inexperienced people/professionals to depend on or to be attached to experienced, skillful professionals for their personal growth and professional development (Erasmus & Westhuizen, 1994), it appeared that the expert support from the university professionals would be provided as and when necessary.

The interviewees also felt that a manual for beginning headteachers would be useful for their induction. The manual would serve as a guide to the headteachers in performing their roles. Oduro (2003) indicated that the GES had produced a Headteachers' manual to guide them in carrying out their day-to-day functions. The proposal for a manual for beginning headteachers, therefore, suggested that the one produced by the GES was less effective or inadequate in addressing their needs. This highlighted the need for the development of differentiated manuals for headteachers – a manual for beginning headteachers and another one for the experienced ones.

It came out of both the questionnaire and interview data that, as part of the newly-appointed headteachers' induction, they should be trained in specific areas. These included instructional supervision, teacher motivation, office administration, human relationships, management of information, and headship roles. A study conducted by Hobson et al. (2003), however, indicated that the newly-appointed headteachers in England and Wales were exposed to personnel and financial issues. The differences in the competencies identified by these two studies might be attributed to contextual differences. As noted earlier, Bush and Jackson (2003) argued that headteachers operate in different political, social and professional contexts and, therefore, programmes have to be adapted to their varied needs.

Both the respondents and interviewees felt that newly-appointed headteachers should be provided with the opportunity to visit other schools to see how the environment operates. This could expose them to good practices and offer them the opportunity to establish links with other professionals for their own professional growth and development.

Conclusion

The participants emphasised the need to induct newly-appointed junior high school headteachers in the context of the study. It emerged from the study that induction programmes would help the newly-appointed headteachers to address the problems they encounter at the early stages of their headship career, expose them to their institutional culture, and give them the opportunity to interact with other professionals for their own growth and development. However, there was no formal policy on the induction of newly-appointed headteachers in the municipality.

It could be argued that the relevance of induction in the continuous professional development of newly-appointed headteachers cannot be under-estimated. Therefore, such
policy has to be formalised by the GES authorities in the municipality in particular. Formalising induction in the municipality would make the circuit supervisors and other top-ranked education officers see it as their duty to organise such programmes for the newly-appointed headteachers. It would also give all newly-appointed headteachers access to the programmes irrespective of their background experience and location.

It came out of the study that some newly-appointed headteachers were denied access to induction programmes organised by the education officers in the municipality because they were believed to have worked under their predecessors. This practice could be formalised by making experienced headteachers in the context help in the training of deputy headteachers as potential future headteachers (Kitavi & Westhuizen, 1997).

The findings showed that the training needs of the headteachers were solely determined by the education officers, making the programmes ineffective in meeting the needs of the headteachers. The induction programmes would be more useful to the headteachers if they participate in determining their own induction needs, which could be assessed through the relevant instruments and be factored into the design of the programmes.

The participants also complained that although the headteachers operated in different social and professional contexts, they were often exposed to the same knowledge, skills and competences. Therefore, there is the need for the programmes to be differentiated to cater for the diverse personal and contextual needs of the inductees.

The findings suggested that the education officers in the context of the study did not have adequate knowledge to lead the induction programmes. There is, therefore, the need for them to be re-trained for effective organization of the programmes. Professional development programmes that focus on induction of newly-appointed staff could be organised for the education officers. Such programme could equip them with ‘expert knowledge’, giving them more professional credibility among the headteachers, especially the newly-appointed ones in the municipality.

References


