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Transformational Leadership and Teacher Capacity Building to Improve Teaching and Learning in Ghanaian Polytechnics

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Abstract:
The accomplishment of every educational goals and objectives depends highly on teachers who are the prime movers in the implementation of curriculum and teaching and learning. The challenging roles of the classroom teacher put a greater demand on teacher capacity building. Therefore, to ensure teacher performance and desired learning outcomes in Ghanaian polytechnics, the leadership of the polytechnics have a big responsibility to develop teacher capacity to thrive in teaching and learning and innovation to attain current educational demands in the country. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to highlight the need to promote transformational leadership behaviours and the continuous learning and development of lecturers in Ghanaian polytechnics to effectively and efficiently fulfill their roles academic staff.
The value of the paper therefore is the recognition that workers are an asset to every organization and it is up to the management of such organizations to value and develop them. It recommends that there is the need for transformational leadership behaviours to be displayed within Ghanaian polytechnics since these have been found to be a suitable style in times of educational reforms and changing circumstances. The paper will be especially beneficial to the management of the polytechnics, polytechnic teachers, students, policy makers and other stakeholders in tertiary education and the field of human resources management as well.

Key words: Polytechnic teacher, rector, development, capacity building, transformational leadership

1. Introduction

Since student outcomes depend greatly on teacher quality, governments, policy makers and school managers need to foster teachers' continuous professional development in order to cope effectively with ongoing changes and improve the quality of education. Strengthening internal school conditions to promote teachers' professional development is considered an important prerequisite for addressing a continuous stream of changes in their environments. Quality teachers who can perform their responsibilities with great commitment are prerequisites for successful and excellent education. Quality curriculum implemented through effective instruction should ensure successful teaching and learning in schools. This requires that all activities and resources in schools should be optimized to ensure that teaching and learning are implemented effectively (Omar et al., 2011; Grigsby et al., 2010; Duze, 2009a; Hill, 1990). Goodwin (2010) identified at least three new norms that are currently influencing the education system as:

- Classrooms are becoming more and more diverse, almost regardless of location;
- Teachers can expect to work alongside colleagues who have not been recruited locally, or they themselves may be searching for regional or international teaching jobs;
- Teachers will be instructing children who are not only diverse in culture, knowledge and skills but may enter the classroom with very unique and challenging needs.

The above norms put a demand on Ghanaian polytechnic teachers' capacity to effectively handle the lecture halls as well the roles of polytechnic leadership as effective transformational leaders. According to Omar et al., (2011), the role of teachers will continue to develop in tandem with the current developments in the world of education because education is a social phenomenon that is dynamic and often subjected to changes and innovations in the larger society. These changes and innovations are occurring in curriculum diversifications and pedagogic practices, and, for the educational system to survive and be equally current, it needs to keep in step with these. In this era of globalization, marked by its borderless world through Information and Communication Technology (ICT), this change becomes more prominent. These changes have created new needs in knowledge, science and technology, changed the trend and profile of students, and modified the role and function of tertiary institutions making them more challenging than before. Bottery (2006) stresses the impact of globalization on education and considers the role of the educators

should be re-defined as a consequence, with school leaders needing to play a vital role in such challenging circumstance. As a consequence of the phenomenon of globalization there is widespread evidence of many countries seeking transformations in their education systems (Harris et al., 2003; Bottery, 2004). Ghana is a typical example of a nation exploring the consequence of globalization and the possible impact on its educational provision. Omar et al. (2011) observe that globalization has changed the teaching profession landscape and this reality needs to be accepted not only by teachers and trainee teachers but also by all school administrators. Consequently, today's classroom environment and student and teacher behaviours are very different from what they used to be some decades back. The effect of rapid and continuous accessibility to technology and innovation has changed the learning needs of students the world over.

In Ghana, this is further aggravated by constant demands from parents and stakeholders who are seeking excellent education. This phenomenon demands that teachers are always alert and involved in the continuous development process to master the latest knowledge, skills and competencies required to match the emerging changes and innovations. It therefore becomes necessary that teachers must possess the ability and capability to handle these changes to ensure their roles and functions remain relevant in schools (Omar et al., 2011; Duze, 2009b). With the innovations and sophistications in ICT in education, the need to continuously build and rebuild Ghanaian polytechnic teachers' capacities in teaching and learning becomes very pertinent. But the questions posed by this paper are, who is in the best position to handle this role and responsibility? Should this be handled by teachers through the practice of self-directed individual learning or should the role of polytechnic leadership involve a paradigm shift from being largely an educational administrator to being more of a transformational leader? And is there a need for Ghanaian polytechnic leaders to display transformational behaviours due to the challenges of educational reform and globalization? It was in answering these questions that the issues of building teacher leaders and establishment of continuous and effective teacher learning culture through effective transformational leadership were explored.

2. Methodology
The study is mainly a literature review with a special focus on transformational leadership and teacher capacity building.

3. Transformational Leadership in Educational Settings
According to Alsaeedi and Male (2013), the concept of transformational leadership first emerged with the work of Burns (1978) who stated that such a leader focuses on change, therefore transforming others within the organization, and 'looks for potential motive followers and seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower'. Bass (1985) later claimed that transformative leaders "… convert followers to disciples; they develop followers into leaders. They elevate the concerns of followers on Maslow's need hierarchy for safety and security to needs for achievement and self-actualizations, increase their awareness and consciousness of what is really important and move them to go beyond their own self-interest for the good of the larger entities to which they belong. The transforming leader provides followers with a cause around which they can rally". The author further states that the components of transformational leadership are an idealized influence, meaning that leaders behave as a role model and are highly respected; inspirational motivation is exhibited in ways that motivate followers and enthuse them, such as;

- Communicating high expectations;
- Providing intellectual stimulation whereby creativity and innovations are strongly reinforced;
- Individualized consideration that takes into account followers' needs.

Bass (1985) contends that early work on transformational leadership was mostly concerned with events and processes within politics, business and the armed services. It can be seen from such studies, however, how valuable followers are for transformational leadership and how this emphasis has distinguished it from studies on other leadership styles. This distinction appears to attract educationalists, invites them to extract its concept and apply it within institutions that seek reform such as the polytechnics in Ghana. Leithwood and Jantzi (200), for example, suggest that transformational leadership behaviours appear to be suitable in a time of reform to contribute towards the development of the capacity, commitment and motivation of the school workforce, with their findings being reflected in other similar studies (Day et al., 2001; Geiisel et al 2003; Stewart, 2006). Litz and Litz (2009) conclude that: "Perhaps transformational models of organizational learning and leadership are exactly the sort required for educational systems to prosper in the modern global world". Consequently, Hallinger (2003) mentions that many sets of leadership behaviours have been established and taken into account in order to be consistent with the evolving trends in educational reforms.

According to Alsaeedi and Male (2013), transformational leadership in educational setting works through inspiring the school workforce to build a sense of efficacy which leads to improved student outcomes. They mentioned that Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) described transformational leadership practices, where behaviours of transforming leaders are seen to be consistent with the educational context in terms of the following dimensions:

- Building a school vision
- Establishing school
- Providing intellectual stimulation
- Symbolizing professional practices and values;
- Demonstrating high performance expectations'
- Developing a structure to foster participation in school decisions;
- Offering individual support

The above dimensions appear to inspire the leadership of the polytechnics to establish behaviours expected to generate the transformational effects. This is so because Sergiovanni (2007) claims that this approach advocates a shared leadership base whereby the workforce participate in decision making, which focuses on effective curriculum development and instructional practices. Consequently, it is believed that the leadership practices emanating from these dimensions would build a shared vision and encourage polytechnic teachers to reassess their efforts and work. Under this broad line the behaviours of the leadership of the polytechnics will reflect the objectives of the polytechnics and are crucial in providing the teachers with practical examples of modeling organizational values. The teachers will thereafter be persuaded to invent new strategies in classrooms and create initiatives that engage all students more fully with the learning experience. Proper (2010), as cited in Alsaeedi and Male (2013), claims that the behaviours associated with transformational leadership style transform staff into taking up opportunities to determine the best path to reach goals in keeping with the school or organization's beliefs and visions. The author claims that staff are empowered to take on leadership roles in certain areas according to their responsibilities towards learning and teaching because they know the needs of their students through their interactions with them. This eventually results in a strong school culture and the commitment of its members to a better student experience. Important in doing this is teacher continuous development.

4. Teacher Continuous Development

Technical and vocational education training institutions have been placed at the heart of Ghana's educational reforms and their levels of accountability and responsibility have risen, particularly for polytechnic administrators. The onus is on the management of the polytechnics to improve their practices or adopt the necessary leadership behaviours to achieve their organizational goals in accordance with reform and globalization. In essence, continuous teacher development is a strategy to update and enhance teacher knowledge, skills and competencies and to sustain and improve commitment. This will in turn improve teaching and learning and enhance students' success in the polytechnics. Harteis (2009) argues that acquisition of knowledge and skills in technical and vocational educational training (TVET) does not only concern the learners but also the teachers who ought to develop their competence over time as circumstances change to better guide the learning process. This implies that successful professional development arrangements are necessary for polytechnic teachers to enrich their knowledge and skills; improve their practical or professional qualifications and be abreast with permanent change driven by developments in society and the economy (Bakah, 2011). Consequently, continuous learning and development must be a necessary requirement for every polytechnic teacher because teachers who fail to continue learning after their pre-service training will fail to fulfill their roles effectively. Their ability to synthesize content with pedagogy and technology to effectively generate current pedagogical-technological-content knowledge will definitely be limited. Again, their creativity would fade and teaching would become dull and boring while the demands for change in curriculum and teaching would not be fulfilled.

Omar et al. (2011) argued that since teachers are more inclined towards using pedagogical reasoning and actions that are technical rather than reflective, the most unfortunate outcome of lack of continuous learning would be that teachers become prisoners of their own experience. In other words, there is the tendency to repeat technically, year after year, the same experience, approach, knowledge and skills acquired and practiced at the beginning of their careers without reflecting and innovating their teaching methods based on current changes and developments. The result, according to them, is that these teachers would be unable to produce students who are creative, critical and innovative even when curricular changes had been made to match the demands of the day. Similarly, Duze (2011) asserts that change in curriculum without corresponding change in the attitude of teachers who are implementers and assessors of curriculum would not bring about meaningful educational innovation. Gordon (2009) also posits that a negative attitude to change is a phenomenon dominant among teachers who are less involved in the process of continuous development while Shulmen (1987) emphasizes that serving teachers need continuous development in strategic knowledge to confront troublesome, ambiguous teaching situations and build wisdom of practice.

5. Instructional Leadership

According to Lashway (2002), instructional leadership role involves setting clear goals, allocating resources to instruction, managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, and evaluating teachers. They involve those actions that the head of a school takes or delegates to others with keen commitment to promote growth in student learning. He makes instructional quality the top priority of the school and endeavours to bring that vision to realization. Flath (1989) observed that school leaders who pride themselves as administrators/managers are too preoccupied in dealing with strictly administrative/managerial duties compared to principals who are instructional leaders. Blase and Blase (2000) expressed instructional leadership in specific behaviours such as making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling effective instruction, soliciting opinions, supporting collaboration, providing professional development opportunities, and giving praise for effective teaching. It involves much deeper concern in the core technology of teaching and learning, carries more sophisticated views of professional development, and emphasizes the use of data in making decisions (Deborah, 2002). According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2001), instructional leaders have six roles: making student and adult learning the priority; setting high expectation for performance; gearing content and instruction to standard; creating culture of continuous learning for adult; using multiple sources of data to access learning; and activating the community's support for school success. Here, teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss their work, work together to solve problem, reflect on their jobs, and take responsibility for what students learn. They operate in networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies or in isolation and people in a learning community own the problem and become agents of its solution (NAESP, 2001). Thus, as an instructional leader, the polytechnic rectors are the pivotal points within the institutions who affect the quality of individual teacher instruction, the height of student achievement, and the degree of efficiency in the functioning of the polytechnics. Therefore, commitment and application of

instructional leadership will enable the rectors to successfully develop teacher capacity in aspects of teaching and learning. Important in doing this is building teacher leadership and continuous learning culture.

6. Building Teacher Leadership

It is necessary to build teacher leadership in Ghanaian polytechnics. Danielson (2006) defined teacher leadership as the skills demonstrated by classroom teachers who not only teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere. Teacher leadership drives other teachers to increase performance, especially in teaching and learning because teachers do have expert and reference power that can influence their other colleagues to positive attitudes towards work. Teacher leaders are not assigned formal positions but earned leadership by working to improve instruction, sharing their knowledge with staff and the community to build the instructional capacity of the school. Austen (2010) posits that teacher leadership can have significant impact on school improvement efforts. Crowther et al. (2002) developed a teacher leadership model that consists of six main functions as follows:

- Convey conviction about a better world;
- Strive for authenticity in their teaching, learning, and assessment practices;
- Facilitate communities of learning through organization-wide process;
- Confront barriers in the school's culture and structures;
- Translate ideas into sustainable system of action; nature a culture of success.

Similarly, Danielson (2006) mentioned that teacher leadership involves the following practices: the use of evidence and data in making decisions; seeing opportunities and initiatives; moving other people to achieve shared aims; organize resources; and taking action; supervising improvements and changing the approaches when the situation changes; retain other people's commitment; and contribute to organizational learning. This list of practices is closely related to teacher capacity development and is a great contribution to schools in achieving especially the aims of curriculum and teaching (Omar et al., 2011). One of the most consistent research findings of effective leadership in schools is that authority to lead is not located in the person of the leader but can be diffused within the school in-between and among staff (Mulford, 2003; Day et al, 2000; Carter and Klotz, 1990). Mulford (2003) observed a growing understanding that leadership is embedded in various organizational contexts within school communities, not centrally vested on a person or an office. Literature also reveals that where decision making is perceived by teachers in secondary school as collegial, cooperative and consultative and providing adequate opportunities for participation, it will be more likely to lead to positive student perceptions about their school and teachers as well as perception about relationships and their own performance than where decision making is more top-down, executive, or does not foster widespread teacher involvement (Duze, 2011; Omar *et al*., 2011). Therefore in the context of Ghanaian polytechnics, the aspect of distributing the leadership role to teachers and other members of the school organization, should be viewed positively and encouraged. For instance, lecturers have credibility to identify and analyze issues in the lecture hall in teaching and learning. Therefore, in aspects of teaching and learning where lecturers are leaders in the lecture hall, it is only reasonable for the rectors to intensify the lecturer's role to lead. In the teacher capacity building context, teacher leaders can play an important role in assisting the rectors to implement transformational leadership. These inputs could be information and data that could be used in decision-making to ensure that decisions are relevant and appropriate in schools (Omar *et al.*, 2011; Blase & Blase, 2000; Smylie & Conyers, 1991).

 Teacher leadership is not only about contributing to the decision making process in the institutions but can also lead other teachers in the same institution or otherwise to achieve desired instructional objectives. Teacher leaders also form excellent net-workings with other teachers and experts in certain fields. Studies show that teacher leadership generally helps teachers in performing their duties especially those that are related to instruction. Teacher leaders' ability to act as agent of change in parallel leadership with their rectors has been found effective. Austen (2010) observed that principals that establish focused goals to meet the immediate needs of the reform, and clearly communicate those goals to the teacher leaders, enable the teacher leaders to effectively implement the goals to the remainder of the staff. However, an observed handicap in teacher leadership is often based on the traditional view where teachers' work was seen as passive and must wait for directives and guidance from the higher authorities before proceeding. As a result, often times the curriculum is designed by experts whereas teachers only implement them. Moreover, teachers do not appear to have their own directions but instead hope that their heads would provide one for them. From the teacher leadership's point of view, teaching is regarded as professional work where teachers are assisted in the implementation (Omar *et al.*, 2011). Teacher leaders need to make autonomous decisions and actions that support student learning. Institutional leadership especially the rector should provide trust and support to teacher leaders to enable them carry out their duties effectively as observed by Zepeda *et al.* (2003). Barth (2001) emphasized that to tap the potential of teacher leaders, the profession needs to invent, expand, and honour a variety of opportunities for teacher leadership so that there will be more choices than being 'either' a principal or a teacher. He argued that if more widespread teacher leadership is to be attained in schools, educators will also have to explore multiple conception of the teacher's role today as team leader and teacher, as teacher researcher, and as master teacher. A study by Omar *et al.* (2011) revealed that Malaysia had taken a step further in this respect by recognizing the teacher leaders with a 'promotion position' known as *Guru Cemerlang* (Excellent Teacher). In Ghana, however, the polytechnic teacher is yet to be afforded the honour he should deserve.

7. Building a Continuous Learning Culture

Teacher learning should not happen as a one-off event. As long as the teacher teaches in the classroom, learning for him actually goes on either consciously or unconsciously not with the myriads of experiences gained from learners from different homes, different societal status, different environments, and different cultures. That notwithstanding, it cannot be denied that specific programmes for teacher development such as in-service courses, workshops, and seminars are important. The problem is that

attendance may not be meaningful if the culture of the school does not assist in strengthening the knowledge and skills obtained. This is so because professional learning culture that exists in schools enables knowledge and skills to be shared and developed. In practice however, professional learning culture in school context does not happen as expected (Omar *et al.*, 2011). In the context of a polytechnic institution, this is where the role of the rector as a transformational leader becomes very important.

Fullan (2008) noted that professional learning communities were being implemented superficially giving the educators involved a false sense of progress, while the deeper cultural changes required for school improvement were not being tackled. According to him, learning is the work itself, not workshops and courses and strategic retreats. The author further argues that learning is also not school improvement plans or individual leadership development but rather a maxim precisely about the need to address day-to-day cultural changes. In other words, money spent on sending teachers for further training and courses would be wasted if the school environment does not support and strengthen the learning obtained. He concludes that it is largely through sharing activities that knowledge and skills gained by teachers in courses and workshops can be disseminated to benefit other teachers and schools. To ensure that learning communities exist and develop in schools, it becomes expedient to build close relationships and collaborations among teachers. This should be one major undertaking in the polytechnic rector's role as an instructional leader. Furthermore, the attitude of cooperation and helping each other on personal issues usually observed among teachers should also extend a great deal to career and professional concerns.

However, in Ghana, the congeniality among teachers as a result of neglect by government is so high that capturing the potentials will be greatly beneficial in creating and developing professional learning communities. According to Barth (1990), relations and associations in schools should be viewed from two perspectives – congeniality and collegiality. According to the author, congeniality involves the personal aspect while collegiality emphasizes the professional aspect. Congeniality refers to the friendly human relationship that exists among teachers and is characterized by the loyalty, trust, and easy conversation that result from the development of a closely-knit social group. On the other hand, Collegiality refers to the existence of high levels of collaboration among teachers and between teachers and heads and is characterized by mutual respect, shared work values, cooperation, and specific conversations about teaching and learning (Omar *et al*., 2011). The fact remains that relationships and associations in the form of congeniality globally have been generally long existed among teachers. Therefore, what needs to be assertively promoted within Ghanaian polytechnics for the purpose of professional learning culture is collegiality. As a result, a paradigm shift in the polytechnic rector's role as greater transformational leader as well as a change in relations are needed and should be reinforced in the polytechnics. As noted by Glickman (1990), polytechnic rector as a transformational leader can determine the strength and weakness of teachers and provide the necessary guidance. Again, the teachers can also strengthen self-directed learning besides reinforcing the value of sharing of knowledge and information. Through this collaboration, the value of trust can be established and inculcated. When trust exists in the professional aspect, Duze (2011) believes more challenging activities can be implemented including peer assessment, peer supervision, peer evaluation and other activities.

Writing on the role of school principals in teacher capacity building, Omar *et al.* (2011) also assert that through guidance by the principal, self-directed learning among teachers and the contributions of colleagues, the school can establish a sustainable learning community. Besides, knowledge sharing is central to the success of all knowledge management strategies. A research by Chaudry (2005) shows that this practice is flourishing in informal organizations whereas its benefits are also needed in formal organizations like tertiary institutions. The study therefore suggests that a system for capturing and codification of knowledge should be put in place to transform tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge for common and wider use. In line with that, Omar *et al*. (2011) advised that the contributions of experienced teachers to various innovations in teaching and learning should not be allowed to die with their retirement from schools. They argue that all experiences, innovations and best practices which constitute tacit knowledge will definitely be taken away with them resulting in a gross loss to the next generations of teachers and to their schools. Consequently, it can be said that it is the responsibility of the management of Ghanaian polytechnics through effective transformational leadership, to establish an enabling environment where an effective system of knowledge sharing takes place in the polytechnics. As however cautioned by Omar et al. (2011), this effort will not become a reality if collegiality does not exist strongly among the teachers.

8. Conclusion and Recommendation

The paper acknowledges the challenges facing schools in general, and Ghanain polytechnics in particular, and their resulting demands. The role of a polytechnic teacher is becoming more challenging in this era of globalization. The expectation of students, parents and other stakeholders in education towards academic excellence has also increased, making innovation in teaching and learning a must. In addition, these changes place greater demand on the polytechnic management towards teacher capacity building as the core business of the polytechnics is teaching and learning with the teacher as the engine-driver. The paper therefore argues that to ensure effective teacher performance and desired learning outcomes in Ghanaian polytechnics, management of the polytechnics have an enormous responsibility to develop teacher capacity to thrive in teaching and learning reformation and innovation to attain current educational demands. The literature also revealed that transformational leadership is a necessity for teacher capacity building and thus, realization of effective schools. Consequently, the paper concludes that transformational leadership behaviours are required to meet the demands of educational reforms and the challenges of capacity building in Ghanaian polytechnics. In displaying this leadership style, the polytechnic rector's role as organization manager needs a paradigm shift towards greater focus on human resources development aspects as a transformational leader.

To sum up, this paper supports the argument that there is a need for transformational leadership behavios to be displayed within Ghanaian polytechnics in view of the challenges of reform initiatives and capacity building. This approach could, therefore, be the way forward for the Ghanaian Ministry of Education, especially the tertiary educational sector. As a consequence,

recommendations for the management of the polytechnics, Ghanaian government and future research have been derived from the literature review as follows:

- The creating of continuous learning and knowledge sharing culture is one of the strategies to enhance teacher capacity that can be achieved through effective transformational leadership;
- Establishing teacher leadership is a strategy that can effectively and efficiently enhance learning and knowledge sharing;
- Relevant capacity building programmes for polytechnic teachers and leaders should be structured and put in place, which will eventually contribute to effective school leadership in the country;
- Polytechnic rectors need to be educated on transformational leadership behaviours and be ready to try such practices.

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