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**A STUDY OF THE ROLE AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF DISTRICT
DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION (DDES) IN GHANA**

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**Thesis submitted to the University of Sussex, United Kingdom, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**HILDA EGHAN, DOCTOR OF EDUCATION****A STUDY OF THE ROLE AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF DISTRICT
DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION (DDEs) IN GHANA****SUMMARY**

A major vehicle for the decentralized implementation of education policies in Ghana is the district education office, the head of which is the district director of education. This study offers an understanding of the position of district directors of education (DDEs) and demonstrates the complex dynamics inherent in their work. It critically analyses the directors' rank and role as policy actors and their power to act. It also provides an informed view of how DDEs negotiate the challenges associated with the contexts within which they work. This study further examines the mechanisms for the DDE's identity construction and capacity to provide appropriate leadership and management.

Adopting a social constructivist philosophical stance this research is framed in terms of narrative and case study. The data set comprises interviews with six DDEs studied as a single holistic case and a participant observation of a conference of directors. Additionally my personal experience as a district director provided deep insight complemented by a reflective research journal which documented my own biases, feelings and thoughts.

The findings of the study suggest that policy formulation and implementation in Ghana does not seem to promote devolution of power from national policy actors to local-level actors in a manner that enables influence from DDEs. It illustrates that specific socio-cultural and organizational contexts have enormous influence on the professional identity formation of DDEs. The study concludes that an understanding of the complex contexts of the district director is critical for developing appropriate leadership and management practices.

This study is pertinent to my own professional identity as an education administrator and a researcher. Fundamentally, this research has changed my perspectives on what it takes to be a district director and has enhanced my understanding of the research process.

Its contribution to scholarship is the systematic re-examination of the district director position enabling a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. It is particularly relevant not only to my colleague directors, but also to senior education administrators in the GES and policy makers in the Ministry of Education.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADEOP	Annual District Education Operational Plan
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CD	Coordinating Director
CDs	Computer Disk
CDRA	Community Development Resource Association
CHASS	Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools
CODE	Conference of Directors of Education
CPD	Continuous Professional Development of Teachers
CREC	Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee
DCE	District Chief Executive
DDE	District Director of Education
DEO	District Education Office
DEOC	District Education Oversight Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DTST	District Teacher Support Team
EdD	International Professional Doctorate in Education
ESP	Education Sector Programme
GAR	Greater Accra Region
GES	Ghana Education Service
GETfund	Ghana Education Trust Fund
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
GNECC	Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition
GOG	Government of Ghana
HQ	Headquarters
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
IEPA	Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
NAGRAT	National Association of Graduate Teachers
NEA	National Education Assessment

NEC	National Education Commission
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RDE	Regional Directorate of Education
SHS	Senior High School
SMC	School Management Committee
SPIP	School Performance Improvement Plan
SSNIT	Social Security and National Insurance Trust
SSSCE	Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination
STME	Science, Technology and Mathematics Education
TTC	Teacher Training College
UCC	University of Cape Coast
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UTDBE	Untrained Teachers Diploma in Basic Education

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Focus of the study

This chapter introduces the subject of the role and professional identity of the district director of Education in Ghana by providing some general background information. After focusing the study and indicating its significance, I define my sources of literature and data collection and explain the rationale of the study. I conclude with the structure of the thesis.

The District Director position in Ghana is a prominent one in the scheme of education governance in Ghana. The significance of this position is derived from the important landmark period of 2010 to 2020 set for the gradual devolution of education management from central government to district decentralized system of education in Ghana (Ministry of Education, 2010b). The importance of this position is also reflected in the increasing responsibilities for policy interpretation, implementation and monitoring of quality education assigned to the district education office, of which the district director is the head. Despite the prominence of this position, it has received little attention in terms of research. UNESCO (2009) suggests that skilled professionals are a necessity to the successful implementation of decentralization.

District directors are expected to be the driving force behind the execution of the education policy implementation and education decentralization, a global discourse emerging as a central policy agenda of Ghana in an attempt to salvage education decline (Pryor, 2007). The questions that arise from this situation are what do the position of DDE entail? In what contexts do they operate? How do these varying contexts, both local and global influence the course of district directorship? How is the identity of the DDE constructed? What competences does the district director count as essential to be learnt and how do they intend to acquire these to enhance the effectiveness of their practice? There is the need for a more in-depth investigation into the workings of the district director in the complex organization of the district education office and in relation to global policy changes such as decentralization in order to deepen our understanding of the position of district directorship in terms of a set of complex dynamics.

I proceeded with my study based on the following premises: that the district director is an agent of policy implementation, and the decentralized system of educational governance in which they operate has effects on implementation of policies; that the district director operates

within organizational realities located within specific historical and cultural contexts; that there is the need for the development of appropriate management and leadership systems in consonance with the Ghanaian cultural values and context.

Following from these premises, this study is grounded in a wide range of literature from low income countries and particularly from the Ghanaian context, supplemented where appropriate by that from developed contexts which will provide potential theoretical resources for use in my analysis. I commenced by setting this study in the context of educational decentralization as the driving force in education provision and delivery in Ghana (Ministry of Education, 2010c; Government of Ghana, 2008; Ghana Education Service, 2007). I also draw extensively on local literature on the institutional arrangements of the district education office (DEO) in Ghana. I locate the major function of the DEO, that is, policy implementation within theoretical and conceptual analysis of policy making and implementation as well as education decentralization to enable a deeper understanding of the complexities, dynamism and contextual nature of educational policies (Trowler, 2003; Ball, 2008). Closely related to the context is the multi-faceted and dynamic nature of the district director's professional identity which did not form part of my critical analytical study (CAS) but which I deem essential to my study. Similarly, I reviewed the Conference of Directors of Education (CODE) as a community of practice (Wenger et al., 2002) which has immense potential to serve as a medium for professional learning and provide development opportunities for district directors. I also identified as crucial the need to provide some explanation of some other conceptual resources that I used in order to make sense of the data I generated. These are the Lukesian theory on power (Lukes, 2005) and the cross cultural theory of management and leadership in African contexts (Jackson, 2004) which were not reviewed in my CAS. The interconnectedness of the district director's knowledge, experience, context and identity are therefore explored in this study in relation to their capacity to implement a hybrid approach to management and leadership.

Following my interest in laying emphasis on the collaborative nature of learning and the importance of cultural and social context, I located this study within a social constructivist methodological orientation, while adopting a narrative and case study approach to it.

I achieved all these from four major sources. First, interviews with my participants were turned to written narratives and shared with my interviewees as an invitation to comment and amend; the second is participant observation over the one-day period of a regional conference of

directors of education. My personal experience as a long-standing educationist and a practicing district director of education was a third source. Finally I kept a reflective research journal which provided additional source of data. Data generated from all these sources were integrated to form a synthesized and coherent account.

1.2 Rationale of the study

The important lesson of context specificities was learnt from my previous assignments and is one of the factors that influenced this study. Harber and Davies (1997) emphasize the importance of contextual realities in the study of educational management and policy in developing countries. Trowler (2003) suggests the expectation of different outcomes of government policies in different contexts. It is in this vein that the context of Ghana and specifically that of the district director as the manager of the district education office responsible for the implementation of education policies is the subject of my study. Engaging with the topic of national education policy making and implementation relates to my professional concerns primarily as an educationist who worked in an education policy context as the immediate past HIV and AIDS coordinator of the Ministry of Education in Ghana. At the onset of the engagement of this study, the district directorship position in the ranking system of the Ghana Education Service (GES) happened to be my immediate future position to attain. Having currently attained that position, this study will deepen my understanding of what the position entails and how I can position myself to provide appropriate management and leadership within the Ghanaian contextual realities.

1.3 Research questions

My study was guided by the following overarching research question:

How do district directors of education construct and carry out their role within the decentralized system of education in Ghana?

From this follow several specific subquestions:

1. How do district directors of education (DDEs) define their roles and responsibilities within policy making and implementation in Ghana?
2. What power does the district director have as a policy actor to act within the organizational and socio-cultural framework where they function?

3. To what extent does the work culture and social context influence the identity construction of the DDEs
4. What do DDEs perceive as their needs for developing appropriate management and leadership systems?

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This research study is divided into seven chapters. In chapter 2, I provide the context for the study by examining Ghana's educational decentralization system with emphasis on the district education office and the district director of education. Chapter 3 provides for the literature review which is in three sections. Based on the key ideas of policy, identity, power and management in this study, the first section focuses on the complex processes of policy production and the second on the complex nature of implementation both within the global and Ghanaian contexts. It also reviews a community of practice and the construction of identities of education administrators. The final section of this chapter provides explanation to specific conceptual resources of power and management that I will use in order to make sense of my data. In the methodology chapter (chapter 4), I provide a detailed description of my methodological stance and the research design. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of ethical issues that arose during the research and the ways in which they were negotiated. In chapter 5, I focus on the findings and analysis of the study by presenting and analyzing the emergent themes using the empirical data. Chapter 6 presents a detailed discussion of the findings and analysis based on the empirical data, theoretical framework and conceptual resources. I also spell out the limitations of the study in this chapter. In the final chapter (Chapter 7), I draw up the conclusions from my research by summarizing the key findings and defining the empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions that this thesis has made to knowledge. I also draw from the emerging key issues, lessons I have learnt for my professional practice and define prospects for future research.

CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter locates my study within the broader context of the operational organizational framework of education in Ghana. The objective of this chapter is to provide a context and background that will provide support and enable an appreciation of the complex processes and relationships involved in my study. As such, I examine Ghana's system of decentralization with emphasis on educational decentralization and the barriers inherent in the system. I explore the functions of the district education office and the district director of education as part of the institutional arrangement for education policy implementation at the district level.

2.2 Educational decentralization systems in Ghana

Even though a wide range of literature reiterates that decentralization is a complex and long-term process, De Grauwe et al., (2005) acknowledge that two forces combine to push for decentralization in many countries, the first being external pressure from international development agencies and experts, and the second, being internal political expediency in national contexts where financing of basic public services has become difficult.

De Grauwe et al., (2005) however note that decentralization does not mean a relinquishing of all forms of control from the central government or administration to the local level. As observed, even in contexts where devolution of roles and responsibilities are intended, central governments have continued to exercise some control or oversight of many responsibilities devolved to local government (Kataoka, 2006). In developing countries decentralization is noted to be burdened by bureaucratic bottlenecks and the deep-seated hierarchical relationship between central and local government reflecting a reluctance to allow local government complete autonomy (Tikly 1996; World Bank 2001; De Grauwe et al., 2005). This state of affairs is supported by a conclusion that often emerges from studies on African decentralization that central governments on the whole have been reluctant to decentralize sufficient powers and resources to local governments. It is an attempt to curtail the growth of powerful local institutions that might challenge their monopoly over power and resources that are needed for local development (Helmsing, 2005; Conyers, 2007; Awortwi, 2011).

The history of decentralization in Ghana dates back several years. It is believed that it commenced with the authorization of the creation of local assemblies to serve as sub government units by the 1957 Independence Constitution (Asibuo & Nsarkoh, 1994). But more importantly, as a result of the Ghanaian education system experiencing little improvement in spite of the introduction of a number of initiatives (Korboe & Boakye, 1995; Quansah, 1997; Fobih et al., 1999) including the major constitutional and educational reform of free compulsory universal basic education (FCUBE) in the late 1980s, Ghana has been influenced by the international development discourse to adopt policy elements of decentralization and community involvement (Pryor, 2007). Since then a number of legislations including Local Government Act 462 of 1993; Civil Service Law of 1993; District Assemblies Common Fund Act of 1993; the National Development Commission Act of 1994 have been promulgated with implications for education decentralization. Key among these legislations is the 1992 constitution of Ghana which is instructive on decentralization and states in Chapter 20 that:

Local government and administration ... shall be decentralized (Article 240, para.1), functions, powers, responsibilities and resources should be transferred from the Central Government to local government units in a coordinated manner” (Article 240, para.2).

The precise design initiatives of educational decentralization vary from country to country but there is consensus on two underlying concepts that emerge:

the devolution of service delivery responsibilities from national to local or regional governments, and the delegation of many service delivery decisions and functions to the level of the school (UNESCO, 2004; UNESCO, 2005, p.1)

Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) have been mandated in Ghana to decentralize their activities with elected district Assemblies given the mandate to supervise the decisions of directors of education at the district level. However local governance in Ghana is characterized by the adoption of a dual hierarchical structure in which central government institutions “operate in parallel” with local counterparts such as education (Ayee, 2000, p. 49). Thus the Education Sector Programme (ESP) delivery also takes place within a hybrid arrangement involving school autonomy, devolution and deconcentration (Ministry of Education, 2010c). A consequence of this structure is that sub national educational institutions and structures lack the wherewithal to enact their policies, with central government encroaching on the roles and responsibilities of under-resourced local government (Nudzor, 2014). In a review of decentralization policy and practice in 6 sub-saharan African countries including Ghana, Naidoo (2002) concluded that core education decisions are hardly decentralized in a way that encourages genuine local community participation in decision making.

There is also the need to harmonize the Ghana Education Act (778) of 2008 which maintains that management, decision-making and implementation is the responsibility of the District Assembly and Act 506 establishing the Ghana Education Service (GES) which maintains the GES as the existing authority responsible for the coordination of the approved national policies and programmes with all decisions and management controlled from the centre. In the short to medium term, between 2010 and 2013 during which legislative changes and capacity-building take place, changes to delivery systems were expected to be carefully phased in.

2.3 Barriers to educational decentralization in Ghana

There exist formidable barriers to the implementation of educational decentralization in Ghana. In 2007, a Decentralization Implementation Committee which was established by the GES identified some challenges to the implementation of education decentralization. Key among them were the continued dependence on approvals of the District Education offices from the regional and headquarters offices of education even in matters that have district-specific contexts, thus preventing to a large extent, the exercise of real powers by the District Directorate of Education (Ghana Education Service, 2007). This situation was also known to affect the working relationship between the District Education Office and the District Assembly. Political interference in some educational management and delivery policies has also resulted in weak political and management decisions to decentralize. All these have persisted from the 1980s until 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2010b). Decentralization also hinges on the assumption that local administrative and technical capacity will be adequate to deliver the expected increase in the production of local service (Robinson, 2007) but this seems not to be the case in Ghana as such capacity is lacking particularly in areas of planning with a staffing gap of over 50% in District Assemblies in Ghana (Laryea-Adjei, 2000).

2.4 Overview of the structure of the Ghanaian education system

The structure of Ghana's education system has been subject to periodic changes. Ghana operated a 17-year pre-tertiary education system comprising 6 years primary, 4 years middle, 5 years secondary, and 2 years sixth form until the third quarter of the 1980s. In 1987, in view of the perception that the 17 years of pre-tertiary education was too long with implications for the national budget (MOE, 1987), a new system of education was introduced which reduced the length of pre-tertiary education from 17 to 12 years with 6 years primary, 3 years junior secondary, and 3 years senior secondary education. In the early 2000s, the name, structure, and duration of pre-tertiary education was further changed to 15 years with the inclusion of 2

years pre-school education, and an extension of the senior secondary education from 3 to 4 years to be known as senior high school (SHS) (MOE, 2005). This structure of education has essentially pertained until 2008 when the 15 year-structure gave way to a 14 year-structure reducing the 4 years of SHS to 3 under the pretext of lack of infrastructural facilities, equipment, and logistics (Nudzor, 2014).

2.5 The district education office

As outlined in the 2008 Education Act (Government of Ghana, 2008), the headquarters (HQ) and the regional directorates of education (RDE) of the (GES) have been assigned co-ordination roles. The Act stipulates with regard to district education directorates:

The district education directorate in consultation with the appropriate religious educational units are responsible for the efficient delivery of educational services to meet the peculiar needs of the areas within the district and in accordance with the educational policy and directives as determined by the minister. (Article 22, para. 4).

The responsibilities of the district education office (DEO) headed by the district director encompasses some essential services which have traditionally been the responsibility of the headquarters and the regional offices of the GES. The DEO was also envisaged to be at the hub of education activities and to receive major funding for education at the local level. Specifically being responsible for the implementation of education policies at the pre-tertiary level implies that the district directorate manages the schools by overseeing the monitoring and supervision of teaching and learning. This includes ensuring school logistics and student/pupil welfare. Responsibility for the collection and submission of accurate data and reports on all schools for the purposes of planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation at the district and national levels is also a key function of the DEO. Financial administration of the district is another function of the office. In relation to the district assembly the DEO also advises the District Chief Executive on all educational matters.

As an office it has staff strength of 50-70 members. Each directorate is responsible for a number of basic and second cycle schools including technical and vocational institutes as well as schools for the physically challenged. The number of schools range from tens to hundreds depending on the size as a district, municipality or metropolis.

2.6 The district director in a decentralized education system

The district director rank in the GES is the fifth rank in the promotion scale of the Service from entry as a first degree holder and a professional teacher. Thereafter, it takes a minimum of

thirteen years of requisite experience and regular service to attain this rank. It is an enviable rank that a member of teaching staff of the Service desires to attain and for the majority of them who serve in the capacity of district director, it is a terminal point to their career before retirement. The district director is both a rank and a position. An education official can attain the rank of district director but may serve in other capacities other than in the position of district director of a district education office. Examples of such positions are serving as deputy directors at the headquarters and coordinators of school health and girl child education programmes. It also serves as a springboard to the director-general position, the pinnacle of the Service. The district director position is also an outcome of the creation of the District Assembly¹ concept of decentralized units of political governance. Ghana currently has 215 districts with prospects for increase as the population increases. As such there are correspondingly 215 district directors of education (DDEs) who are the local education authority. The director's role can be categorized into professional, administrative and non-professional. Professionally, the director is responsible for ensuring that effective teaching by the teachers and learning by the pupils is achieved. This includes the organization of training programmes to enhance teachers' performance and ensuring the development of school plans by head teachers. The director fulfills their administrative functions by managing school supplies, generating data and reports and processing promotions and leaves of teachers. Significantly the director is also required to administer non education related roles such as serving on various district committees including electoral registration challenge committees. One significant category of staff the director oversees is the circuit supervisors who are inspectors of the schools, organized into circuits within the district. Circuit supervisors are therefore the direct link between the District Education Office and the teachers in the schools.

In summary, the DDE as the administrator in charge of the education directorate is to ensure that high quality teaching and learning takes place in all schools; that education services in the areas of advisory and training, inclusion and other essential services take place among others (Ministry of Education, 2010b).

By 2020, it is anticipated that most delivery systems of the education sector will be located at the district level, lending credence to the enhanced role and importance of the DDE.

¹ District Assembly is a decentralized unit of political governance. Assemblies are categorized into district, municipal and metropolitan according to size. There are currently 215 assemblies.

2.7 Summary

In the context of decentralization in Ghana, the DDE is the head of an administrative unit which operates both under the Ministry of Education and the district administrative authority. In both instances the DDE remains a key technical authority responsible for the successful implementation of education policies at the district level while operating within a complex network of relationships.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I engage in a critical discussion and summary of a body of literature in four key areas: policy production and implementation, power, identity and leadership and management constituting the theoretical framework which drives this research. This chapter also forms the basis of the categories of analysis in the findings and discussion chapters while also pointing toward the answer to my research problem. In order to do this, I have reviewed scholarly journals and books, authoritative data bases, primary sources and other secondary sources. I also included non research reports such as the local newspapers. The period of my literature review coverage was largely the period of 2000 to present with some critical ones covering the 1960s to 2000. Influenced by my research focus, goals and coverage, I included in the literature review if they met each of the following criteria: provision of central and pivotal information on my field of study, report written in English, current studies which report on variables such as processes of education policy production and approaches to policy implementation in the global, developing countries and Ghanaian context, professional identity formation, contemporary insights on power, management and leadership in the context of Africa. Also included are studies and reports which use qualitative research methods which report on research outcomes, research methods and also describe theories related to my four key areas of study. These provided a clear guide and focus to my research objective while defining and limiting the problem I am researching. Specifically, they were most relevant and of potential interest to the four research questions of this study and furthered the reader's understanding of my topic.

Excluded from my literature review are studies that do not directly relate to the specificities of my topic and not deemed to be related to my research questions, older studies, older perspectives on power and management and leadership systems foreign to Africa.

The literature review for this study is broken down into three sections. In the first section, I focus on the complex processes of policy production within the global context in general and in the Ghanaian context in particular. I commit the second section to issues of policy implementation also from international and Ghanaian perspectives. This section also focuses on the subject of identity. These together provide the point of reference to research questions 1 and 3. In the final section of this chapter, I explore specific understanding of power in the Lukesian theory on power which presents a standard way of mapping out the schools of

thought on power. I also focus on management and leadership and their attributes in Africa out of the broader theories and debates on these key ideas. These also provide the point of reference for research questions 2 and 4. The theories associated with these key ideas constitute my theoretical framework which is expected to guide the selection of methods while forming the basis for data analysis.

3.2 Processes of educational policy production

I begin this section by focusing on global perspectives on policy definition and features of policy while engaging such discussion within the theory of the role of the state and associated theories such as knowledge economy and human capital, and their influences on policy production. I also feature the types of policies. I dedicate the second part of this section to education policy, educational politics and the influence of globalization on public policy processes in the Ghanaian context.

3.2.1 Perspectives on policy definition

There are different perspectives of policy definition. The notions span from policy as simplified to more sophisticated definitions, from traditional to contemporary context definitions, as a process and as a label. For the purpose of this study, my discussion on policy definition is based on policy viewed as “actions and positions taken by the state, which consists of a range of institutions that share the essential characteristics of authority and collectivity” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 4) as distinct from policy decisions taken on an isolated individual and institutional level like non-governmental organizations.

Citing David Easton (1953), Rizvi and Lingard (2010) refer to his definition of policy as the “authoritative allocation of values” (p. 11) and expand this definition by adding that policies “either articulate or presuppose certain values” while directing people to action in an authoritative way thus highlighting the normative feature of policy as both ends and means. The phenomenological perspective of policy recognizes implementation as an “actual part of the policy-making process itself rather than being merely a second stage of putting it into practice” (Trowler, 2003, p. 130). The process nature of policy which involves the identification of the policy issue, its production into text, its implementation into practice and evaluation is however rejected by Ball, (1994a) as a “one way, linear” representation of policy process. He rather suggests policy processes as “policy cycle” pointing out the non-linear and interactive relationships that exist between the stages of the process. In other words the process of agenda-setting, formulation, implementation, feedback and evaluation presents a multi-stage

cycle which provides a means of thinking about the sectoral realities of public policy processes as the feedback provided by evaluation is injected back into the agenda-setting stage, thus closing the loop of the cycle. The interactive relationships emanate from the individuals and groups who constitute the central and ground-level policy actors who influence the course of the policy process. A further account of who these policy actors are with specific reference to the Ghanaian context is provided in the subsequent paragraphs.

From an anthropological perspective, a definition of policy is considered from an angle of what governments seek to do in the name of policy (Weimer and Vining, 2004; Wedel et al., 2005). In most cases policy is viewed as seeking to change or reform and as such it projects a desired state of affairs in the future. This general perspective however does ignore an aspect of implementation which by all accounts involves practical realities on the ground.

Luke and Hogan (2006) advance the importance of a resource allocation component of educational policy making, that it is “the prescriptive regulation of flows of human resources, discourse and capital across educational systems towards normative social, economic and cultural ends” (p. 171).

3.2.2 *Features of policy*

Policy involves complex processes of negotiation and compromise both within and outside of the state (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). Ordinarily, policy is presented as responses to perceived problems empirically researched and theoretically grounded. However, analysis of the definitions and their implications clearly portray the fact that policies are designed to present issues in a particular light not necessarily in tandem with empirically researched analysis. This is achieved through the changing language practitioners engage with policy in practice and also proffering solutions to the problem constructed by the policy itself (Yeatman, 1990). This brings into focus the normative and discursive nature of policy, that is, policy expressing both ends and means.

Another distinct feature of policy is policy as text and as discourse which opens up discussion on issues of power of local actors in policy making and implementation. Policy as text refers not only to the actual words that are put on paper in a language that are intended to portray certain meanings but also the “relative freedom of individuals to change things” and a reference to the “contested, changing and negotiated character of policy” (Trowler, 2003, p. 130).

Instructive on the distinction between policy as text and policy as discourse is Ball's (1994c) assertion that "policies shift and change their meaning in the arenas of politics ... Policies are represented differently by different actors and interests" (pp. 16-17). Trowler (2003) asserts that policy as text exposes the importance of social agency, struggle and compromise while policy as discourse refers to the use of language or other forms of persuasive communication to convey particular meanings (Fairclough, 2001). According to Trowler (2003), this point takes its root from Foucault's emphasis on the way our view of the world is limited and shaped by discourses available to us while highlighting Ball's (1994c) claim that discourse helps create reality and not just represent it. In his later works, Ball takes a step further in his conceptualization of the world in a more comprehensive way by stating that "policy texts are located within and framed by broader discourses" (Ball 2006, p.48). These culminate in his expression that, policies "have semantic and ontological force" (Ball, 2008, p. 13)

Central to policy is the issue of values. According to Ball (1994c) policy is value-laden and also dynamic. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) also indicate that in any given policy values are either implicit or explicit and resources are allocated in favour of particular values as against others. They contend also that whereas traditionally values articulated national interests, in the last two decades "global considerations now enter the articulation of values as never before, transforming the balance between economic efficiency and the social equity goals of education" (p. 16).

Another important feature of policy is its contextual nature. Policies do not exist in a vacuum. They exist in the context of specific material realities and cultural formations, have a prior history and are linked to other policies in an interrelated manner, in what Ball (2006) refers to as a "policy ensemble" (p. 48).

3.2.3 *The role of the state*

The education sector has been a key sector in which the role of the state has been significant. For this reason, Ball (1994c) asserts that "any decent theory of the education policy must attend to the workings of the state" (p. 10). This assertion coheres with Ozga (1990) who raises concerns about the absence of discussions on "broader issues" and "what theoretical perspective informed their studies" (p. 360) in the rich descriptions and detail of their accounts. One of such issues and a major gap she recognizes in such studies is the theory of the role of the state in education as a precondition for engaging in any information gathering on education policy.

3.2.3.1 Traditional versus contemporary role of the state

Traditionally, policy processes begin with a state's vision for education which Kogan (1985) refers to as “values” the state would like to fashion out in its adults and which represented national interest. Thus policy context is largely viewed in national terms. Education policy is related to the needs of the state and the economy. Closely linked to this is the importance attached to education as a national cultural resource with “discrete national cultural formations” and with the “narratives of the nation” being carried by the educational systems (Hargreaves, 1985). Education was also viewed as a source of wealth whether personal or on a national scale for it was believed that the benefits of education was so pervasive that in the long run investments made by governments in education could yield increased productivity, higher incomes and subsequently higher taxes for development purposes (Ball, 1994c). Evidence of the social benefits of education has also been well documented. Researches from the World Bank and other institutions suggest that increases in primary and secondary education have substantial positive impacts on poverty and violent crime reduction, population control, equality and societal health particularly for girls (World Bank, 1995; Green et al., 2006). This called into being the prevailing orthodoxy of human capital theory which takes its root from the recognition of education as fundamental in the creation of the knowledge and skills required in the production of goods and services. Thus expenditures on education and training is basically considered as investments in human capital and a key promoter of economic growth as it will yield returns for the individual and society as a whole (Shultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). Weber (2002) observes that individuals and nations benefit from expanded educational access and spending on skills acquisition and thus economic productivity is at the heart of human capital. This constitutes a shift from our dependence on more traditional forms of natural, work, and physical capital to what we now call *human capital* in order to build the new ‘knowledge economy’. Thus it was advanced that low-income countries could receive assistance from the West through aid and technical expertise in these prescriptions (Robertson et al., 2006).

There is however considerable empirical evidence from both industrialized and developing countries to question the assumptions of human capital theory (Weber, 2003). Such evidence emitted primarily from the widening of income inequalities despite education expansion. It is also argued that human capital theory is not sensitive to context in the identification of specific skills needs and priorities facing Africa, for example, but derived essentially from experiences in high income regions (Tikly et al., 2003).

These ideologies and beliefs of education greatly influenced countries like Ghana, to adopt the welfare regimes where the role and power of the state covered the planning and provision for all interventions including education. For example in most developing countries, national governments took responsibility for their education systems during the period that characterised the end of colonization in an attempt to widen social access to education and to build nationalism in a nationally controlled curriculum (World Bank, 1995) in order to overcome the inequities inherent in the system. Indeed in the early colonial period in many African countries, education programmes of training in basic skills for adults and young people dubbed 'Fundamental Education' and pursued by UNESCO was seen as investing in education in countries which were nowhere near the provision of universal education (Jones and Coleman, 2005). The post independence period also witnessed mass education systems as a means of forging national identity and pursuing economic progress (Robertson et al., 2006).

While some authors have in common the idea that the role of the state in education policy is diminishing and shifting, Whitty (2003) however argues that evidence on the ground does not seem to suggest that. Bearing evidence from England's National Curriculum, Whitty (2003) demonstrates that the state does not seem to loosen its grip on aspects of the curriculum which promote tradition and nationhood and suggests that many governments at state or national level are rather tightening their control over the curriculum and assessment, through neoconservative policies. He however concedes that in the preservation of the traditional role of the state, tensions are bound to erupt. The suggestion for the reversal of the goals of social cohesion by Green (1997) seems to suggest that he concurs with the school of thought that the role of the state is shifting contrary to Whitty (2003) claims.

Some authors disagree with the notion that the role of the state in education policy is becoming obsolete in the light of external pressures such as globalization. Others agree that the state simply does not work in the same way as previously. Kamat (2002) suggests that the new thinking around the role and function of the state has impacted seriously on developing countries to the extent that as a result of reduced budgets education is being increasingly turned over to civil society and other non-state organizations rather than being largely a state obligation. Tikly (2004) confirms this by stating that in low income countries the role of the state depends on the capacity of the state to fund education and training. However, the state itself remains complex in its structure, and in the relationships that exist between its sub structures and the other sectors of the economy.

3.2.4 Knowledge economy

The construction and rationale of the knowledge economy according to Ball (2008) give overwhelming emphasis to the economic role of education for knowledge and education can be treated as business product that can be exploited for high value return. Ball (2008) explains that as land and labour were primary wealth-creating assets some 200 years ago, technology and knowledge are now the key factors of production facilitated by information technology, global and creative workforce and ability to derive value from information. Its implication for education is that different kinds of persons who are capable of working creatively, flexibly and are globally minded with broad skills should be produced and “linked to the instrumental purposes of human capital development and economic self-maximization” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 81). Ball (2008) further explains that of critical importance to education and education policy is what he refers to as “innovation systems” and their “knowledge distribution power” (p. 20) and exemplifies this with the World Bank assistance programme to developing countries to help them equip themselves with the highly skilled and flexible human capital to compete in the global market and the articulation of this in national education programmes. In Ghana for example, the articulation of this is found in the ICT in Education Policy which aims to transform Ghana “into an information rich knowledge based and technology driven high income economy and society” (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 16).

Criticisms leveled against the knowledge economy concept is the commodification of knowledge by constructing “a narrow, instrumental approach to the economics of knowledge and to intellectual culture in general, denying the primacy of human relationships in the production of value and in effect, erasing the social” (Ball, 2008, p. 22). Brinkley (2006) adds to the criticisms by indicating that it contributes little to the impact on growth and productivity performance. He emphasizes that investment in knowledge is necessary but not sufficient. Other factors such as the institutional frameworks set by product market and competition regimes for example are crucial. Finally, Ball (2008) reiterates that knowledge economy reinforces systematic social inequalities as a result of technological developments in ICT for example which is not experienced in many developing countries like India. In Ghana, ICT for example is taught in many schools theoretically rather than practically for lack of computers in such schools.

3.2.5 Types of policies

Proceeding from an understanding that there are different purposes for public policy formulation and implementation, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) postulate that these purposes

influence the way policies are expressed and promoted. Some public policies are derived as a result of pressure brought to bear on political leadership for some form of decision to be made to address such issues. Such policies which often result from such stances lack the necessary financial base and commitment, one of the key factors that Rein (1983) cited in Rizvi and Lingard (2010) explains as crucial for the likelihood of implementation of policy. He further indicates such policies often lack the depth, clarity and purposefulness characteristic of well thought-out policy implementation. Termed as symbolic policies, Rein argues that such policies may be perceived as first step of a strategy intended to cover a longer period within a state. He cites the issue of gender equity as a typical example of symbolic policy. This type of policy stands in sharp contrast to material policies which are accompanied by funding as a demonstration of commitment to their implementation and are also factored in, effective mechanism to ensure the achievement of goals for which the policies were instituted.

Rational policies on the other hand are positivist in tradition and prescriptive in form. They follow clear, distinct and quite linear steps in the process of their development from problem identification to the implementation strategies, evaluation and modification, known as the classic model with a focus of assisting government policymakers to develop technically sound policies (Hudson and Lowe, 2004). Incremental policies take their form from the basis that policies do not exist in a vacuum and that they have a history and also descriptive of the way policy text is produced (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). As the name suggests, this understanding of policy takes into account what has been previously established as a way of informing further development or change even though politically, policymakers want to highlight what difference they have made.

A further distinction is made between distributive and redistributive policies. Essentially, while distributive policies seek to distribute resources with the objective of allocating funds according to “various accountability measures and performance against targets” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 11), policies that target the disadvantaged through positive discrimination but not necessarily in terms of funding are redistributive. Useful for our understanding of the purposes of policies, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) sound a caution that these distinctions are never absolute for many public policies serve multiple purposes. Many developing countries, including Ghana, continue to pursue redistributive policies in areas of girls’ education, school feeding and free school

uniforms for the poor. It is to open opportunities for the achievement of greater equality even though at higher education level, such opportunities are limited in scope.

3.2.6 Education policy making in Ghana

Essentially, education policy making in Ghana seems designed to adopt the traditional rationalist model (Nudzor, 2014). Following from the quite linear steps, the process commences from a perceived need for change in the education provision and delivery systems informed by research findings or an identification of problems with particular educational reform programmes. In previous major educational reforms, the process commenced with the setting up of a national education review committee or commission with membership from a wide range of stakeholder organizations to address the demand for change. An example of such a commission was the National Education Commission (NEC) on education established in 1985 which held extensive consultations across the country that involved trade unions, heads of secondary schools, civil servants and universities (Little, 2010). Outcomes of these engagements which constitute policy recommendations are submitted to the Ministry of Education for consideration. At this stage the extent of revision of recommendations is contingent on the political will behind the policy initiative (Nudzor, 2014). This process proceeds to the formulation of implementation strategies, and to the evaluation and modification stages (Working Group on Education Sector Analysis, 2000).

Education policy in Ghana is also conceived in a hierarchical manner where it is largely formulated at the national level by political figureheads and technocrats (Nudzor, 2014). Political elites continue to play a crucial role in what policy ideas are enacted. Bureaucratic elites strongly influence which policies are implemented. In essence, pro-poor growth policies are unlikely to succeed without elite support because elites continue to influence policy formulation and implementation (Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, 2014). It is also observed that increasingly, political promises by politicians who are seeking the votes of the electorates in an election are influencing policy making.

3.2.7 Educational politics

Archer (1985) contributes to the debate on the broad range of factors that influence education in a way that is illuminating of the debate. From a sociological analysis perspective, she defines these factors as “major mechanisms articulating education and society” (p. 40) because they constitute an aggregate of influences from the micro-level which “form the macroscopic demography of the education system from which ‘interest groups’ are born and with which they and ‘politicians’ must contend” (p. 40). I adopted Archer’s (1985) view of education politics from

the viewpoint of those that ‘influence the inputs, processes and output of education’. Examples of these influences include pressure groups such as educational personnel, professional and teacher unions; private investment, experimentation, local transactions, propaganda and discourses of globalization.

The exposition of Archer’s (1985) educational politics on the three different types of negotiations among the various groups of actors is instructive. Educational personnel who exist inside the education system and whose interaction is inevitable constitute a critical force that engages in negotiations with official authorities and other interest groups and are termed ‘internal initiation’. This category can range from managers at the central and local levels, teachers and even learners and the principal resource they command according to her is their expertise. Professional unions such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the National Association of Graduate Teachers (NAGRAT) for example in Ghana seek to influence the course of education policy through direct negotiation with Government and sometimes through agitation.

External interest groups also engage in negotiations with the aim of introducing change from outside the system based on their desire for new or additional services, what Archer (1975) terms as ‘external transaction’. According to her the external parties vary and their mode of interaction is voluntary but they wield much influence in terms of the considerable resources, particularly the liquid assets at their disposal. Apart from these groups already discussed, there are the political authorities who wield ‘legal authority’ and seek to “acquire formal influence over the shaping of public educational policy” through “political manipulation” (p. 43) which influence negotiations between government and the education profession. They also dominate the decision-making processes whether at the central or local level and use official powers to keep educational activities in check (Archer, 1975). All these forms of negotiations interact in complex and multidimensional forms highlighting the significance of power and availability of resources in the scheme of influences on educational policy.

As earlier discussed, the discourses that frame policy texts are located within national space. However, policy context has in recent years been shaped by discourses that are increasingly emanating from beyond national space to international and supranational organizations (Dale 2006; Ball, 2008; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010).

3.2.8 *Influence of globalization on public policy processes*

Public policy processes are now changing with the onset of globalization to the extent that there is a new context and content of policy production largely influenced by “an emergent global education policy community” (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010 p. 16; Ball, 2008). In summation, Robertson et al. (2006) suggest that “globalization involves real ‘new’ phenomena as well as continuities with the past, that it is a discourse anchored in the material world as well as producing material effects, and that it involves shifts in how we see and explain the world” (p. 8). This view signifies more or less conventional wisdom about globalization whether viewed from the cultural, historical, political or economic angle. However, debates still rage on with regard to whether technology or politics is the driving force, to what degree states are diminished in importance or whether convergence of national economies, cultures and society are likely outcomes of globalization (Green, 1997). In practice, Goldberg and Pavcnik (2007) contend that the educational response of low-income countries to globalization depends on three key factors: their financial situation, interpretation of the situation and ideological position regarding the role of the public sector in education.

Dale (1999) illuminates the crucial understanding of the nature of globalization and its consequences for both the content and form of some of the education policy making procedures and outcomes as such:

... that ‘global’ to a large extent masks the fact that three major regional economic groupings have separate, as well as collective, effects; that the impact of globalization can occur at different levels of national societies, such as the regime, sectoral (e.g. schools, or educational bureaucracies) levels; and that the effects of globalization are mediated, in both directions and in complex ways, by existing national patterns and structures (p. 3).

3.3 Text to practice

In this second part of my literature review, I focus specifically on the complex nature of policy implementation and their transformation within a generalized setting. I progressed by analyzing the different approaches to policy implementation and the factors that serve as hindrances to their execution. I settle on policy practice within the educational decentralization system in Ghana while exploring the politics of policy implementation and the influence of policy actors in Ghana. Within broader theories and debates surrounding Lave and Wenger’s Community of Practice (COP), in the latter half of the chapter I take a specific and particular focus of COP germane to my study in relation to the Conference of Directors of Education (CODE) as a community of practice.

3.3.1 Policy Implementation

The complex nature of policy practice is encapsulated by the assertion of Ball (1994c) that “Policies are crude and simple. Practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable. Policy as practice is ‘created’ in a trialectic of dominance, resistance and chaos/freedom” (pp. 10 - 11). This view is supported by Trowler (2003) who states that “the practice of policy on the ground is extremely complex, both that being ‘described’ by policy and that intended to put policy into effect” (p. 96). There is usually conflict between policy makers and those who do the implementation as a result of the multiple interpretations that policies are subjected to depending on the standpoints of the people doing the interpretation, resulting in policy outcomes being different from policy makers’ intentions (Trowler, 2003). Figure 1 below depicts the dynamism in the policy encoding and decoding processes.

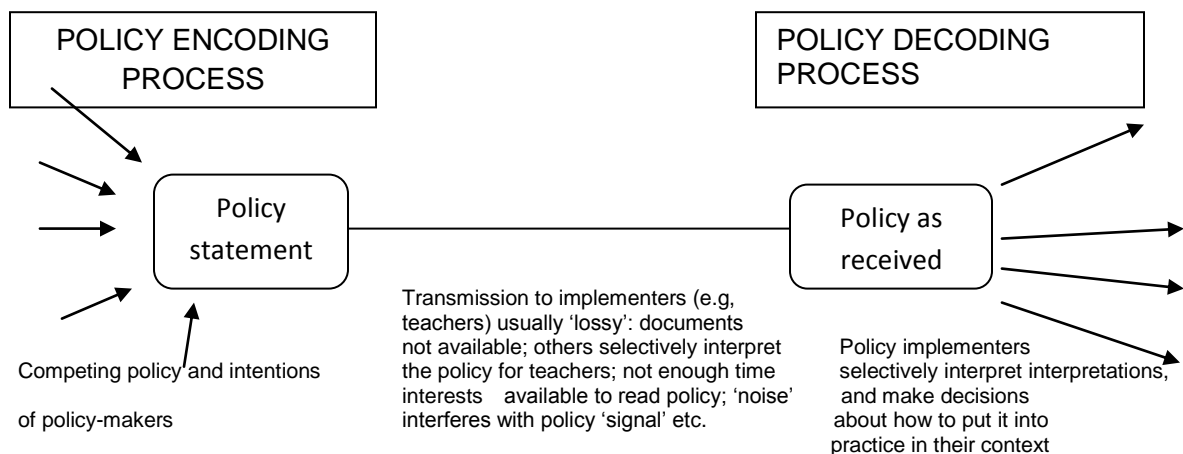


Figure 1 Policy encoding and decoding

Trowler (2003) explains that “policy encoding involves complex practices of interpreting, negotiating and refining proposals” (p. 97) consistent with the claims of Wells (2005) that policies would have been transformed multiple times by the time they get to the local educational institutions and her analogy of the ‘telephone game’.

3.3.2 Approaches to policy implementation

With regard to implementation, Trowler (2003) expounds in great detail three approaches to policy implementation: the managerial or top-down, the phenomenological/bottom-up and directed collegiality.

3.3.2.1 The ‘managerial’/ ‘top-down’ approach

According to Trowler (2003), policies are formulated in a variety of locales but implemented by individuals and groups within an organization which is characterized by its organizational cultures. Trowler explains as the central notion of this approach:

that leaders at the top of organizations should set goals within the framework of broader policy, and pulling the right levers, secure their staff’s commitment to them. If this occurs it is assumed that, given sufficient available resources, policy can be successfully implemented by direction from above (p. 124).

Thus the burden of policy implementation is laid on the manager of the organization who must know how to create the right conditions, build a strong culture and culturally manipulate the behaviours of those within the organisation for the successful implementation of their policies. This functionalist view of organizational culture based on a rational model has however been criticized by researchers for downplaying “issues such as power relations, conflicting interests and value systems between individuals and agencies responsible for making policy and those responsible for taking action” (Barrett & Fudge (eds), (1981) cited in Trowler 2003, p. 127). Another criticism leveled against this approach is that ground-level actors do not simply act out cultures they find in an organization, they also construct and enact new ones thus changing the ones they come to meet resulting in multiple, complex and unstable rather than linear, unitary and stable cultures (Alvesson, 2002; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

3.3.2.2 The phenomenological/bottom-up approach

Grounded in the postmodernist view of contemporary society with their own understanding of the nature of reality (Ranson, 1985), this school of thought emphasizes the unpredictability of human behavior in policy implementation. The basis of this assumption is what Saunders (1986) amplifies in his ‘implementation staircase’ concept. This concept views the expression of policy in a number of practices and by different participants who exist in a hierarchical power matrix and by participants who are both receivers and agents of policy and whose ‘production’ of policy reflects their priorities, pressures and interests. Trowler (2003) claims as the central message of this approach:

Individuals and groups have deeply rooted values and attitudes, and these are reinforced by behaviours repeated daily. In educational organizations particularly, individuals draw on their ideas and values in order to think critically and deploy arguments in support of their point of view. Attempts to impose policy are likely to result in resistance, subversion, non-compliance and ultimately failure (p. 135).

Authors of both the functionalist and phenomenological approaches seem however to agree that dialogue, negotiation and learning from experience and on the basis of mutual

comprehension as well as an understanding of managers of the nature of the cultural characteristics are key to successful implementation.

3.3.2.3 *Implementation as Evolution/‘Directed Collegiality’ Approach*

Viewed as the ideal, sensible and moderate policy-making/Implementation approach, this approach is a synthesis of the top-down and bottom-up approaches and its core message is mutual adaptation of (central actors and ground-level actors to fit the local setting and innovations (Hall, 1995 cited in Trowler, 2003). The development of such mutual adaptation is to encourage the development of a shared vision which in turn will attract broad commitment to its implementation as a result of the sense of ownership that would arise out of this consensual engagement (Fullan, 1993). We are reminded that establishing such ownership of policy developments is however difficult to achieve since commitment can fade off and needs to be sustained by hands-on experience and experimentation (Trowler, 2003). This approach still recognizes management as responsible for goal setting and to avoid the trap of over control and anarchy in centralization and decentralization systems, some researchers have suggested small scale implementation of policies on a trial basis before full scale implementation. In some contexts like Ghana for example, many pilot implementation have however remained as such and un-scaled.

3.3.3 *Factors that mediate policy implementation*

“Policy implementation is never straightforward” is a strand that runs through policy discourses. There are factors therefore that significantly affect the likelihood of implementation of policy. Ball (2008) affirms that policies “are inflected, mediated, resisted and misunderstood, or in some cases simply prove unworkable” (p. 70). Having already considered how culture of change and cultural configurations in the institution of policy production and practice is a factor affecting policy implementation, it is important to add that the clarity of the goals of the policy is one key factor. The vagueness, ambiguity and abstract rendition of the policy text will have serious implications for interpretation and implementation particularly for the public who constitute the readership (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010).

Lack of well thought-out strategies which will deal with the complexities envisaged in implementation will undermine the effective operationalization of policies and will result in anarchy in their implementation. Closely linked with this is the number of steps in the policy process from text to practice which has the propensity to complicate the implementation process in education (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010).

Adequate funding is also crucial to policy implementation, otherwise policies remain symbolic and shelved particularly in cases where an orientation of actors from the central actors through the decentralized levels to the ground-level actors on new policy changes is absent as a result of the non-provision of funds to that effect. Support for professional development is even more crucial for effective management of the funds and in cases of curriculum reforms such as the adoption of new instructional approaches. Sedel (2003) amplifies this point by stating:

Many education reforms in sub-Saharan Africa have faltered on the shoals of implementation. In many countries, human capacity and institutions are not effectively used. In others, experience and skills are insufficient for the demanding and complex challenges of real education reform, ie. programmes that impact on what students learn in the classroom (p. 43).

Organizational realities which emanate from the bureaucratic organizational arrangement and values have effects even when the policy production processes are highly rational (Carley, 1980). The centralization and decentralization systems of educational governance have differential effects on policy implementation.

Reform fatigue as espoused by Ball (2007) also produces some form of resistance to policy implementation. While central actors may have to protect their positions as ensuring enforcement of implementation, ground-level actors may be intransigent in implementing as a result of regular reforms and may result in unintended consequences. Haddad and Densky (1995) suggest that policy implementation involves concreteness such as a schedule for moving people, physical objects and funds; administrative systems and technical knowledge must also be clearly structured. Important lessons learnt in their study of four developing countries of Jordan, Peru, Thailand and Burkina Faso are that the degree to which political support is garnered for educational reforms are crucial.

Little (2010) supports this view by indicating that in the implementation of the 1986 National Policy on Education in India, considered as the most important post independence education policy, a major bottleneck encountered was the lack of political will in the states and in the administrative service.

For Harber and Davies (1997), the success of education policy implementation in developing countries is influenced by an understanding of teachers' beliefs, practices and their identity.

3.3.4 Policy implementation in Ghana

In the Ghanaian context, the structure for implementing policies is hierarchical involving four main levels of national, regional, district and school levels. A pictorial representation of this elaborate structure is the policy implementation staircase adapted by Trowler (2003) from Saunders (1986) and also Reynolds and Saunders (1987) and further adapted by me as shown in Figure 2.

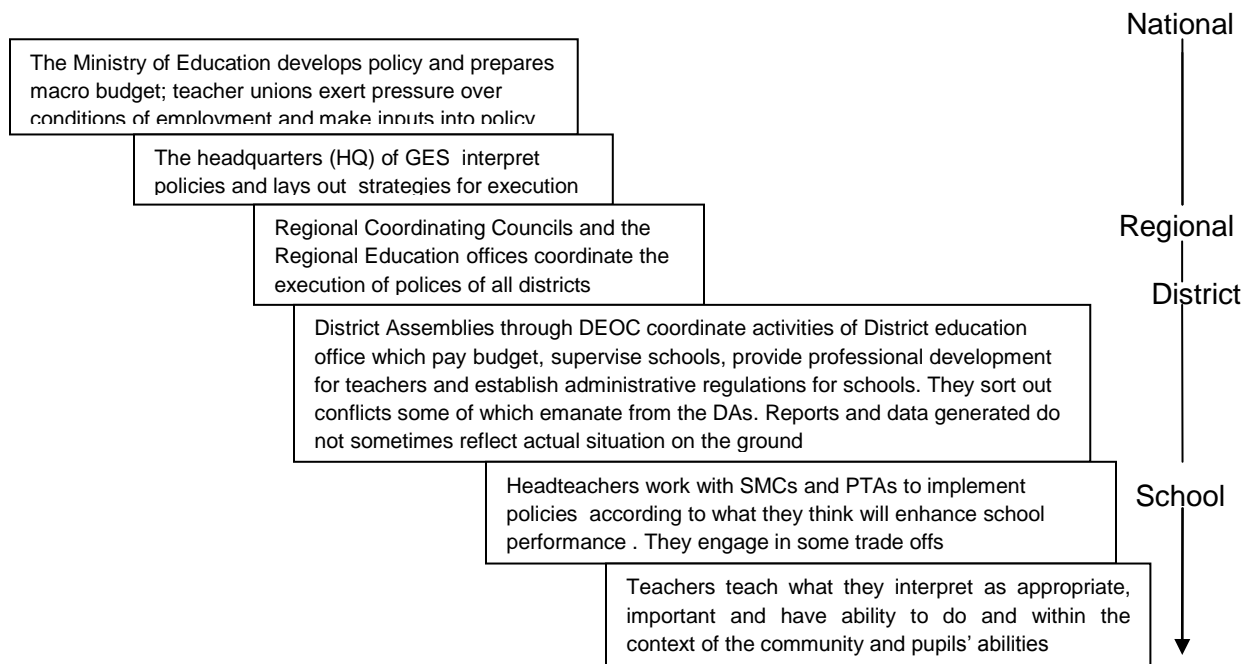


Figure 2 My adaptation of 'The Implementation staircase' cited in Trowler (2003)

This figure portrays the context of education administration in Ghana from the central level to the classroom level. At the national level, the Ministry of Education (MOE) represents the government and has overall responsibility for policy formulation, planning, monitoring, evaluation, budgeting, and coordination. The Ghana Education Service (GES) is responsible for policy implementation through the regional directors of education, together with regional coordinating councils coordinate the execution of policies in the decentralized system. At the district level the district directors of education and the district assemblies coordinate activities of head teachers and teachers at the school level. The various levels on the staircase of implementation portray the levels of interaction, agency and pressures in the decentralized education system in Ghana. According to Nudzor (2010) a major consequence of this process is the duplication of functions among the implementing agencies. Furthermore policy is mediated by leadership practices, interests, interpretation and translation into practice, a reflection of the active interactions that go on at each group site.

3.3.5 *The policy of education decentralization*

The global discourse on decentralization has been characterised by three distinct phases. The influence of tradition of context specific cultural issues such as national geography, language and religious involvement as well as the former colonial power on its colonies in terms of educational organization dictated the extent of de/centralization (Pryor, 2007). This constituted the first phase. The second phase is associated with neo liberalism as an ideology of the 1980s and the minimisation of the role of the state in social and economic life as a prelude to the creation of markets in education (Brown et al., 1997). In the third phase, notions of good governance and accountability had become essential as means to an end and desirable in its own right to the extent that community involvement had become increasingly relevant and an important part of the concept of decentralization (Bray, 2001).

Having been projected as such, decentralization has featured prominently in international discourses not only on consumerism, choice and accountability but also in promises of empowerment, bottom-up change and good governance (Davies et al., 2003) in education. Sayed (2002) however observes that although decentralization has become a mantra in texts promoting good governance, its success or failure as a concept largely remains at the rhetorical level rather than at an empirical level.

3.3.6 *Policy actors in decentralized education system in Ghana*

Evidence of the complexity in decentralization process in Ghana relates in part to the number of factors involved. These include new linkages between the different actors and the different levels of responsibility. Aside the education professionals at the national, regional, district and school levels analysed in the implementation staircase, there are a group of non-education professionals who constitute the district-level support system. These are the parent teacher associations (PTAs), school management committees (SMCs), district education oversight committees (DEOCs), and district teacher support teams (DTSTs). One of the purposes of decentralizing education services is to widen the participation of non-education professionals at local community level in the running and management of schools (De Grauwe et al., 2005). In a study of the relationship between various actors in a four country case study in West Africa, De Grauwe et al., (2005) concluded that such relationship was often characterized by conflicts for as local authorities emphasized their political legitimacy, education officials insisted on their professional legitimacy. In Ghana for example, some shortcomings have been identified as defeating the concept of active grass root participation at the level of planning, management

and accountability. Critical among these is the non-functioning of School Management Committees (SMCs), and District Education Oversight Committees (DEOCs) in some districts. The SMCs for example were charged with the responsibility of rekindling the community spirit in improving education especially at the basic education level and empowering communities to analyse their own schooling problems, adopt and internalize their strategies towards the improvement of teaching and learning. Its membership according to the Ghana Education Service (GES) Act of 1995, is to be drawn from the district education office, the school, the school-community and the PTA. The main areas of responsibility of SMCs were local school policy, school development, administration and finance. PTAs as a representative body of parents on the other hand have supported schools through fund-raising for the provision and maintenance of infrastructure, addressed teacher welfare issues, and provided a forum for the mutual interest of schools and communities to be discussed (Addae-Boahene and Arkorful 1999; Ministry of Education, 2010c). The DEOCs on the other hand, which comprise stakeholders in education at the district level and represent the Ghana Education Service Council at the community level, were also established to strengthen the SMC activities and enhance broader stakeholders' participation in the management, supervision and general governance of schools in the communities (Ministry of Education, 2010b). There have been various sensitization programmes for the SMCS and PTAs on their mandates but Dunne et al., (2005) conclude that there are tensions and contradictions in the role and responsibilities between SMCs and PTAs which undermine their effectiveness. Another phase of tensions and conflicts is located in the non clarification of the level of authority at the school level between the heads of schools and SMCs which results in rifts between these two groups and in some cases the extinction of the latter. (Ghana Education Service, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2010b).

Cultural obstacles have also been identified to impede community participation in the implementation of a decentralization policy in some West African countries. Lugaz (2004) notes that Stakeholders' traditional conceptions on matters of the structure of the education system and division of responsibilities can stall the participation of the local communities in school management. It was noted that some schools were unwilling to allow community participation with the view that schools were still under the sole responsibility of the central government and not that of local communities.

The actions of this wide range of actors impinge on education policy and practice in ways consistent with Archer (1985) who argues that "in the decentralized system, political

manipulation involves a struggle, not only on the part of those wanting to influence governmental policy, but also in order to translate official policy into educational practice” (p. 56).

3.3.7 Power of actors in the context of Ghana’s education system

As is characteristic of decentralization systems the number of policy actors increase in view of the promotion of grass root participation in education delivery. Trowler (2003) reiterates “the power of local actors to negotiate and adapt centrally formulated policy” (p. 139). Each group of the policy actors constitutes a policy site which has its own set of rules about how truth is constructed and that the relations between the policy actors should not be underestimated as some are more powerful and can exert pressure in various ways on those less powerful (Scott, 2000). In agreement with Scott’s (2000) assertion is the finding of Adam (2005) in a study he conducted on *Community participation in school development in the Nanumba District of Ghana*, that the voice of the influential in the community is one of the factors that account for the form and level of participation in school development. Despite their rationale of acting as a counterweight to the powerful professionals in the system and to complement inputs such as resource mobilization such influence is often problematic (Pryor, 2005).

Fiscal decentralization is essential to the successful implementation process for it has been argued that decentralized decision-making without fiscal control is a cosmetic exercise. Financial management (planning, budgeting, accounting skills and activities) are fragmented at the district level in the District Assemblies thus affecting their authority and decision making power (Ministry of Education, 2010). Tikly (1996) indicated that in some developing countries funding mechanisms used to allocate resources from central government have been used to encourage local governments to promote increased enrolments in government schools. Indeed in Ghana, financial resources in terms of capitation grant have been allocated from central government to the school level since 2005. Schools receive a fixed amount of funds based on the number of pupils enrolled. Indications from enrolment figures after the introduction of the capitation grant led to a surge in enrolments which suggested that, indeed fees were a major barrier to access (Akyeampong, 2011). Dunne et al., (2005) however, surmise that the key to success of funding mechanisms lies with greater responsibility and accountability for financial management devolved to the school level.

3.3.8 Perspectives on definition of Identity

Related to the actions and powers of decentralized education policy actors with focus on the district director is how they impact on the construction of the director's identity. Identity is a complex concept which has been explored variously by authors across various fields of endeavour. Olsen (2008) provides a view of identity 'as a *label*' for a number of intertwined and fluid constructs such as "influences and effects from immediate contexts, prior constructs of self, social positioning, and meaning systems" (p. 139). In terms of discourse, identity finds expression in "how collective discourses shape personal worlds and how individual voices combine into the voice of a community" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 15).

Kirk and Wall (2011) claim that identity in relation to the significance of fixed notions of race, gender and social class have dominated discourses on identity since the 1980s. A further development saw the relationship of class, culture and work as the central experience fundamentally shaping identity formation. Rapid changes in the socio-economic circumstances of many nations as a result of globalization and associated 'governance without borders' and increased trans-border movements and activities and neo-liberal human capital concepts subsequently led to new ways of conceptualizing identity beyond cultural and national identities to reflect the differences and diversity expressed in multiple worlds and the emergence of a de-centered individual aptly described by Skeggs (2004) as "a position that assumes the self-authorizing of the subject free from any wider structural constraints" (Skeggs, 2004, p. 71).

Beijaard et al., (2004) identify what seems to be a common thread in the various perspectives on identity in the literature they studied (1998–2000) "In general, the concept of identity has different meanings in the literature. What these various meanings have in common is the idea that identity is not a fixed attribute of a person, but a relational phenomenon" (p. 108).

3.3.9 Professional identity

Identity can be viewed in relation to a profession that is, a professional identity. Moore and Hofman (1988) determine that professional identity is similar to the extent to which someone thinks of his or her role as important, attractive, and in harmony with other roles. De Corse and Vogtle (1997) characterize it as derived from the social perception of an occupational group.

For the purpose of my study perhaps the definition that most resonates with me is the reference of professional identity as 'stories to live by', given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context in their narrative study of the interconnectedness of knowledge, context, and identity in the stories of teachers and administrators (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999). These definitions also seem to focus attention on the professional aspects of

a career such as teaching. The centrality of work to the exploration and understanding of identity in contemporary times however is re-echoed in later research works. MacKenzie et al., (2005) recognize “the common pattern of lived experience as essential for explaining the development of common identities” (p. 836) and ‘work and social interaction’, according to Kirk (2007), “denote central analytical, experiential and conceptual categories for exploring and understanding identity” (p. 85). Bourdieu’s concept of habitus which he defines as “a system of schemes of perception and appreciation of practices... which are acquired through the lasting experience of a social position” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19) is used by researchers such as MacKenzie et al., (2005) and Kirk (2007) to provide significance to work as the basis for ‘group identity’. The district director’s identity therefore finds meaning in the processes of their work, their career formation, their knowledge and experiences as individuals and as a community of district directors within specific contexts.

3.3.10 Conference of Directors of Education as a Community of Practice

A community of practice as a socio-cultural learning theory is defined by Wenger et al., (2002) as:

Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis (p. 4).

This definition aptly describes the Conference of Directors of Education (CODE) whose membership comprises all directors of education i.e., District, municipal, metropolitan directors and regional and divisional directors of education. The association is national in character with national executives but also with 10 regional sub-groupings with their executives as well. The national conference is a five-day programme of activities where members, a community of people, interact to share issues of common concern. CODE as a community of practice must be seen not only as a ‘naturally occurring group’ who have common interests but as one which develops its members while providing a sense of belongingness and confidence (Smith and Sadler-Smith, 2006, p. 42). Key characteristics of a community of practice as suggested by Wenger et al., (2002) are their ability to evolve, to access perspectives beyond the community, bringing on board new ideas while embracing different levels of participation of their members, and where learners’ identities are co-constructed and transformed.

Lave and Wenger (1991) surmise that a community of practice involves much more than the technical or skill associated with undertaking some task. Members are involved in a set of

relationships over time and communities develop around some particular area of knowledge and activity giving members a sense of joint enterprise and identity (Wenger 1998).

In distinguishing between legitimate peripheral participation and situated learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that rather than looking to learning as the acquisition of certain forms of knowledge, it must be placed in social relationships, that is, situations of co-participation. They highlight that participation “refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities” (Wenger 1999, p. 4). They further explain that people initially have to join communities and learn at the periphery. But as they become more competent they become more involved in the main processes of the particular community. They move from legitimate peripheral participation to ‘full participation’ (Lave and Wenger 1991, p. 37) by taking up more and more of the identity of group membership and central practices of the group. Learning is, thus, not seen as the acquisition of knowledge by individuals so much as a process of *social* participation. The nature of the *situation* impacts significantly on the process.

This social process where legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice virtually subsumes the learning of knowledgeable skills (Lave and Wenger 1991). It is important to note that the focus on the social aspect of learning is not a displacement of the person. On the contrary, it is an emphasis on the person as a social participant, as a meaning-making entity for whom the social world is a resource for constituting an identity.

CODE could develop group norms that value critical reflection on school policies and teacher practices, as well as how those policies and practices influence student learning (Keefe & Howard, 1997). Thus CODE could constitute a powerful learning environment where directors could confront critical issues surrounding teaching, learning, and district education management through shared experiences and with professionals from other sources. Soal (2007) shares a transformative experience of the South African NGO Community Development Resource Association’s (CDRA) ‘homeweek’ as an interesting organizational learning model which could be replicated in an organisation and also at the level of CODE. It is a:

Week-long process of organisational connecting, strategizing, action-learning, co-creating, managing, resource-allocating, peer-supervising, accounting, team building, record creating and practice developing (p.3).

For Soal (2007), “organizations are best equipped to tackle problems of practice when they organize themselves to access the rich resource of experience that they already contain, and then translate into improved collective thinking, strategy and practice” (p. 2).

3.4 Perspectives on Power and Management in Africa

An investigation into the workings of the District Director in the complex organization of the district education office being the focus of my study necessitates an understanding of the notion of power. However the notion of power is a contentious one and its understanding depends on how it is conceived. My interest is in Lukes’s three dimensional view of power (2005) which not only provides contemporary insights on power (Béland, 2006) but also “a standard way of mapping the schools of thought regarding power” (Swartz, 2007, p. 1).

3.4.1 Lukes’s Notion of Power

From a basic notion of power being the ability to influence others in social relationships, Lukes (2005) provides alternative interpretations and applications where each view of power depends on a different conception of interest. The three dimensions of power are explored by Lukes using as a starting point the elite theories of Mills (1956), Hunter (1953) and the behaviourist, decision-making approach of Dahl (1961). Lukes classifies their thoughts as the first dimension of power because “the stress is on the study of concrete, observable *behavior*” (Lukes, 2005, p. 17) as exercised through what happens in decision making processes. Considered from this angle therefore, Lukes writes:

...this first, one-dimensional, view of power involves a focus on *behavior* in the making of *decisions* on *issues* over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) *interests*, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation (Lukes, 2005, p. 19).

What Lukes categorizes as a second dimension of power: control of agenda is what Bachrach and Baratz (1962) had identified as having been left out of consideration in what Lukes captures as the first dimension of power. This is ‘what does not happen’ in decision-making settings. In other words, power can also be exercised through the control of agenda in such a way as to consciously constrain or exclude certain issues from the agenda and through non-decision making as well. Thus “it is crucially important to identify potential issues which non decision-making prevents from being actual” (Lukes, 2005, p. 23).

Lukes' third dimension of power enables us to consider the critical question: "how do the powerful secure the compliance of those they dominate?" (Lukes, 2005, p. 10). In power through domination, Lukes asserts that actors unwittingly follow the dictates of power even against their best interests as a result of deeply rooted forms of political socialization (Swartz, 2007).

In essence, he provides a conceptual framework through which we can think about power broadly while paying attention to the variety of ways in which issues could be kept inaccessible to observation whether through the decisions of individuals, the workings of social forces or institutionalized practices.

3.4.2 *Re-conceptualization of Power and Domination*

The clarification and expansion of Lukes' three-dimensional theory of power in the two new chapters of the 2005 edition presents to us an updated and well-informed discussion and definition of power and domination while providing a more detailed conceptual map which summarizes the wider notion of power. For him, power indicates a 'capacity', 'a facility', 'an ability' not a relationship thus the conflictual aspect of power as exercised over people fails to exist.

Lukes borrows from Spinoza and suggests that there are two types of power; power over and power to. Lukes admits that "power over others can be productive, transformative, authoritative and compatible with dignity" (p. 85) under certain conditions. That is to say that not all 'power over' is negative in its effects on subordinates (Swartz, 2007) as perceptions and preferences can be shaped to ensure acceptance and approval of the status quo (Lorenzi, 2006). In other words, power does not only repress, but also creates other significant effects. Swartz (2007) gives the teacher and student relation as an example of the productive and transformative nature of power for both of them. Hence domination should be considered as just one type of "power over". Lukes therefore rejects what he terms the "ultra-radical view" of the earlier works of Foucault which suggests the all-pervasive reach of power but aligns himself with Foucault's insights on how domination is secured through compliance.

Considering the three dimensions of power as force, persuasion, and manipulation, Lukes also reveals that rather than looking only at binary relations between actors, there should be a consideration for multiple actors with views that are divergent in many situations. For example religion, race, gender and a host of others can generate their own particular interests and Lukes explains that real interests are "a function of one's explanatory purpose, framework, and

methods which in turn have to be justified” (p. 148). What still remains unanswered is what the most vital interest is that cannot be realized in any given situation because of domination. With his updates and acknowledgements, he re-conceptualizes power to include the ability of agents to produce significant effects, particularly by either seeking their own interests or having an effect on others’ interests. Lukes states that social life involves an interplay between agent-power and structure (Lukes, 2005, pp. 68-69), thus many consequences that are not intended by a particular agent are the results of the agent’s actions mediated by social structures.

In his distinction between power and domination, he describes domination as a subcategory of power where there is exercise of power over others in a way that subverts their real interests. Real interests are described in terms of an agent’s ability to live life according to “how his nature and judgements dictate” (Lukes, 2005, p. 123). Domination thus results in the dominated being less able to make independent judgements and constraining their ability to be self-determining.

Lukes is in agreement with Bourdieu’s concept that the less visible power is to the consciousness of actors the more effective it is, even though to Lukes, power could be more susceptible to resistance than Bourdieu suggests.

Lukes has been criticized for raising thorny conceptual and methodological issues. His claim that identification can be made of “objective interests” of dominated actors and that they vary from one theoretical approach to another has been singled out as raising epistemological issues rather than providing solutions and not offering a sociological analysis of the causal and structural reality of power. The epistemological question is how can we determine people’s objective interests for they may not always know what is best for them and neither may those exercising the power. At best what we can aim to do is to find out about people’s subjective interests – what they claim they want.

3.4.3 Essential elements of Lukes’ power

That power is ‘essentially a *contested* concept’ and inescapably political because its definition depends on how it is conceived so disagreements on the definition of power are appreciable.

That power cannot be a fully objective concept because value judgements will always enter into selecting which outcomes of power matter most and the significance of such outcomes is generally thought of in terms of the interest involved, highlighting the normative aspect of power.

Lukes emphasizes that power can still remain a useful analytical concept lending itself to empirical research into how compliance can become an internalized disposition and the subtle real effects of power.

3.4.4 Dynamics of power relationships in management in developing countries

There is growing significance of the concepts of management and leadership reflecting in the broader debates about their definitions. Whereas some view the shift from leadership to management as purely semantic, others stress the importance of both dimensions of organizational activity. For example, while leadership is linked with change, management is seen as a maintenance activity (Cuban, 1988). Day et al. (2001) also suggest that management is linked to systems and 'paper', while leadership is about the development of people. The analysis of the various theories of management and their attributes in Africa (Jackson, 2004) is that which informs this study.

Earlier literature on indigenous management in developing countries seems to suggest an inflexible, hierarchical and authoritarian model (Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990; Blunt and Jones, 1992). The theory of cultural value dimensions supports this view highlighting the "high power relations" that characterize the relationship between employee and manager and the acceptance of the differences in status (Hofstede 1980). Blunt and Jones (1992) describe public sector and state owned enterprises in developing countries generally and sub-Saharan Africa specifically as being too large, bureaucratic with emphasis on control mechanisms, rules and procedures rather than performance. Joergensen (1990) outlines some inefficiency in state-owned enterprises in East Africa such as overstaffing, lack of job descriptions and incentives, political interference and poor infrastructure. Similar views are also expressed by Ayee (2005) who suggests some reasons for the ineffectiveness of the public sector in African countries to spearhead socioeconomic development and to reduce poverty as "excessive politicization, lack of accountability and representation, inability to promote the public interest and authoritarian tendencies" (p. 3).

Analysing the various theories of management and their attributes in Africa, Jackson (2004) characterizes them as postcolonial and post instrumental management systems which appear to have an underlying assumption that people in an organization have an instrumental value and as such are considered a means to an end. Defining the main principle of postcolonial management system as western/post independence African with continuing legacy through political and economic interest and a hierarchical structure, he recognizes the difficulty in

identifying a particular African philosophy. He describes an African Renaissance management system as having key values such as sharing in terms of helping one another, deference to rank, regard for compromise and consensus, good social and personal relations and sanctity of commitment (p. 28). Jackson (2004) surmises that these theories seem too simplistic and miss out on the importance of power relations and ideology within a geopolitical context, dynamics and challenges too real and visible to be ignored (p. 11). In the generation of his cross-cultural theory to address the management knowledge and management education gap in Africa, Jackson (2004) demonstrates that African countries present a complex and rapidly changing multicultural context and efficacy of management methods will depend on awareness of this and the relative influences of western, African and post colonial principles and practices (p. 2). He illustrates this by stating:

for employees and managers there is often a split between the world of work and community/home life. Staff going into work in the morning step out of their own culture and enter a different one. This is not being managed well in many organizations, often leading to low levels of employee morale... (p. 2).

Jackson (2004) identifies three levels of cultural interaction: Inter-continental, inter-country and inter-ethnic and managers in sub-Saharan Africa have to manage this complexity every-day. He explains that these cross cultural processes produce a paradox where there are conflicts between policies and practices between historical legacy and future requirement to develop people in work organizations.

Jackson (2004) asserts that in the African context, while organizations cannot return to pre-colonial management methods a process of hybridization of management systems with regard to the locus of human value can be managed by understanding, and redefining the complexities of the operating environment. It also involves the combination of collectivism, humane leadership style and performance orientation. He surmises that management systems within Africa should consider an 'indigenous' African management system. He suggests the facilitation of different stakeholder inputs, the development of appropriate leadership and the adaptation of motivation and commitment to local conditions and the turning around to the advantage of developing countries the multiple influences of culture.

3.4.5 Public sector reforms in Ghana

In Ghana like in other African countries various structural and economic reforms have been undertaken without significant effects largely attributed to an instrumental view which fails to address the real issues of developing countries (Jackson, 2004).

In Ghana, between 1987-1990, there was a major public sector downsizing of an over bloated public sector wage bill as an indirect fiscal measure toward economic stability as within the world bank sponsored economic reform agenda. A decade later, an ambitious National Institutional Renewable Programme was launched. Its objective was to re-engineer the public service to enable it to deliver an efficient and cost effective service that would respond to the needs of the country. Among some initiatives taken were the development of a human resource framework for the public service, public pay policy, pension reforms and decentralization among others. Undertaken within broad interventionist and liberal economic policies applied at different times, Aryeetey et al., (2000) suggest from their various reviews and analyses that these reforms failed to achieve broader growth and development outcomes beyond the short term in Ghana. Reasons adduced for this situation are summarized as either “right policies applied within the wrong institutional arrangements or the wrong sequencing of otherwise appropriate policy instruments” (p. 1).

The explanation of the conceptual resources relating to power and management outlined in this chapter will be used to do interpretation and explanation in the ensuing chapters. For example the ideas on power will be related to the DDEs and their power to act. Specifically, the issue of agent power and structure and the objective and subjective interests of the DDEs will be subject to further analysis. Similarly the DDEs management system will be considered within the context of the various theories of management and their attributes in Africa.

3.4.6 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the major debates on the concepts and theories that underpin the processes of educational policy production and implementation. A reflection on these debates gives me an indication that the specific education management system being executed in a specific country context is important in determining the implementation complexities and the degree to which policy will be reproduced. I have reviewed policy implementation as an integral part of the policy production process highlighting the perception that policy implementers are not just passive receptacles but actively engaged in the production, making and remaking of policies. The general approaches to policy implementation and specifically in a decentralized educational management system akin to the Ghanaian context was also reviewed. I have also examined the factors that serve as impediments to the implementation of policies. Issues of power and other micro politics of personal relationships among policy actors have also been outlined.

Furthermore, this chapter has also explored the concept of professional identity in relation to CoDE and how it is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context. It also focused on a review of the characteristics of the group of directors within the theory of community of practice. The final part of the chapter gave attention to the Lukesian (2005) power and Jackson's (2004) concept of management and leadership in Africa which all together enabled me to make meaning of my analysis and discussion chapters.

CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I clarify the different methodological decisions that I had to make for use in this research. I outline my epistemology, research methodology, research design and choice of methods and how my theoretical framework has shaped them. I discuss the usefulness of these instruments and explain their relative suitability in addressing the research questions of this thesis. Following from this, I reflect on the research methodology, methods and ethical and moral issues. I also reflect on my relationship with my participants and describe how I managed and processed data that I had generated. I conclude this chapter with how I ensured trustworthiness and credibility in the research approach and the limitations to the study.

4.2 Issues Considered in Designing Research Instruments

The nature of my topic which seeks to explore the role and professional identity of district directors of Education in Ghana and the research questions to be answered lend themselves to the adoption of a qualitative approach to this study for according to Creswell (2012), it helps the researcher to address a problem in which he or she does not know the variables and needs to explore. I distinguish my research methodology as the theory or general principle which guides a study (Dunne et al., 2005) and research methods as explained by Dunne et al. (2005, p. 163) as denoting the ways in which data are produced/collected, interpreted/analysed and reported, which include instruments such as questionnaires, interviews and observation, among others. I view social relationships from a subjectivist researcher point of view influencing my social constructivist, interpretivist stance. The set of theories underlying how education policies are implemented, power to enact policies, identity construction and education management practices which constitute my theoretical framework guided the selection of the methods for this study as they are based on social constructions which can be usefully deconstructed when qualitative research methods are used to explore them. I adopted the use of the narrative and case study approaches as outlined below to be the most appropriate for this study (Yin, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2004) as I based the study principally on the views and experiences of directors.

I also intend to compare the representations of reality emerging from the data from the different subjective realities offered by the participants through interviews and my own subjective views of participant observation, personal experience and reflective research journal while also using

my theoretical framework to form the basis for analyzing and interpreting the data to be gathered.

4.3 Epistemology and research methodology

I approached this study from a social constructivist approach by emphasizing the notion that people talk their reality into existence and that this is the reality that I am concerned with. My adoption of a constructivist approach as my epistemological stance is in recognition of my desire to understand the production of the social world which is constantly being made and which sees the account of reality as being constructed through interaction between the researcher and those who participate in the phenomenon under investigation. My use of the constructivist approach to interviewing and story-making to construct meaning required of me a greater sensitivity to the interpretive procedures through which I derived my meanings (Harris, 2003).

In this study, the phenomenon I am studying is the professional practice of district directors of education within their social and corporate contexts, from the perspective of the directors themselves and those who aspire to their positions. This case study is qualitative and interpretative. It aims to focus closely on the interaction between the directors and the teachers they supervise and other stakeholders they deal with in education governance at the district level. This is in order to understand various perspectives and unpick the complexities with regard to policy implementation, the interplay of power, the influences on the identity formation and the management practices with a view to making further contribution on the phenomenon. Exploring the key areas of District director role and identity are social constructions and can usefully be deconstructed when qualitative research methods are used to explore education management and leadership. Furthermore, using the theoretical framework presented the additional advantage of considering the case through those interactive factors which have an influence of the director's practices.

4.4 Narrative Inquiry

The nature of my study lends itself to the narrative approach as it enabled me to achieve a shared and jointly-constructed meaning through stories. I chose the narrative approach for Bruner (1990) describes the human as a species that has an inborn tendency to tell and understand stories resulting in the view of some researchers that stories are rooted in human agency (Squire, 2006). Indeed story-telling as a transmitter of human morality although perceived to be drawn from Aristotle (Andrews et al., 2008) is also a thing of the global south

and deeply ingrained in the Ghanaian folkloric culture. I also took a cue from researchers like Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who extensively used narrative in their educational studies because they perceive education and educational studies as a form of experience and as such “narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience” (p. 18). Experience-centred narrative was of particular interest to me. They are “texts which bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of past, present, future or imaginary experience” (Patterson, 2002, p. 128). The personal narrative also opened a window into the specific issues of self and identity where subjectivities and identities are negotiated (Sclater, 2006). My choice of the experience-centred narrative was also influenced by the thought that it offers me the opportunity to expand the scope of my participants’ stories to include my own reflective written or oral comments on the interview (Andrews et al., 2008). This characterizes narrative as “a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20; Andrews et al., 2008). More importantly, by the use of the narrative approach which is a “means of human sense-making” (Polkinghorne, 1995; Andrews et al., 2008) I saw myself engaging in an exciting activity of ordering the human experience of my district directors and their deputies in a sequential and temporal way (Bruner, 1987; Polkinghorne, 1995; Andrews, 2008). The narrations made by the DDEs enabled me to understand the link between knowledge, context and identity (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999).

4.5 Case Study

This study is also grounded within a case study methodology as it allows me to explore individuals, simple through their complex interventions, relationships, within communities or programs (Yin, 2003). This approach to my research also afforded me the opportunity to produce “the type of context-dependent knowledge that research on learning shows to be necessary to allow people to develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 221). Again, I adopted the case study “not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something” (Eysenck, 1976, p. 9). Finally, its concentration on experiential knowledge of the case and also its close attention to the influence of its social, political and other contexts (Stake, 2005) makes case study relevant to this study.

4.6 The Case

In this study, the two district directors and four assistant/deputy directors constitute six DDEs. To some extent each constitutes a case of a DDE. In view of this, I provide a summary of each DDE in the subsequent chapter (chapter 5) on the findings and analysis. However I have rather

studied them as a single holistic case, that of the DDE within the decentralized system of Ghana. The claims I make are about the role of those in this study but invite comparisons for those whose concern is with educational managers more generally or with those in other management positions within decentralizing systems.

4.7 Research design and data collection process

In this section I provide a detailed and systematic outline of how I managed data collection. It begins with the context about the study districts, and a description of the selection process for the participants. I follow this up with the various instruments I employed. I also discuss the means for analyzing data collected.

4.7.1 *The study districts*

Two districts, Sawtena East and Leket West were purposefully and theoretically selected out of a total of 215 districts organized into ten regions of Ghana. Both districts were newly created in 2008. Sawtena East is largely a rural setting while Leket West is predominantly urban. Each of these districts also represents a different region all located in the southern coastal belt of Ghana. While fishing and subsistence farming alongside small-scale cultivation of cash crops is the mainstay of the people of Sawtena East, fishing and trading are predominant in Leket West. These districts have not been over researched and their proximity to the researcher was a major consideration in the selection process.

4.7.2 *Participants' selection*

In each study district, the district director of education and two deputy directors/assistant director 1 out of the four at post constituted the participants for the semi-structured interviews. Deputy directorship is also a rank and a position. Holders of the rank and/or position aspire to become district directors so long as they fulfill the conditions for district directorship. In cases where there are inadequate numbers of deputy directors, assistant directors are used to fill in the positions. The two deputy directors were selected from the four based on their years of experience in the deputy directorship position ranging from three years and above and below three years. Each of the 6 interviewees was subject to two rounds of interview.

4.7.3 *Methods of data collection*

Data collection was preceded with the seeking of approval for the conduct of the study from the Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) of the University of Sussex, UK.

As part of the conceptualization of my research process there was the need to clearly define my data collection methods which are interview, participant observation, my personal experience and the keeping of a reflective research journal. In the following section I outline the systematic processes of my data collection beginning with the preparatory arrangements I put in place prior to data collection and continue with the actual processes while highlighting changes to my initial conceptual frame as I came face to face with realities on the ground.

4.7.4 Interviews

My primary source of data collection was interviews which according to Polkinghorne (1995) are “the most often used source of storied narratives in contemporary narrative inquiry” (p. 12). It was a personal, face-to-face and one-to-one interview encounter with participants about their experiences relating to career choice and development, identities and work experiences. I was reminded by Chambon (1995) cited in Shacklock and Thorp (2005) that life story interviews are more of “constructing a language-practice place where a life story is put together by the participant-conversants” (p. 157) rather than just ‘collecting facts or reports of life’ through the use of an interview schedule.

Two separate semi-structured interview guides were developed to guide the interview process. One targeted deputy directors and the other directors. Each guide comprised three parts. The first part focused on issues of the academic background and socio- cultural context of interviewees intended to address research question 2. Part 2 provided for research questions 1 and aspects of 2, 3 and 4. It focused on the roles and responsibilities of directors and deputies, the organizational context and power to act as well as factors that influenced the formation of the identities of directors. This section also attended to directors’ management capacity to address challenges and motivation for their work. Other aspects of research questions 3 and 4 were addressed in the final part of the interview guide with specific reference to the influence of CoDE on identity construction of directors and in addressing management challenges.

The interview guides allowed for modification or extension with supplementary, unplanned questions. It therefore provided flexibility to pursue a line of inquiry which might arise during the interview process and to ask follow up questions in order to clarify participants' views.

4.7.4.1 Pre-interview arrangements

I assembled together all supporting documents of the C-REC ethical review which were the permission letter to conduct interviews, participant information sheet and consent form. The

rest were the research outline and two sets of interview guide appropriate to the two categories of participants: district directors and deputies. I amended as recommended by C-REC the section on confidentiality of what participants will say in the research on the participant information sheet to read: "I will therefore ensure that the information you give remains confidential" instead of "Any information to be collected is not meant for supervisory intent. I will therefore ensure that the information you give remains confidential and will be accorded all the privacy it deserves".

The process for my data collection thus started with an initial visit to the selected education offices to identify and meet with participants during which I delivered my permission letter to conduct the interviews. I also booked appointments for the interviews and took contact details of participants. The facilitating and cooperative role of the two district directors was brought to bear right at this initial stage of the process as they assisted me to identify participants according to the criteria I had set. As already stated, I had previously conceived my sample of participants to include four deputy directors of education from two districts. Realities on the ground however indicated that my selected districts did not have the full complement of officers with the rank of deputy director as I learnt was the case in almost all districts in Ghana. In such a case, two participants of the next lower rank of assistant director I were selected as they were recognized by the GES to act in the position of deputy director.

Prior to the appointed dates I followed up with calls to confirm the appointments. In the case of the farthest district, Sawtena East I was able to clinch a same day appointment for all three interviewees unlike in Leket West where three separate days were used for interviews according to the availability of each of them.

4.7.4.2 Conduct of first round interviews and processing

I observed the C-REC guidelines for approval of field work by dispensing the participant information sheet and consent form to each participant. I had previously taken on board a comment by C-REC with regard to the confidentiality of participants' information in my consent form to indicate that due to my small sample size, there was a risk that their views could be attributable to other participants in the report. I also reminded participants of the need to audio-tape the interviews.

All interviews were carried out at the education office premises with each lasting between an hour and an hour and half. Questions and answers were shaped by dialogue between me and my interviewees, thus making the process a dialogic event where we as participants acted

‘together in an on-going, non-linear process’ of constructing an account, with questions also phrased in everyday language (Shacklock and Thorp, 2005). My semi-structured interview schedule developed for the purpose contained questions which were not narrowly specified in order to allow for storied answers to be provided in an ordinary way in which they make sense (Polkinghorne, 1995) and which also allowed for ‘active narrative interviewing’ (Andrews et al., 2008). I was also mindful of the choice of words and other non-verbal communication of participants during the interview process. I composed field notes concurrently as the interviews went on. The dialogic nature of the interviews was apparent and spontaneous in view of my personal background knowledge and experiences in matters of education and my assumption of the connection between my interviewees and cultural narratives. This resulted in a very active interviewing interaction with my interviewees. I proceeded to transcribe each conversation from the audio tapes. I further developed participant narratives from the transcripts which extended to co-construction of the narratives (Andrews et al., 2008) and a means of making sense out of the data I had collected. I organized my data elements by describing the interviews thematically while paying particular attention to the “sequencing and progression of themes within interviews, their transformation and resolution” (Andrews et al., 2008, p. 50). I also took particular interest in identifying quotations of key statements.

4.7.4.3 Post textual constructions of first round interviews

The life stories, which is the new material I developed were used for the second round of interviewing to enable interviewees to be gatekeepers: to examine interpretations, to allow for alternative views and use as basis to continue conversation and for stories to unfold since “narrative research is emergent and cannot be rushed to fit an imposed schedule” (Andrews et al., 2008, p. 159). My respondents also had the opportunity to check on my interpretations as far as the stories were concerned.

To give respondents adequate time to study the texts, I ensured their delivery a week to the dates scheduled for the second round of interviews. I stressed during these interactions their freedom to comment on the narratives I had constructed. This was also an effort to make my interviewees gain more power over the data I had gathered from them to be used as the basis of findings in my research work. Five of my respondents expressed their satisfaction with the textual representations. In the case of the last one, a comment was made on the order of presentation of two issues which I assured of correction.

Secondly, I intended to continue the conversation on issues raised in my first interview and which I considered significant in my theoretical framework (Andrews et al., 2008) to merit further probing. This was particularly the case of the challenges leading to potential tensions in the implementation of critical policies by district directors of education in Ghana. In view of this, the submissions of two of my respondents were quite revealing. I also asked for some examples in the case of some statements that had been previously made.

4.7.5 Observation

My second source of data collection was participant observation. This entailed my presence in a situation and recording my impressions about what takes place (Jones and Somekh, 2005). It also required the use of my sensory organs, with me as the primary research instrument to consciously gather data while also subjectively “engaged in making sense of impressions and interpreting the meaning of observed behaviour and events” (Jones and Somekh, 2005, p. 138). The object of my observation was the Conference of Directors of Education (CoDE) which is organized on quarterly basis at the regional level for all DDEs in the region to attend. The choice of this was informed by the potential it has as a community of practice to affect the professional lives of their members by providing the forum for professional engagement, dialogue and continuous learning while also providing the opportunity to gain information on other themes related to my research questions.

Beyond this I was open-minded to opportunities for destabilizing my own understandings and assumptions about district director identity and learning processes. I was initiated into the membership of the Conference by the time I undertook the observation which offered me the opportunity to immerse myself in the community to observe ‘from within’ as a participant for the one-day duration of the conference.

4.7.5.1 Pre-participants observation arrangements

Arrangements for my participant observation as my second method of data collection commenced with a clarification of what exactly I will be looking for in doing it as recommended by C-REC. Influenced by my ontological position of conceptualizing the world as socially constructed, I intended to observe behaviour and events in order to understand human action particularly from the point of view of learning activities. I adopted the unstructured observation approach by making detailed notes on choices influenced by the emerging themes from interviews and stories previously made with a bearing on my research questions. For example, I was particularly interested in noting the ways in which issues concerning the roles and

responsibilities of directors attracted more attention for discussion and how they managed their power as policy actors in addressing challenges emanating from the implementation of educational policies within a decentralized setting in relation to research questions 1, 2 and 4. I was also interested in observing the experiences they shared, what they learned in general and how they influenced the identities of one another. Of personal interest to me was also what I could personally learn to enhance my practice as a director. The focus of my research and my prior knowledge, experience and professional background (Jones and Somekh, 2005) also influenced what I looked out for.

Another area of change from my initial conceptual framework was the object for the participant observation. My request for a change from the national conference of directors of education (CoDE) to the regional CoDE, was occasioned by the late year (October) organization of the previous as against the early year (April) organization of the latter. The change of the object did not however affect my participation as an insider observer as my assumption date of the district directorship position (March 2013) preceded my invitation to attend the central regional CoDE meeting (April, 2013) which happened to be the first quarter meeting.

At the receipt of the invitation to attend the meeting, I arranged to meet with the chairman of the regional CoDE during which I introduced my research work encapsulated in the research outline I submitted to him. I also discussed with the chairman what exactly I would be doing during the pending meeting with particular reference to my research work that is, taking notes and recording specific areas of interest. I took the opportunity to assure him that this would not interfere in any way with the meeting.

4.7.5.2 Conduct of participant observation and processing

The day's conference was hosted by one of the districts in the region. A roll call indicated that all the expected 17 directors were in attendance. The conference was in two parts: The first part was set aside for an update on the status of education in the host district followed by fraternal messages and interactions with various stakeholders from the host district invited to the first part of the meeting. The second part was strictly reserved for the deliberations of the DDEs and the regional director of education.

The nature of the conference allowed me to critically observe proceedings as an insider engrossed in "the culture of the group" of directors (Jones and Somekh, 2005, p. 140). I also had the opportunity to sense the impressions, and to take copious notes while recording specific areas of interest as I did not have any other role to play in the meeting than to listen

attentively to proceedings and to ask questions where necessary. I was particularly interested in recording areas related to the themes that emerged from my interviews as already indicated. I made hand-written, observational notes during the meeting. For example:

I observe the director treasurer expressing serious concern about delays in the payment of welfare dues by members which make it difficult to honour welfare entitlements of retired directors and also the poor attendance of directors at funerals of close relations of colleagues (April 13, 2013).

My notes-taking was however done simultaneously with my attempt to make sense of what was happening and to interpret actions and activities (Jones and Somekh, 2005). I later processed the notes I took during the meeting into a detailed report. I identified the relevant sections of the report which lend themselves to integration into the analysis of the interviews. I integrated and interpreted data from the observation with the stories from the interviews to form a synthesized and coherent account not apparent in the data themselves (Polkinghorne, 1995).

4.7.6 *Personal Experience*

My third source of data collection was my personal experience. The richness of my experience stems from 32 years of work experience in the education sector. Having worked in various capacities first as a teacher and to my current position as a district director, I have acquired education and training and practical experience in matters of education both in the classroom and in education administration. This background places me in a position to be a potential source of data key to the data collection and sense making of the data I collected. My personal experience was brought to bear on my interviews as it enabled me to better understand the right perspectives and contexts of the issues at stake and to ask appropriate follow up questions. With regard to sense making of data, it also enabled me to explore different perspectives of the data and to appreciate and reinforce some underlying meanings not obvious to the uninitiated.

4.7.7 *Reflective Research Journal*

The need to create transparency in the research process was an important consideration I made in doing this research. The use of a reflective journal as my fourth source of data collection provided me the opportunity to record my thoughts, feelings and reflections at certain critical stages of the research work. Being the main 'instrument' behind the data collection in the interviews I conducted, the participant observation I made and given my personal and professional experience in this study, it was necessary to keep an introspective record of my

work to enable me to take stock of my own biases, feelings and thoughts and to understand how these may be influencing my study. I achieved this by expressing specific thoughts in my journal for example, about my relationship with my participants and assumptions about how interview questions should be answered. The exposure of this information to the readers of my work is in accordance with the need to be open in qualitative inquiry so as to “make analytical events open to public inspection” (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002, p. 31), to enable a better evaluation of my findings and to make visible to the reader the constructed nature of my research outcomes.

4.8 Reflection on the research methodology and methods

Doing a major research work like this over a period of time provides an opportunity to reflect on various experiences encountered in the course of the project. In this section I provide a critical account of my experiences as a researcher. I reflect on my research relationship with my participants and how the relationship dynamics affected responses to questions. I explain how I engaged in narrative meaning making and examine some assumptions and preconceptions I had.

4.8.1 Reflection on relationship with participants

The period during which I conducted my research covered two different phases of my working career. I commenced the preliminary stages of the research when I was on a schedule as the HIV& AIDS Coordinator of the Ministry of Education on the rank of deputy director of education. By the time I got to the stage of field work of collecting data through interviews, I had attended an interview for district directorship position even though the results were not yet out. To my realization, this mid-level position in which I found myself had an influence on the interviews I conducted with my participants. Even though I did not indicate my rank to the participants, I felt more comfortable with the four non-director participants as they were on the same level with me. With the two substantive directors I tended to be more polite with the introduction of words such as “please” and an expectation of more detailed exposition of areas not familiar to me. From the onset of framing my topic and outlining my research questions, I envisaged that I would be looking for some objective ‘truth’ ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered by asking the right questions. While reading over the interview transcriptions and doing my analysis I realized I had taken for granted that my questions were objective and that participants’ responses had definitive meanings reflecting singular ‘reality’. I noted that “I thought I had gotten into the minds of my participants and expecting to discover the truth concerning my subject” (Journal entry, April 19, 2003) when in reality I was co-creating knowledge with my participants.

4.8.2 Engaging in meaning-making

Fully aware that my engagement with the narrative approach is a ‘means of human sense-making’ (Polkinghorne, 1995; Andrews et al., 2008) I attempted at “making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 46). I acknowledge that my interests as a researcher informed to a great extent my “research intentions and approaches to analysis and interpretation” (Dunne et al., 2005, p. 86).

As I engaged in meaning-making in doing narrative, I compelled in one way or the other, my participants to reflect on those experiences in relation to the subject areas of my interviews and to select relevant aspects and to order them into a coherent whole (Ferber, 2000). Then to enable me do my analysis in the light of my research questions, I mediated the themes according to my perspective, interests and standpoint as the researcher (Riessman, 2003; Colley, 2003). This is because I constructed the narratives by “selecting, interpreting and ordering small portions of lengthy interview transcripts” (Colley, 2003, p. 6) from narratives constructed by my interviewees. Furthermore, in doing interpretation of the data, I brought in more explicitly my background experience and possible meaning into it. I organized my experience of my given reality and found ways of making representations of that experience through my textual reconstruction (Dunne et al., 2005) and in recognition that there is no one single approach to knowledge.

I recognize that all meanings from the interviews I conducted were interactively and culturally constructed with me as the researcher as part of the meaning-making process and that a shift in our social locations could produce and construct meanings as dictated by the particular context.

4.8.3 My assumptions and preconceptions

Having carefully crafted my questions in my interview guide, I assumed that the concepts and wording of my questions would be understood and were appropriate to elicit relevant responses. A question like: “what do you want to achieve as a director?” also attracted what I noted as “a longer than expected response which also veered into challenges encountered with teachers and staff as a director” (Journal entry, February 28, 2003). Though initially considered at the time of the interview as a ‘long account’ and ‘possible digression’, it did not only become a useful piece of data for my analysis but also a resistance of my participant to my attempt to fragment her lived experience (Reissman, 2000).

I also assumed that having previously scheduled the time to conduct interviews with participants I could have access to them accordingly. However, little did I envisage that district directors operated schedules influenced by other stakeholder activities and for that reason I could not get easy access to one of the directors as scheduled previously. Similarly the counselor participant's emergency case at one of the schools took priority of place over my interview engagement which had to be rescheduled. These experiences taught me to lay open any assumptions and pre-conceptions while becoming aware of situational dynamics underlying joint knowledge production.

4.8.4 Management and analysis of data

The observation of Glesne and Peshkin (1992) of the qualitative researcher to “expect to be overwhelmed with the sheer volume” (p. 131) of data that builds up dawned on me as I completed the transcriptions of my interviews. In my journal entry I noted with satisfaction a “successful field work” but “expressed anxiety about managing the data” (Journal entry, March 5, 2013). I however recalled my experience with the phase 1 module 2 assignment of the EdD programme which was a mini research on the topic: Managing newly qualified teacher (NQT) transition to the classroom: a case study of head teachers in primary school in Ghana.

I applied the stages of “generating natural units of meaning” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 368) by reading carefully each of the transcriptions a number of times. I identified, highlighted and categorized the data of each transcript into codes according to the commonalities of topic or content of the response by using the previous codes and adding on new codes where necessary with subsequent transcripts. I also searched for contrasting views. I continued with this iterative process until I had coded all my interviews. I then reviewed my codes to identify those that overlapped or were redundant and also renamed some of my codes. Having generated many codes, I proceeded to organize them into major and subset categories and concepts while deciding on the most informative and logical manner of sorting. Subsequently, I determined from the data the meaning I think could be found and presented it in the subsequent chapter on findings and analysis.

This process of data analysis was guided by the research questions and influenced by my literature review and theoretical framework which suggested the kind of themes that would be useful to my study and provided direction to my work. These experiences provided the impetus for managing the seemingly overwhelming data I collected for this research.

Another source of my anxiety was whether the quality of the data I had collected was adequate and appropriate to answer my research questions. A revision of my notes reminded me of “emergent” nature of qualitative studies and as such the need for me to be open and sensitive to the emerging insights from my participants and also from myself.

4.8.5 Intrusion in lives of participants

An ethical question I constantly had to contemplate on was to what extent could I as a researcher intrude in the lives of participants? What was I to do with interview data that did not seem to be pleasant? Where did I obtain the authority to textualize the participant’s life for the consumption of unknown readers? I surmised that so long I had sought their consent and gone through the motions of the participants’ information sheet with them they were fully aware that the outcome of the interviews would be disseminated and used for other purposes beyond my control. I believe that this informed what they put out there. I also addressed this issue by doing participant checks through the development of stories out of the interview data which I returned to participants for confirmation. I noted, “I am returning participants’ stories to them with the unease that I might be asking too much of them and with the hope that they would not find their sensibilities hurt by any aspect of the reproduced stories” (Journal entry, June 10, 2013).

4.8.6 Addressing the power differentials

My adoption of the use of the narrative accounts of the lives and experiences of the six participants for this study provided good evidence about some aspects of their lives. By allowing the participants to give these accounts it has helped me to address the power differentials that are inherent in a research activity.

In my negotiation of access to the participants it brought to the fore the “effects of inequitable power dynamics” (Silverman, 2006, p. 103). I reflected on the power I had as a researcher and also as someone who has some knowledge and experience of the enterprise the participants and I were in together. I took counsel to maintain a good rapport with the participants not only during the period of the interviews and the participants’ story checks but even well after the period of study in an on-going relationship.

4.9 Trustworthiness and credibility of research approach

To enhance the overall quality of this case study for readers to assess its trustworthiness and credibility, I employed the strategies of outlining clear research questions backed by purposeful sampling techniques which enabled me to collect and manage data systematically. More importantly, I integrated a process of sharing my interpretations of the data with the participants

in order to give them the opportunity to clarify and add their perspectives to the issue under study.

Additional strategies I adopted to establish credibility of my study was the use of reflective journal which documented my thoughts and field notes. Finally I also included a discussion of my assumptions and preconceptions while making my biases explicit.

4.10 Limitations to study

While this research has focused on the district director, it by no means exhausts all issues pertaining to district directorship. This study has essentially centred on the DDE's rank and role within the confines of the constituents of the district. However the DDE's functions extend to institutional interactions with the regional education office and educational units as well. Such interactions have not been explored in this research. The choice of the narrative as the method for this study is not to claim to represent objectivity in what happened in the lives and experiences of my interviewees. Also, in building my narratives, I seem to present the events in the lives of my respondents in a linear progression of events as if in normal life there is no complex interplay between parts of life. I was not able to mirror such complex patterns.

4.11 Summary

In this chapter, I have identified the research questions that my research sets out to answer and which constitute the basis of my study. I have also spelt out the social constructivist approach to this study. The narrative inquiry as my research method has also been outlined. As a case study, I have justified the use of this approach and also defined the case of the study. I have described the mode of selection of participants for the study and have also systematically charted the steps for data collection. A reflection on the methodology and methods of this study has enabled me to relate theory to practice and consequently gained new insights into the complexity of qualitative inquiry and what it means to be a qualitative researcher. This chapter has also covered the trustworthiness and credibility of the study and concluded with its limitations.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

In this empirically-based chapter I present my data and explore for analysis a variety of themes that emerged from the stories told and retold by my participants interpreted through my filter as a district director researcher. The categorization of the findings enabled me to address the research questions raised in this study. I did this by examining the issues and the larger cultural and national contexts within which these stories are situated and analysed and how they have shaped individual stories. I also located my discussion within my theoretical framework in support to my analysis.

5.2 Research participants

I begin this section with a summary of the background information of my sample in Table 5.2. In fulfillment of my guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity, I have used pseudonyms to represent the names of the two districts and the six interviewees. I continue with a summary of each participant.

Table 5.2 Basic Information on Sample

Name of District	Name of Interviewee	Sex	Rank	Position	Years in position
Sawtena East	Eben	M	Director II	District Director	Three
	Abena	F	Assistant Director I	Assistant Director I Admin. & Finance	Three
	Kwesi	M	Deputy Director	Deputy Director Human Resource Management	One
Leket West	Esi	F	Director II	District Director	Three
	Faustina	F	Deputy Director	Deputy Director Human Resource Management	Three
	Kwame	M	Assistant Director I	Assistant Director I Monitoring & Supervision	One

5.2.1 Eben

Eben is a substantive district director of education in Sawtena East district. He is in his fifties and has been a Director since 2009 but continued working at the GES headquarters as the planning and budgeting officer till 2011 when he assumed the DDE position in this district. He achieved a BEd in Social Studies, MPhil in Educational Planning, and executive masters in Public Administration at institutions of higher learning in Ghana. He originally entered the GES as a national service person teaching economics in one of the secondary schools. Gradually his interest in teaching was enhanced, so after the national service he decided to stay on to teach even though his initial interest was to work in the financial sector. He rose through the ranks of GES but somewhere in 2002 he had a medical problem which compelled him to move from the classroom as a teacher to the office to commence work in an administrative capacity. He is also a doctoral student by distance of a University in the UK.

5.2.2 Abena

Abena has over 30 years experience in the education sector. She began her career in teaching after training as a teacher at a teacher training college. Upon completion she taught at the basic level and after undertaking further education and gaining a first degree, she went to teach home economics at the secondary school level. In 2006 she decided to take on a new career in the marine industry by undertaking a maritime course for her second degree. After the course she worked briefly in the marine industry but moved back into education because she found the work of doing oil inspection in ships too physically challenging. She came back to education to work in the office. She is currently working in the rank of assistant director I but in the capacity of deputy director in charge of Administration and Finance in Sawtena East district. Abena is in her early fifties and aspiring to be a full DDE before she finally retires from the Service.

5.2.3 Kwesi

As the deputy director in charge of monitoring & supervision at the Sawtena East district education office, Kwesi started his teaching career 25 years ago when he completed the then 4-yr teacher training college. He taught at the middle school level of the old education system. After two years of teaching, he proceeded to do three years of post secondary teacher training in Special Education where he obtained a diploma. After teaching for three years, he went to the United States of America on an exchange programme on disability education for two years. He taught for another three years on his return and decided to further his education where he did a post diploma in special education after which he taught at a school for the deaf handling

the intellectually disabled. He furthered his education in Disability Rehabilitation Development at one of the universities in Ghana where he obtained a Masters degree. He was transferred to Sawtena East Education Office as the special education coordinator in 2003. He handled this schedule for a number of years till he took up the position of deputy director in charge of monitoring and supervision of the district. Kwesi is also in his fifties and looking forward to becoming a DDE.

5.2.4 Esi

Esi who is in her fifties is a substantive district director of education. She completed secondary education with the desire to do nursing since she was a science student but after attending the interview for admission into nursing she realized that her inability to cope with blood would not enable her to pursue that career even though she qualified for admission. Esi ended up applying to do a 3-year post secondary at a TTC leading to the award of a certificate at the time. Esi interspersed teaching with further education culminating in the attainment of a first degree in home economics and finally a Masters degree in Human Resource Management. She eventually transferred to work at a regional education office and upon obtaining the rank of district director she was posted to Leket West, one of the newly created districts in 2009 as the director.

5.2.5 Faustina

In secondary school, Faustina recounts that anytime she explained something in class, her colleagues told her that she would be a teacher in future confirming her childhood desire to be one. Thus when she completed form five she chose to go to a TTC. After teaching for a while at the primary school level, she pursued further education by combining teaching and learning to obtain her first degree and then a Masters degree in Adult Education. She proceeded to work as the basic schools coordinator at the sub metro education office, a sub-structure of the metropolitan education office. Upon the creation of Leket West as a new district, Faustina transferred to this office as the officer in charge of Human Resource Management with the rank of deputy director. Faustina is also in her fifties and desirous of attaining the rank of a full DDE before retirement.

5.2.6 Kwame

Kwame who initially harboured the desire to become an accountant ended up in a career of teaching. Having proceeded from doing five years secondary education, Kwame continued to do his advanced level secondary education which qualified him to enter the university. He was

persuaded to do a course in psychology and religion where he obtained a BEd in Psychology and a Diploma in Religion. He taught for a while at the secondary school level and continued to do an MPhil in Special Education. Kwame has worked as the guidance and counseling coordinator of the sub metro education office and also transferred to the Leket West district office where he continued to work in that capacity until recently when he assumed the position of assistant director 1 in charge of monitoring and supervision. He is currently pursuing a Masters sandwich course in Human Resource Management. Kwame regards himself as very versatile and aspires to be a full district director. He is in his late forties.

5.3 Characteristics and challenges of participating districts

This section and the subsequent one provide some background information on the work and socio-cultural contexts in which DDEs operate. This is in relation to research questions 2 and 3. Both rural and urban participants showed similar background characteristics in terms of rank, position and years of work experience. None of the districts had the full complement of deputy directors in terms of rank with each having one assistant director acting in the position of deputy director. Indeed the more rural the district is, the less likely that deputy directors in rank are available. The equal numbers of deputy directors in rank in Sawtena East and Leket West districts in this study could be explained by the proximity of largely rural Sawtena to the largely urban capital of Ghana, Accra where Leket West is located and offering a viable alternative to teaching jobs in the capital. The number of years of experience was a year and three years in both districts. All participants irrespective of their years of experience expressed the desire to attain the district director position which they variously termed as 'the ultimate', 'crowning of efforts', 'achieving the maximum', 'topmost position', 'prestigious position' and 'the highest level any one would like to attain'.

The differences in the settings became more apparent in terms of challenges they face in their various districts. Kwesi, a participant in Sawtena East recounts that a number of school-aged children were not in school and rather engage in income generating activities during market days. This largely rural district of Sawtena East has a large market in one of the towns near it. Kwesi attributed this situation to lack of role models in their communities and the unwillingness of some parents to further the education of their children even though they could afford financially to do so. Kwesi is convinced that such parents do not appreciate education and gives a personal testimony in his answer to a question about the challenges they face in his district and how they resolve them:

... Some parents say that even well educated people in Accra [the capital city] come to borrow money from us. So as my children are around, they can still make money from farming [instead of going to school] (Kwesi, February 20, 2013).

Eben, the district director of Sawtena corroborates Kwesi's story when I asked whether he is achieving his interest in becoming a director. He states:

We as implementers are also engaged in activities to get our children in school by organizing enrolment drives, community sensitization. ... some of the problems are from the community. The inability of parents to play their role in ensuring that the children go to school to learn ... parents do not appreciate the opportunity cost of not sending the child to school (Eben, February 20, 2013).

An issue director Eben finds related to his challenges of schooling in his rural area is the posting of teachers to rural communities to teach. He says:

This is a rural community so posting teachers to certain areas is a challenge especially with the newly trained female ones. We have to give them incentives like gas cookers and cylinders, buckets etc in conjunction with the Assembly (Eben, February 20, 2013).

This highlights the issues related to social settings in Ghana where rural areas lack qualified teachers as a result of their deprivation. Contrary to urban Leket West the director raised the initial challenge of the provision of adequate classroom infrastructure and school furniture to cater for the numbers of school children, a challenge she claims is being addressed by the Assembly. This indicates that children are in school and by extension that parents appreciate the essence of schooling.

5.4 Making career choices

In this section, I provide information on how the majority of participants chose their teaching career, a beginning point for their progression into district directorship. This provides a basis for an understanding of the family and some aspect of the socio-cultural context in which the DDEs function and is in relation to research question 2. It also addresses research question 3 in terms of how this context is likely to influence DDEs' work and identity construction. After providing this information, I proceed to address participants' perception on the status of DDEs.

Majority of interviewees (4 out of 6) experienced a situation where this important process of career determination was not left in their hands but mediated usually by older family members such as older siblings and parents.

This is how a participant expressed this situation when asked why he chose to be in education.

Interesting question. Initially at secondary school I never thought of being a teacher even though I had a passion for helping children. I went to Nigeria for vacation and when I came back my brother had bought a Teacher Training College form for me so I decided to pursue it (Kwesi, February 20, 2013).

Similarly, Abena responded “After form 5, my brother said I should go to training college so I went to the Presbyterian Women Training College at Aburi (February 20, 2013).

Even in the case of Kwame who thought he had a fair idea as to what he wanted to become, was not spared from a father’s intervention of wanting him to become a reverend minister till a decision of an elder in the education profession was made to hold sway.

Right from secondary school, I wanted to be an accountant but my father rather wanted me to be a pastor. So after my ‘A’ level examination, my father took me to the University of Cape Coast where one professor suggested I pursued a course in psychology (Kwame, February 13, 2013).

Faustina indicated that having been influenced by a parent who was a teacher and others in the teaching field she chose to pursue a course of teaching. In a response to an enquiry from a former teacher at the secondary school why she did not pursue a university education, she replied “I told him the Teacher Training College was the place I had chosen to be” (February 7 2013).

For two of the participants, although they finally landed jobs in the teaching field, one attributed it to destiny as she had “got angry” when initially the idea of becoming a teacher was suggested to her at secondary school by her mathematics teacher. The suggestion was as a result of the way she was able to work out a mathematical question on the board to the understanding of her classmates. For the other, his inability to gain employment in the banking sector made him remain in teaching.

Despite the seemingly noninvolvement in the decision-making process of pursuing a career in teaching and the inadvertent landing in the teaching field, participants seemed comfortable with the decision of being teachers and were unanimous in expressing no regrets. For some, the question posed by the interviewer about whether there were any regrets about being in teaching and now in education in general elicited the following responses: ‘no... no... no...’; ‘I will say no because I love the work I do’; ‘not at all’; ‘no, because education is an area that influences a lot of people’; ‘I will say no... gradually my interest in teaching increased’; ‘no, not at all’.

One participant justified being a teacher as: “you can make or unmake people so to speak”. It can also be said of this group of participants that the decision to pursue a career in education was obviously a good one and particularly influenced by their knowledge and hope of becoming a director, which is only a rank away from their current rank. The same however would likely not be said about a more representative sample. These expressions of ‘no apology’ by my participants in turn seem to justify and support the interventions of the family members in their lives at the time they did. By extension, the mediations of the family members and the community also extend to the working life of the teachers.

The unopposed acceptance or decision to go to the TTC to be a trained teacher can also be interpreted on the other hand as a professed confession of the inability of the participants to proceed directly to the sixth form schools and to the university thereafter as a result of the non-attainment of the required marks. Faustina makes this evident in her personal narrative when asked about why she decided to work in the education sector:

When I completed form five I chose to go to a TTC. On the first visiting sunday of the college, I met one of my secondary school teachers who asked me what I was doing there at the college. I told him I was unable to get the marks for mathematics that would have sent me to the sixth form. He further asked me why I did not spend a year to better my grade in mathematics so that I could still pursue my sixth form course. I told him the TTC was the place I had chosen to be. So unconsciously I was living out what came to me naturally (February 7, 2013).

Going to the sixth form would have enabled Faustina to proceed to the University. All participants however were able to pursue a university education later on in their teaching life through alternative routes such as study leave with/without pay, sandwich or distance programmes which are all well-established continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for teachers. A challenge however associated with CPDs was articulated by Director Eben. He said of teachers:

The career they are in gives credence to qualification. If you go for further studies your promotion period is shortened. The minimum qualification is diploma so the urge to go to school including the sandwich is high. In my district about 50 teachers have gone on sandwich. It is the timing which is a problem (Eben, February 20, 2013).

The CPDs have played crucial role in the formation of the careers of teachers and continue to be a popular option.

5.5 Perceptions on status of district director

There seemed to be consensus on the status of the district director by all the participants in the study irrespective of their settings, both the aspirants and the substantive directors. This section contributes to addressing research question 2 in terms of whether the status of the DDE could be translated into power to cause change.

Asked whether they hoped to become DDEs and why, one deputy director said “everybody wants to see development and progress in her life so before I go on pension, I hope to crown my efforts with this position” (Abena, February 20, 2013). Similarly Faustina said:

Certainly, every person loves to achieve the maximum as district director. It is a craving for self actualization (February 7, 2013).

Kwesi describes the DDE position as ‘ultimate’ because he would not be able to attain the position of Director-General. Kwame stated:

Becoming a DDE is one of the topmost positions in GES. It is a prestigious position. When we were growing up, we knew of no other position as ‘director’. So I think that being a director makes you feel good (February 13, 2013).

By these accounts, they deemed the DDE position to symbolize development and progress in life and the crowning of a professional effort. In their estimation it is the maximum they can achieve as other higher ranks of Deputy Director-General and Director-General seem out of their reach.

The prestige of the position of the DDE is confirmed by Esi, a substantive director:

I have risen through the ranks to the highest that everyone would like to attain...it is a prestige to get to a director position (February 28, 2013).

The consistent use by others in the GES of the title ‘director’ instead of the director’s name is a testimony to the prestige associated with the position. These contribute not only to the ‘feel good’ factor of the director but also present him as a ray of hope and a role model. The ability of a district director to influence teachers and pupils and others in the district is vested in their position as the ‘final authority in the district’ as stated by Kwame in his view of the position of director. He also affirms that ‘there is an aura of power around them [directors]’. A similar sentiment is expressed by Kwesi and Abena:

So working as a DDE it means that you have absolute control of education in the District. Infact many things come into play here. If you are the boss and someone who is yearning to help his nation, this will be a good opportunity (Kwesi, February 20, 2013).

As DDE you can implement government policies that will help your district to grow. There are government policies that are very good but sometimes if you are not the director, you cannot implement it very well (Abena, February 20, 2013).

These perceptions of the position of the director show deference to the director position and also indicate an opportunity for the director to be patriotic by helping the nation. The admiration for the director position also stems from the perceived director's abilities ordinarily acquired through long years of experience which gives them agency in working for the common good.

It must be emphasized that issues of status seemed to dominate the interviews irrespective of what I was asking. Status seemed more important than substance thus shedding light on some aspect of organizational and socio-cultural framework in which DDEs function.

5.6 The Scope of district director's role and responsibilities

Even though the role of a director differs from one organization to the other, it is clear that their roles can be summarized as acting in the best interest of their organizations and taking the necessary steps to promote the success of the enterprise they are engaged in. In the case of the district director their role seems to be multifaceted. In what is to follow, I will demonstrate that the director is expected to carry out a vast range of tasks without the required resources and capacity in respect to research question 1. These tasks include playing professional, administrative and other non-professional roles and power to act as policy actor in reference to research questions 1 and 2 respectively.

5.6.1 The professional role of the DDE

As the representative of the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service at the Metropolitan, Municipal or District level, director Eben succinctly explains the professional role of the director:

I have at the back of my mind that my growth and development has been made possible by the government of Ghana especially in terms of financing my education to this level and realizing my responsibilities as DDE my interest is to ensure that government policies are achieved for the education sector. You know the Ministry is responsible for policy making and GES is responsible for implementing the policies. Most of our policies are geared towards having all our school children in school, ensuring quality education and ensuring gender parity in enrolment and ensuring management efficiency in education delivery. So it is a question of having the education of our school going children at heart (February 20, 2013).

Policy implementation as a major role of the director being the representative of the Director General of the Service at the district level is supported by Abena who said "as DDE you can implement government policies that will help your district to grow" (February 20, 2013). She

confirmed the prerogative of the director to implement policies of the government above anyone else when she declared: “There are government policies that are very good but sometimes if you are not the director, you cannot implement it very well” (February 20, 2013).

Kwesi located the role of the director within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) when he said:

There is this thing we call the MDGs. It spells out the areas that Ghana has to reach. Some of these areas are accessibility of education, quality, gender main-streaming and parity (February 20, 2014).

For Kwame, achieving quality education is the priority role of the DDE, “high academic performance based on effective collaboration between teachers and parents...” (February 13, 2014). Director Esi shared a similar sentiment when she stated:

I hope to achieve proper quality of education in the municipality and we are seeing signs of improvement each year. The 2012 Basic Education Certificate Examination produced some aggregates 6, 7, 8, that is the single digits from public schools which was a good achievement (February 28, 2014).

Again, director Esi shed more light on her professional role when she was asked how her background knowledge and experience had helped in her work. She remarked:

It has really helped me, especially the teaching. Our work is not to stay in the office. We need to move out. With the teaching experience, I am able to go to the schools, observe teaching of lessons and I am able to make inputs (February 28, 2014).

She however expressed a challenge she encountered while implementing this professional role:

I remember some reactions to this practice. Some of the teachers and community members came to me in my office and thought that as a director I should not be seen doing that. I responded by telling them that I am a teacher. They had not experienced that before so I explained that, that was my work (February 28, 2014).

The teachers and community members’ intervention was premised on their understanding that culturally the director’s status was not to be ‘downgraded’ by doing a job which could be delegated to subordinates.

Another challenge to the professional role of the DDE is inadequate funding and delayed supplies of school materials. The district directorate is a cost centre. The major cost areas of the district budget are administrative expenses which cater for the running of the office such as utilities and maintenance. A second budget covers projects/programmes activities to be

undertaken at the district level. A common occurrence is the late release of inadequate funding as director Eben clearly articulated:

The main challenge is finance. All our activities are powered by money from the government. When releases are delayed, work must still go on. You need to find a way to convince schools and staff to work even when you know there is no money (Eben, February 21, 2013).

Inadequacy of funding and late releases do not only tend to limit the extent to which the directorate is able to carry out its monitoring and supervision tasks but also thwart efforts at strategically planning of the district's activities. Some key activities such as in-service training programmes, monitoring and maintenance works have to be shelved as a result of shortfalls in revenue while utilities bills remain accumulated. Related to this issue of funding are delays in the supply of logistics to support teaching and learning which have a bearing on quality of education. Delays in the supply of essential school materials such as chalk and class registers were captured in a national publication (Daily Graphic, October 21, 2013) four weeks into school re-opening.

Another area where participants acknowledged as a hindrance to the professional role of the DDE was located at the national level. The national debate that raged on concerning a three or four year duration of the senior high schooling (SHS) in Ghana. The final political decision was to change the existing four year duration to three years. Asked about why the voice of CoDE as a professional body of directors of education was not heard on debates on national education policies taking the three/four SHS as an example. Eben responded:

CoDE does it [contribute to the debates] but we are mindful of the highly political nature of the issue and we as technocrats find it difficult going on air talking about these issues. If we do that we open ourselves to unnecessary ridicule and politicians can easily change your working place (February 20, 2014).

'Changing of your working place' refers to the call by the politicians for the relocation of the director for political reasons. Eben's response has implication for both power and policy. My observation of regional CoDE revealed that a director had been transferred from one region to another not as a result of involvement in politics but as a result of disciplinary actions taken against teachers being misconstrued to be politically motivated. Director Eben confirmed the reason why CoDE is silent on some issues as he remarked "a director was transferred to Kumasi [one of the major towns in Ghana] because of politics" (Eben, February 20, 2014).

5.6.2 The administrative role of the director

The director's administrative role comprises drawing up of action plans which director Eben makes reference to when he said:

Moving to the HQ, I worked as a planning and budget officer which are very relevant to what we do at the District. District strategic plans are in line with the national strategic plans. It is only the activities that we will carry out that differ from district to district. We identify our needs, prioritize them and cost them in readiness for government releases to implement them (February 20, 2014).

Dealing with disciplinary issues such as lateness and absenteeism are also administrative roles the DDE performs:

the attitude of staff must also change. For instance why should I ask officers to come to work early and stay till closing? So we need attitudinal change both at workplace and community (Eben, February 20, 2014).

Director Esi also recounted her experience at addressing absenteeism which is one of the administrative issues that she deals with in her district:

Yes. Sometimes it helps me to block the salaries of some teachers. When you study the attendance register, you will realize that some of them have not booked for more than 10 working days and the head would not have reported. This term I have done quite a lot of the visits. You have a situation where after I have visited and left, some of the teachers who had not earlier on booked will now come and write their names. In this case I indicate 'not present during visit' (February 28, 2014).

An important challenge that Esi reveals in this account is that some head teachers are not likely to report shortcomings of teachers to circuit supervisors and to DDEs so that they can be addressed. Another administrative task that director Esi identified is financial management as she remarked: "Right now as I speak, I have gone for the accounting books because the auditors are coming to audit the books and going through I have realized that a lot of attachments are missing" (February 28, 2014).

From my personal experience other administrative roles that the director performs include pursuing effective and efficient management of resources and the production of situational, quarterly and annual reports. Director Esi referred to report writing when she said "right now we have been asked to bring a situational report on challenges that the Senior High School will be facing during this year's West African Senior School Certificate Examination because you know the 3rd and 4th years are sitting together" (February 28, 2013). The holding and attending of meetings, attending to correspondence and collecting data on all aspects of staff and school also feature prominently in the director's administrative role (Journal entry, April 25, 2013).

These roles require that the director has knowledge and skills in planning, resource management (human, material, time), monitoring and supervision, budgeting and financial management, data management, report writing and good communication skills.

In locating the administrative role of the DDE within the regulations governing the public service, the DDE encounters challenges that bring them into contention with politicians. Eben narrated his experience with dealing with one such incidence.

Recently there were teachers who engage themselves in politics. I did not know how to go about it. So I had to seek advice from some of the old people. We were informed that in the Code of Conduct of the Service it is stated what a teacher should do when you want to engage in politics. In my district, the DCE contested and two teachers also contested one of whom won the seat. Now politicians are asking whether the teachers applied for leave of absence, did they actually teach during the campaigns and if they did not, then they have to pay back their salaries (February 20, 2014).

Eben is obviously torn between going strictly by the terms of the code of conduct. It is indicated in paragraph 34 under Participation in Partisan Politics that “any teacher who is seeking public office through an election either on the ticket of a Political Party or as an independent candidate shall apply to the Director-General for a leave of absence without pay”. Eben is also mindful that he is dealing with politicians who “can easily change [his] working place”. Had the DCE won the seat, politicians would not have asked questions.

Eben negotiated this challenge by referring the situation to a meeting of the regional Conference of Directors of Education (CoDE) where he was advised to invite the teachers concerned and to ask them to officially apply to move into politics after the primaries had been organized and they were definite about their move into politics.

Participants articulated their frustration at issues they thought should not be dealt with within the domain of politics but which have been treated as such thereby causing negative ripples and tensions where they should not.

5.6.3 The non-professional role of the director

During my observation of the Regional CoDE, one of the long-serving directors remarked:

When you are a director, you are expected to do wonders. You are a parent, counselor, spiritual guide, financier, dispute settler all at the same time forgetting that you also need counseling and money one time or the other (April 18, 2013).

This statement is indeed a true reflection of the expectations of teachers and the public from the director. From my personal experience, a lot of the director’s time is sometimes dedicated

to issues outside their core functions but which cannot be ignored in view of the value placed on the issues brought forward by staff and teachers and which when unresolved may affect their work output. Examples of such issues are request for endorsement of application forms to higher institutions of children of staff and issues bordering on family. The Director is also invited to attend various functions of staff and teachers including funerals of relatives and weddings. The director must be seen to be concerned about all aspects of the welfare of staff as well as the community such as attending festivals and other public events. It is necessary for the director to be selective but at the same time not to show discriminating tendencies.

5.7 Motivation for director's work

Having outlined the roles and responsibilities of the director and the challenges that abound in the course of the director's exercise of these roles, one may ask what motivates the director's work and how does the motivation change in the course of their work? This has implication for the identity construction of the DDE in reference to research question 3.

The director usually sets out with all the best of intentions to be responsible for the matters of professional and educational policies and to achieve quality of education and high academic performance of learners as consistent with the statements of virtually all the participants with regard to what they want to achieve by being a director. However, sooner than later, the director is caught up in a dilemma between reaching the peak of one's career in the directorship position while at the same time being pension-bound:

Most of our members are at the brink of moving out of the Service so they are pension-oriented than active service oriented. ...So people are cautious in maintaining their status quo than to come out on issues that can change their sleeping place. You are thinking more of what next (Eben, February 20, 2014).

The consequence of this position is that many directors find themselves torn between actively promoting the tenets of the Service which comes along with taking hard decisions and actions and bearing responsibility for them and opting for inaction. Directors who are on the brink of pension as is the case in many do not want to muddy the waters so that they can exit in peace. The temptation therefore to take a low profile and play it safe becomes attractive to the director but may have negative impact on the education system. The motivation for the director in this circumstance is essentially to earn money to make a living having already achieved status and success for his or her family.

5.8 Lack of empowerment of deputies

The vast range of roles the director exercises makes the role of deputy directors indispensable. This section provides further information on the work culture and organizational framework raised in research questions 2 and 3. They are to provide the much needed support to the director in their directorship practice. The four critical areas the deputies cover are human resource management, administration and finance, monitoring and supervision, planning and statistics. Their 1-3 years experience on their schedules place them in an advantageous position with regards to their schedules. However in some cases, directors are not able to fill their knowledge and experience gaps by engaging their deputies in the day-to-day management of the directorate basically due to mistrust. Director Esi narrated her experience with one of her deputies:

There was an officer of the sub-metro in those days who thought he should have been the director. When I took over I made him my deputy director, human resource against the wish of my regional director. I thought as a stranger, he could be of help to me. But alas that was not the case. I ended up taking back the position from him. He has even gone on pension. Could you believe he came to confess to me some of the things he used to do and to beg for forgiveness? (February 28, 2013).

Having been in the driving seat in the absence of the director as some director vacancies are left unoccupied for some time, some deputies create their own empires and find it difficult to relinquish some roles even when the director has taken position. In other cases, some deputies resort to undermining of directors. These situations create tensions and conflicts and do not augur well for planning and addressing issues related to salaries of newly trained teachers, budgeting and reporting of activities in the directorate among others.

5.9 Decentralization as an organizational context

All participants seemed to be conversant with the policy of educational decentralization as a major framework within which their districts were operating. This section is in reference to research question 2. The district directors however were more copious in their experiences with decentralization given their relative advantage position as cost centre managers with regular dealings with the Assembly. All participants come from a similar background in terms of the creation of their districts in 2008. They were unanimous in their expression of an appreciation of decentralization as an organizational system that could provide an enabling environment for ownership and the provision of infrastructure. Faustina declared “I see the creation of my district as a practical example of the workings of decentralization. On paper, the concept seems good (February 7, 2013). A similar statement was made by Abena:

Here at the district level, decentralization is a good way to develop the districts. Based on what they tell us at meetings and what is written in books then it is a good concept... On paper the concept looks good (February 20, 2013).

Esi, Eben and Kwame respectively expressed their appreciation for decentralization more in terms of infrastructure:

Decentralization is good... in this district decentralization works...With that we have gotten a lot of classroom infrastructure. The Assembly knows that the schools are theirs (Esi, February 28, 2013).

In furtherance of government policy to make education free and compulsory classrooms, teaching and learning materials for instance have to be provided. For instance, it was a government policy to remove all schools under trees. In my district about 44 schools were targeted by the Assembly. Now at least 4 of those schools have been completed and handed over to the Directorate. Those schools under trees concept was schools with poor infrastructure. About 20 of them are near completion with a few at foundational level (Eben, February 20, 2013).

Our district was created out of the concept of decentralization. It is a good system so long as all the things that are enshrined in it are executed to the maximum. For instance the Assembly is constructing an office block for us and also schools (Kwame, February 13, 2013)

Kwesi on the other hand expressed it in terms of time and cost of doing business.

Decentralization is bringing down the governing system from the HQ to the Districts for management purposes...Oh, the whole idea is very good. It will curb the time and cost of doing things because you will not have to go to Accra [the capital city] (February 20, 2013).

5.9.1 Negotiation of challenges of decentralization

The challenges associated with decentralization as expressed by participants were located generally within the implementation of the concept and in consonance with the argument of Darvas and Balwanz (2014) that “ongoing decentralization poses both a great opportunity and significant challenge. From a district perspective, problem solving in this complex and fragmented system is very challenging” (p.140). This section is related to the organizational context and issues of power that research question 2 addresses.

The deputy directors gave their accounts of the challenge with decentralization as follows:

...but in practical terms it [decentralization] is not what we see. If education is controlled at the Municipal Assembly level, education is likely to see a downward dip because the Assembly has too many issues to deal with to concentrate on education alone but if it is

under the Ghana Education Service, the focus will then be solely on education (Faustina, February 7, 2013).

Abena confirmed this by stating that “it is the implementation that may be the issue” (February 20, 2013) while Kwame suggested that “... in Ghana, it is very difficult to achieve full decentralization because of the bureaucratic nature of doing things” ((February 13, 2013).

The following accounts of the two substantive directors are also instructive on the challenges of decentralization. Director Eben gives a narration of the relative position of the education directorate to the Assembly and the qualification of personnel as follows:

We are at crossroads. The point is that when you look at the structure, GES is supposed to be under the Assembly. If you look at the structure very well it is possible to have somebody who is not into education being the head of the social service committee while you work with that person before getting to the District Chief Executive. We are down there according to the Assembly structure and you know the nature of our work come to think of the qualification of the people who direct the affairs of education in the district is quite high. For instance you can't be a director if you are not a graduate. But the head could be a non-graduate (Eben, February 20, 2013).

Eben thinks that Education is in a disadvantaged position in terms of structure, qualification and even in orientation. Director Esi corroborated this assertion:

...Sometimes the problem is that the heads of the departments like me in Education and that of Health are oftentimes far more qualified than the DCE and his coordinating director so then it becomes a bit difficult working under them. Indeed in some districts, there are conflicts between the DDEs because the coordinating directors entertain the fear that the DDEs may be appointed in their positions because of their higher qualifications and ranks. When I took over as DDE the Assembly took me for a course at the District Assembly Training school and the coordinating director probably thought I was being trained for his position (February 28, 2013).

These statements reflect the realities on the ground that in a democratic society since politicians are supposed to represent the common people it is generally expected that senior civil servants will be better qualified than them. What is however not expected is the power struggle with the consequence of impacting negatively on official work.

Director Eben identifies working relationships as another area of challenge when he stated:

First of all it is relationships, because at the district level, you work with other units under the Assembly to achieve your aim. For instance recently there was an organization of health immunization against cancer and this was done in conjunction with education. The target was girls of a certain age in the schools. We had to provide staff and

vehicles to enable the health personnel administer it. We also have a head of that unit. So if you are unable to win the support, interest and understanding of all these units, you will be found wanting. A major area that we need to give training is the area of building good relationships with other stakeholders in education delivery. You have people working under you, there are rules and regulations governing your operations in the directorate. You should be able to go around with all your workers bearing in mind that they are all mature people (Eben, February 20, 2014).

Eben's call for good interpersonal relationships apply to both in-house and out-house in order to promote education delivery.

Challenges of working **relationships** are negotiated by either channeling requests through or seeking the intervention of the more favourable character of the two key officers of the Assembly, that is the coordinating director (CD) and district chief executive (DCE). Director Esi sheds more light on this by narrating her experience in terms of finances, another major challenge of decentralization.

... the current coordinating director is very difficult. So if you are putting impediments in my way, I go back to the DCE to let him know about the issue. You see even though it is the DCE who gives approvals, the coordinating director and finance officer sign the cheques (Esi, February 28, 2013).

In her case, Esi negotiated this challenge by seeking the intervention of the more considerate person of the DCE. In a worst case scenario as narrated by one of the directors during my observation of the central regional CoDE meeting, a marred relationship with her DCE had resulted in being asked not to involve him and by extension the Assembly in any educational issues. The director in such a case cannot indeed make appropriate inputs into the Assembly's plan but wait on the Assembly to make its decisions devoid of the director's contribution.

In the case of finances, both directors gave interesting versions of the same issue:

I am afraid the politicians think differently from the way technocrats do. The monetary injection that we make into education delivery takes a long time to realize results but politicians need immediate results so they prefer to do things that easily catch the eye of the populace to get support from them and they may prefer using education money for instance to cart refuse etc., basically misapplication of funds (Eben, February 20, 2013).

We usually budget for activities like sports; culture; Science, Technology and Mathematics Education so when we attended a meeting of the social services committee of the Assembly, I was asked to make an input so I raised the issue about the essence of a composite budget but when it comes to disbursements then we have all sorts of problems so why do they waste our time in doing the composite budget. Last year they did not sponsor the sports and culture activities and so it was a big issue for us (Esi, February 28, 2013).

Esi explained how this challenge should be dealt with “our time, things are quite difficult. You need to be innovative, think outside the box to see how you can raise funds outside GES and the Assembly to support district activities” (February 28, 2013).

5.10 Relevance of prior work knowledge and experience to DDE

This and subsequent sections address the issues of management gaps and how to address them and how the identity construction of DDEs are influenced in reference to research questions 3 and 4. All participants in the study referred to their background qualification, knowledge and experience as relevant and a justification for their readiness for the directorship position. The following extracts of directors Esi and Eben were in response to how the knowledge and experience they had acquired was going to help them/was helping them in their work.

I went to pursue my first degree at the University of Ghana, Legon in BSC Home Economics...I used to be the head of the human Resource Management Unit of the Greater Accra regional directorate of education... With the teaching experience, I am able to go to the schools, observe teaching of lessons and I am able to make inputs...The human resource work I did at the region has really helped me and also the financial management I did as part of my Masters in Business Administration has also been of immense benefit to me (Esi, February 28, 2013).

I read BeD in Social Studies at Cape Coast ...I pursued further studies ie, my masters degree in educational planning and administration. ...Administration of the district entails all those things I did along the line from the beginning of my career. I have been a teacher before, I know how these schools run and by virtue of the fact that I was the second cycle institutions coordinator, I did postings, staff establishment for schools to ensure the approved number of teachers are posted to schools ... These are all work time experiences (Eben, February 20, 2013).

Confirming how their knowledge and experiences have shaped their thinking, one deputy director said “I can communicate with a broad audience in various areas. I know home economics, administration, finance, budgeting which will help me to delegate responsibilities and effectively supervise as well” (Abena, February 20, 2013). Another refers to the management of human resource as her strong point “I do not have any formal training in human resource management but some aspects of my Masters programme in Adult education is helping me” (Faustina, February 7, 2013).

Counseling and an understanding of teachers, learners and parents was the professed knowledge of Kwame:

I have come to understand teachers a lot because I am a member of the inspectorate team also. I understand how teachers work. I also understand children as well because

of my work as a counselor. I also know the expectations of parents. You will agree with me that these are the key stakeholders in education. So I know I will be in a position to handle the affairs of these stakeholders (February 13, 2013).

Indeed all areas of specialization and experience cited by the participants, that is, human resource management, counseling, planning, administration, finance are very relevant to the work of the director. They also help boost the confidence of the director and to attract the respect necessary for directing affairs at the district office. Director Esi makes this clear in her remark to her accountant: "... when I started there was a problem so I called my accountant and made him understand that my knowledge in accounting was higher than his so this made him sit up". (February 28, 2013). More so within the reality of late orientations for directors they fall back on their store of knowledge and experiences for direction.

5.10.1 Gaps in the prior knowledge of participants

In acknowledging the relevance of their knowledge and experience to the director's work, participants were also quick to admit the shortfalls in their knowledge and experience system which were evident in their accounts. They also identified the areas they would recommend for capacity building to enhance their managerial skills. As directors, Esi's shortcomings became more apparent as she commenced her practice as director since she declared "From the orientation some of us realized that we had already made mistakes in the field" (February 28, 2013). Eben on the other hand could clearly identify "building good relationships with other stakeholders in education delivery and computer literacy as major areas necessary and relevant for the director's work" (February 20, 2013). Computer literacy as a training area for directors is corroborated by Abena who says "Now with ICT I know I will need a lot of training" (February 20, 2013). She also identified another key area as a gap. That is translating policy into implementation through planning and budgeting. She referred to this as "the factoring of government policies into financial terms for example, how does a policy translate into needs like chairs, classrooms etc" (February 20, 2013). As part of my personal experience as a director, the district develops its annual district education operational plan (ADEOP) which is based on key performance indicators the district collects. Then a district budget is produced in line with the district's ADEOP. Abena therefore identified this process as a gap for which she will need training. Like her, many directors have similar challenges and rely on their subordinates to provide such tutelage.

Kwesi also makes a confession about the weaknesses in his prior knowledge in reference to the whole spectrum of roles the director has to supervise:

I will not rule out getting more knowledge or taking some courses. But I think my background has helped me a lot.... I would like to say that with my work as the special education coordinator, my knowledge is limited. The DDE works with various people. If you refer to the organogram as we can see, (on the wall of DDE's office) there are many areas some of which are professional areas in their own right. As a DDE managing all these people you will need some foundation in such areas to enable you do the work effectively. So I will need some courses or seminars to upgrade my knowledge (February 20, 2013).

These accounts of the DDE position are however contingent on how the role of the DDE is conceived and what sort of thing it ought to involve.

5.10.2 Trial and error approach to management

Lack of sustained professional leadership career development scheme to prepare prospective and newly appointed directors for their jobs is a major challenge to the work of the DDE. A repercussion of this deficiency is the mass failure of candidates for the DDE interviews resulting in DDE vacancies being created at the district level. Director Esi brought this issue to the fore when she said:

We had an orientation as new directors so there we were exposed to the work. Even though it was just a five day programme, it is better than not being oriented at all. The orientation is good even though it came late. From the orientation some of us realized that we had already made mistakes in the field. So I wish it had come on earlier than it did for our time. It was really good and it was recommended that immediately officers are appointed, they need to be given the orientation before going to the field (February 28, 2013).

In view of the lack of professional development, directors apply the trial and error approach to management as Esi's account testifies. Esi's story implies that a vacuum is created in the knowledge and skills of the directors who sail through the interviews on assumption of duty as district directors. Even though the director comes in position with a store of knowledge and experience having spent not less than 30 years in the education field as revealed by the participants, the knowledge and experience previously acquired are varied and general. It depended on where and the schedule one was coming from: a basic, secondary school or a college of education, education office (district, regional, headquarters) and lacked the specificities characteristic of each new context.

5.11 Negotiating the knowledge and experience challenges of directors

In the absence of sustained professional leadership career development scheme for prospective directors and the late organization of the training for newly appointed directors, the

question that arises is what learning opportunities exist for the newly appointed director? How do directors learn about their roles? How do they address the shortfalls in their prior knowledge and experience? This section also addresses the issue of identity construction in research question 3. As previously discussed the medium of deputies in the district office is one source for addressing such shortfalls. Another significant medium to address these challenges is the Conference of Directors of Education (CoDE) in Ghana. CoDE is the single most important grouping of directors whether at the regional or national level. It also fulfills the tenets of a community of practice defined by Wenger et al., (2002) as “Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). It was cited by participants as a classic example of providing a learning opportunity through experience exchanges. Director Eben made this clear when he stated:

It is an association of directors of education and they have different experiences. When CoDE meets, directors share good practices and that actually helps in the functioning of directors, both old and new. Some new directors have new ideas and new ways of doing things but there are certain things which are binding on us which are the rules and regulations of the Service. Most often it is the old hands who have hands-on experience who share with other officers at meetings.... There are things that you cannot find in books but your colleagues can aid you on (February 20, 2013).

Director Esi shared this sentiment when she declared: “We learn a lot when we go for our annual conference like the good practices” (February 28, 2013). Similarly even though the other participants are not members of CoDE they are aware that CoDE provides learning opportunities when one of the participants declared “I think it is a very good concept. You can share ideas. You can bring your problem for the more senior ones to advise you in order to improve your work” (Abena, February 20, 2013). Kwesi, another participant confirmed this view:

It is an opportunity to meet and learn from each other, to also correct some anomalies in some areas. It also enhances teaching and learning. One can learn from a district that has achieved positive results from the implementation of an intervention (February 20, 2013).

Kwame provides a practical example of the experience sharing nature of the directors’ conference as he narrates his experience in his district with his director who had attended one of the regional CoDE conferences and had shared a good practice with her colleague directors.

... I know it is an association of all directors of education. I got to know about CODE through my director. ... I know it is a platform to discuss common issues. For example GES produced the syllabus on compact disks (CDs) for schools. However the schools prefer the hard copies so our district has liaised with the office of the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) which is in a position to produce the hard copies on a large scale. Other Districts are therefore contacting us for assistance in this direction (February 13, 2013).

I observed during my attendance of the regional CoDE that directors asked about issues which were challenges for them in their districts and the more experienced ones shared how they managed similar cases in their districts. However issues of national character such as the period of sandwich programmes and the effect they have on teaching and learning are not resolved by such a forum. For example, Abena is categorical in stating that “children are not doing well because of sandwich programme since the teachers are not in the classroom in June and July” (February 20, 2013). Kwame confirms this by stating “both the distance and sandwich programmes are causing harm to teaching and learning since teachers do their assignments while they are suppose to be teaching” (February 13, 2013).

One lesson I learnt as a newly recruited director was the need to keep a close eye on the human resource and the integrated personnel payroll data units of the district office in order to avoid over recruitment of teachers (Journal entry, April 23, 2003).

The directors’ conference also serves as medium for giving directives by the regional director with regards to our work. During my observation of the regional CoDE he proceeded to remind us of a catalogue of both existing directives particularly the ones that were being reneged on and to communicate new ones to us.

Despite these positive outcomes of CoDE, the narration of 3 out of the 6 participants on the association gives a clear indication of unfulfilled expectation of the group. Their anticipation of CoDE as providing critical reflection on education policies as they affect teaching and learning in line with the suggestion of Keefe and Howard (1997) that a community of practice could develop group norms that value critical reflection on school policies and teacher practices, as well as how those policies and practices influence student learning remains unaccomplished. Citing as examples of what they consider as critical policy areas, they highlight the missing gaps in the directors’ actions. These can be summarized as lack of critical reflection, facilitating perhaps public discourse and lobbying authorities as a way of influencing policy formulation are gaps that need to be filled. The following accounts of Faustina, Kwame and Abena speak to these critical areas:

The idea of directors coming together is a good one. But I think they are too much on the quiet. They do not market themselves. They should lobby government through communiqués as in the case of the New Year School. I wonder why they do not comment on national education issues like the three and four years duration of Senior High School (Faustina, February 7, 2013).

I would like CODE to contribute to educational policy formulation because they are on the ground. For example I would want CODE to speak out on issues such as the school feeding programme which is in bad shape (Kwame, February 13, 2013).

They can also pressurize Government to release grants to enable you run the district ie, acting like a pressure group (Abena, February 20, 2013).

Directors Esi and Eben attempt some explanations to the gaps the other non-director participants identify in the operation of CoDE. They strive to do this in reference to the operations of the Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS):

CHASS is in the schools so it is easy for them to get funds from their internally generated funds to support their activities. They relate to parents and government to get funds. We work on the quiet. For instance we are currently working to address our concerns about the West Africa Secondary School Certificate Examinations to management (Esi, February 28, 2013).

The operations of CHASS for example are different from other associations like CoDE. When you look at CoDE, we deal with basic and secondary schools. We don't technically speaking deal so much with the finances of the school whereas CHASS is in direct contact with parents. So they talk about cost of feeding, boarding facilities, teachers etc. trying to convince parents and government to pay additional monies and also provide motivation for teachers (Eben, February 20, 2013).

The explanation of Esi and Eben border on the reason that CHASS unlike CoDE is more visible and can constitute a real pressure group as a result of the relative financial strength of secondary schools. Director Eben attempts another reason for the non-pressure stance of CoDE by indicating that issues of policy have political undertones as many policies including educational ones are more of political party than national in character when he states:

CoDE does it but we are mindful of the highly political nature of the issue and we as technocrats find it difficult going on air talking about these issues. If we do that we open ourselves to unnecessary ridicule and politicians can easily change your working place (February 20, 2013).

It is also noted that the extent to which CoDE has achieved the key characteristics of a community of practice as suggested by Wenger et al., (2002) remains questionable. This includes the ability of members to evolve by seeking perspectives beyond the community,

embracing new ideas and encouraging different levels of participation of their members with the aim of co-constructing their identities. The sharing and incorporation of new ideas particularly beyond the directors' community is superficial and limiting in view of time, preparedness and openness of members to even adapt to such ideas. The onus probably lies on the newly appointed directors and those who have a few more years to cover in their directorship. These and many more shortcomings in the knowledge base of the director coupled with director Eben's confession that "there are things that you cannot find in books" makes it expedient for the director to identify other sources of knowledge to help improve the director's management and leadership systems in consonance with our cultural values and organizational context.

5.12 Negotiating the individual and collective interest of directors

One of the functions of CoDE is representing the individual and collective interests of its members. In representing the individual interest of directors, a key role already discussed is the sharing of experiences of the more experienced with the amateurs. Even though CoDE cannot be described as a trade union since as members of management it is not permitted that they constitute a trade union to engage in conditions of service negotiations for example, it is still expected that it will function in the individual and collective interest. One of such ways is to negotiate on behalf of individual directors in issues that do not have a bearing on politics but on other risks of the job. Director Eben alludes to this when he said:

We go through so many things. If you inadvertently sign a document implicating yourself like some one's SSNIT claims, you may be accused of connivance with a teacher and taken to a police station. CoDE can come to your aid in such an instance to help bail you out (February 20, 2013).

CoDE also acts as a benevolent society by instituting welfare schemes as is characteristic of each regional CoDE. This includes the lending of social support to colleagues in the case of events such as retirement, death, sickness and other occasions worth celebrating. Directors variously expressed the significance of the welfare concept when they stated:

Members' welfare is also important. That is also somehow taken care of where members are made to contribute financially which also serves as some form of savings so that when you are retiring you are given some money. When also a relation passes on, there are certain support services that are provided (Eben, February 20, 2014).

We learn a lot when we go for our annual conference like the good practices. For instance we in the Greater Accra Region have instituted a welfare scheme for our members and that is some form of financial security for us in preparation for retirement (Esi, February 28, 2014).

This feature underlies the social value from communal actions such as sharing in terms of helping one another. The shortcoming of CoDE however is the inability to defend a member in matters assumed to be political in nature as the group does not want to be tagged as one with political interest.

5.13 Summary

The effective participation in educational policy implementation and administration of the district education office are the focus of the district director of education in the context of decentralization. This study has revealed however that amid performing a host of mundane tasks the director is faced with challenges partly emanating from the realities of the wider societal contexts, struggle for power and other political tensions. These can pressurize the director to settle for the status commensurate with the position and the income to take care of one's family as the motivating factors.

The DDEs also countenance a situation where they cannot just count on their prior knowledge and experience to empower them to effectively manage affairs at the office and in the schools. Their knowledge and experience are limited in scope and depth to adequately deal with the practicalities and challenges associated with the work and the pivotal role they are expected to play. In view of this the need to develop appropriate management and leadership approaches with emphasis on the adaptation of motivation and commitment to local conditions become too real to be ignored.

Having thus presented the findings in this chapter, I proceed in the next chapter (chapter 6) to discuss the findings.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the significance of my findings under four major themes: Critique of the notion of a traditional rationalist approach to policy making and implementation, the role of the DDE as a policy actor and power to act, construction of the DDE's identity, developing appropriate management and leadership systems. I discuss my interpretations and opinions and explain the implications of my findings in the light of the various theories presented in my theoretical framework and using my conceptual resources.

6.2 Critique of the notion of traditional rationalist approach to policy making and implementation in Ghana

The quite linear process of conception, consultation, development, implementation, and evaluation characteristic of traditional rationalist model of policy making and implementation which Ghana seems to have adopted and outlined in chapter 3 is not unproblematic. The practice at the conception stage of the policy-making process to respond to demands for review is assumed to be based on the analysis of the experiences gained in the implementation of existing policies that are the subject of the proposed change. In line with the hierarchical structure of the implementation of education policies in Ghana, the four main substructures of the Ghana Education Service: the headquarters, regional, district and school levels come into question. It will be observed that from a strategic position of the district with direct link to the school level, the district occupies a position of advantage in the implementation continuum and as such the director could have something of substance to offer in the processes of policy formulation. However, as Eben suggests, the highly political nature of national education policies taking the three/four years SHS as an example makes it difficult for technocrats to contribute to such debates. The silence of CoDE to contribute to the debates as expressed by other participants in the study highlights the difficulty of directors in making their views heard publicly as a result of their total dependence on the financial and legal power of government.

In Ghana, the use of electronic media for discussions on national issues is very prominent and constitutes an effective medium of sampling the views of the general populace including the technocrats. The inability of directors and for that matter other technocrats to effectively contribute to the national debates through the media and by extension through other means as

a result of the likelihood of victimization means that the objective of assisting government policymakers to develop technically sound policies as a focus of the traditional approach to policy making would be difficult to be achieved (Hudson and Lowe, 2004). This phenomenon highlights the hierarchical manner of policy formulation by political figureheads and technocrats at the national level (Nudzor, 2014) where at the consultation stage of the policy-making process the government represented by the minister of education have the prerogative to accept or not the policy recommendations received as feedback from the wide range of stakeholder organizations. This underscores the tendency for policy-making initiatives occasioned by politicians in fulfillment of political promises made to the electorate rather than from an evaluation of the system to find out why objectives of existing policies are not being achieved.

This also informs the design of policies to present issues in a particular light not necessarily in tandem with empirically researched analysis but within the purview of political authorities who wield “legal authority” and seek to “acquire formal influence over the shaping of public educational policy” through “political manipulation” (Archer, 1975, p. 43). This process changes the relative power and influence of certain groups like the district directors.

Viewed against the backdrop of Ball’s (1994a) rejection of the ‘one way, linear’ representation of the process nature of policy, the traditional rationalist approach to policy making and implementation in Ghana seems to be devoid of the non-linear and interactive relationships that exist between the stages of the process as suggested by Ball (1994a). In other words this model does not take into account the multiple factors which attempt to influence the process itself as well as each other, and the complexity this entails. It thereby reduces the policy process to a simplistic routine of decision making by a group of decision makers who are called upon to weigh various options within well-defined preferences. One of the complexities in the Ghanaian context emanates from the nature of the social and cultural landscape for instance which can be complex and sometimes not well defined and without any sequence of happenings. For this reason the thinking procedure implied in the model can be subject to difficulty in such circumstances since the peculiarities of the wider structural, socio-cultural and political dimensions of the Ghanaian landscape are not taken into account. This brings into focus the encoding and decoding processes of policy where policy statements could be subject to selective interpretations and interests by policy receivers who make decisions about how to put it into practice (Trowler, 2003). It also affirms Ball’s (2008) assertion that policies “are

inflected, mediated, resisted and misunderstood, or in some cases simply prove unworkable” (p. 70). It is also reminiscent of the analogy of the ‘telephone game’ propounded by Wells (2005) where policies can be transformed several times before they get to the educational institutions. Furthermore the forward and backward process emanating from the interactive relationships between the individuals and groups who constitute the central and ground-level policy actors who influence the course of the policy process does not seem to be taken account off and thereby limiting the cyclic nature of the policy process.

The number of steps on the Ghanaian policy implementation staircase as demonstrated in paragraph 3.3.4 from the ministry to the school level also has the propensity to complicate the traditional rationalist implementation process (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010). The six-level staircase of implementation has implication for duplication of functions particularly at the grassroots levels. As earlier explained in the context of this study, the district education office of which the head is the DDE is responsible for a host of things ranging from supervision and monitoring of schools to managing school support systems in the district with particular reference to the DEOC, SMC and PTA, creations of education decentralization. Sometimes conflicts that erupt between the DDE and the DA are as a result of the imposition of interests/duplication of efforts of the DDE by the DA. Similarly tensions that also erupt between head teachers/ teachers with SMCs and PTAs have a bearing on some contradictions and over-elaboration of functions among these groups.

The traditional rational approach to policy making and implementation also downplays “issues such as power relations, conflicting interests and value systems between individuals and agencies responsible for making policy and those responsible for taking action” (Barrett & Fudge (eds), (1981) cited in Trowler 2003, p. 127). Ground-level actors also do not simply act out cultures they find in an organization, they also construct and enact new ones thus changing the ones they come to meet resulting in multiple, complex and unstable rather than linear, unitary and stable cultures (Alvesson, 2002; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

6.3 The role of the DDE as a policy actor and power to act

The district director’s role is embodied in the mission statement of the GES which is to:

ensure that Ghanaian children of school-going age are provided with quality education and training through effective and efficient management of resources to make education delivery relevant to the manpower needs of the nation (Ministry of Education, 2012).

A fundamental weakness of the current basic education in Ghana is that pupils of average ability are unable to acquire sufficient grounding in basic literacy and numeracy. According to the 2013 National Education Assessment (NEA) for primary schools, only 11% of the pupils at primary 6 performed at proficiency levels in mathematics and 39% performed below minimum competency level. Similarly for English, performance was at approximately 39% at proficiency levels and 31% below minimum competency levels where the standard minimum competency and proficiency levels are 35% and 55% respectively (Ghana Education Service, 2013). Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) passes for Junior High School candidates also decreased from 56% in 2012 to 53% in 2013 showing a decrease of 3% (Plan 2013). At my local district level, there was a sharp drop in the candidates' performance from 81% pass in 2012 to 42.5% in 2013.

These data show that children are not learning enough and so achieving quality education is a major concern for all key stakeholders in education. Ultimately the performance of schools in each district is the responsibility of the DDE. It might thus be expected that the professional educational work of the DDE will be the focus of the director's work. That is to say that building on the director's knowledge of teaching will enable them to intervene directly as professional educators so that teachers' efforts are directed in achieving the best possible learning in their pupils. However the data seem to suggest that the work of the director revolves more around detail and administration, a bureaucratic role of policing the compliance of teachers and other GES personnel with their terms of employment rather than professional role. Dealing with issues of discipline, collecting and submitting data, preparation of budgets and managing resources as well as reports writing and attending meetings seem to take the centre stage of the DDEs functions which amount to attending to the day to day activities with the aim of keeping the system running rather than making the system run well.

The continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for teachers represent an example of the way that the role is structured so that it focuses on administrative issues of maintenance of the system rather than professional issues of ensuring that the real purposes of education are being pursued. CPD programmes are pursued in Ghana with the notion at first sight that teacher professional development is about improvement in teaching and learning. An international review of literature on teacher professional development (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) suggests that successful professional development experiences have significant positive impact on students' performances and learning. In view of this, the Ministry of Education in

Ghana expanded opportunities for both the initial training and later upgrading of teachers with the introduction of Untrained Teachers Diploma in Basic Education (UTDBE) programme, distance and sandwich programmes. These programmes were also attempts at stemming the high attrition rate of teachers from the classroom to institutions of higher learning and the limiting quota system associated with the study leave with pay policy. These initiatives were perceived to improve the competence of teachers and raise the image of teaching as a profession in Ghana (Adu-Yeboah et al., 2010).

However, CPD programmes in Ghana are organized by Universities and not education authorities who are not consulted on it. The sandwich mode which is supposed to be undertaken during school vacations takes place during the vacation of the universities which unfortunately is not aligned with the vacation of basic schools. The vacation of the universities coincides with the third term of the basic school academic calendar. Teachers who enlist on the sandwich programme have to be absent from school for the whole of the third term of basic school. DDEs are not consulted on the core issues of content, methodologies and assessment of teachers as they relate directly to teaching and learning in schools. These are solely managed by the universities against the backdrop that the DDE as a professional educator could make salient inputs in these areas. This reduces the professional role of district education authorities to an administrative one of seeing to the processing of applications of passage from the classroom to their selected universities to commence their training. Thus the only involvement of DDEs is with mechanics of process – enabling and coping with teachers' absence and then adjusting qualifications, rank and salaries.

As such, DDEs are precluded from an active role of making sure that CPD improves classroom performance. As Abena conceded “children are not doing well because of sandwich programme since the teachers are not in the classroom in June and July”. The perception is that teachers are more concerned with their career which will also enable them to move higher on the ranking ladder and lead to higher incomes. Being at the fore front of improving their pedagogical skills and becoming better teachers to the benefit of the children they teach is relegated to the background. Director Eben rationalized this state of affairs by attributing it to the nature of the teaching career which thrives on qualifications.

The question that arises from this state of affairs is how the director can ensure that teachers who undergo professional development will help improve upon pupils' performance. The

director is handicapped as far as this is concerned and how to achieve this remains unclear aside the regular call on teachers to work hard to improve on their performance.

Arguably the most critical of the factors that support the DDEs' focus on the administrative role is that the status of position is not adequate to secure compliance. The exercise of the director's authority and power described in the dataset by Kwesi as 'absolute' is far more constrained than it appears to effect change. Headteachers through circuit supervisors (CS) in the chain of command are responsible for bringing to the attention of the DDE shortcomings in teachers' work such as non preparation of lesson notes and inadequate class exercises. However there is failure on the part of some heads and CS to do so as confirmed by Director Esi. Reports presented to the office hardly contain such details. Director Esi rationalized this for being one of the reasons for doing her rounds at schools. The underlying reason is that they do not want to be regarded as the source of misfortune of teachers who would be sanctioned by the DDE as a result. Thus the DDE is unable to take the necessary measures to effect change in erring teachers so as to make them more effective as teachers. In some instances where DDEs have defied the odds and taken action against teachers perceived to be nonperforming, such actions have been subject to legal action without the benefit of proper documentation of offences to be used as evidence by DDEs. This does not only constrain the power of the director to effect change but also puts them at risk.

The DDE by the definition of Archer (1975) as an education worker who exists inside the education system and whose interaction is not only inevitable but constitutes a critical force that engages in negotiations with official authorities and other interest groups, is an internal local policy actor. The official authorities that the district director engages in negotiations range from regional directorate of education, educational units, district assemblies to teachers and learners. The interest groups include the teacher unions, the SMCs and PTAs and community members. These authorities and interest groups have specific identity and interests regarding educational issues to which they adopt a position and conduct activities while creating social and power relations. The degree of involvement of these policy actors in the process of influencing educational policy process may vary in intensity and depth. In the attempt of the DDEs as ground-level policy actors, to oversee the implementation of education policies at the district and school levels, they find themselves in a pivotal position around which an interactive relationship and negotiation with other policy actors previously identified take place. During the course of the interaction of the DDE with the other actors, they often give up or modify their

objective interests in return for concessions from the other policy actors. This is because these interactions occur in the context of various institutional arrangements surrounding the policy process and affecting how the actors pursue their interests. These negotiations seek to influence the course of the policy process and raise issues of power of the local actors in policy making and implementation. Similarly, the 'relative freedom of individuals to change things', a feature of policy as text and as discourse is a demonstration of the power of local actors to seek their interests.

As a policy actor the director is expected to possess and harness power which will influence the multiple actors in the social relationships in a manner that will secure their compliance in ensuring the achievement of the objectives of the education policies. But in effect what capacity does the director have to achieve desired outcomes or to produce results in educating the marginalized in society?

In the application of Lukes' insights on the three dimensions on power to the practice of DDEs mandate in education at the district level, it is expected that the DDE is engaged in the struggles which emerge within the decision making arena of influencing the actions of teachers and community members through the institution of disciplinary measures to address shortfalls in the school systems. This is a presentation of the first dimension of power. In the second dimension, DDEs actions and inactions shape the agenda-setting process. The decision of DDEs to settle for inaction and to earn income and retire in peace without actively furthering the professional tenets of the Service constitutes the shaping of the agenda setting process of the second dimension of the Lukesian power. The DDE's actions and inactions which shape the perceptions and preferences of the various policy actors also constitute power, an example of the third dimension. In reference to this, Lukes (1974) proposes:

is it not the supreme and most insidious use of power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things, either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial?
(p.24)

The DDE's ability for instance to produce significant effect on teachers' interests by shaping their perceptions and preferences and not by necessarily repressing them constitutes power to

ensure the fulfillment of the professional role of the DDE. This would however necessitate much work on the part of the DDE in re-orienting teachers as their perceptions and preferences are largely set. This is in line with Lukes' thinking that the shaping of the preferences of actors is always "partial and limited..." (p. 150). However according to Lukes, the proof of the occurrence of a successful exercise of power is when it can be empirically proven that without the presence of *A*, *B* would otherwise have done *b*. This is because while it is relatively obvious to determine the counterfactuals in an open political conflict between two characters, it is more difficult in a situation of no political conflict as in the case of the re-orientation of perceptions and preferences.

Similarly, political priorities of interests expressed by various education policy actors whether at the national, regional, district and school levels where an issue otherwise of importance in achieving the education of the marginalized in society is excluded or not prioritized among other agendas can be considered in terms of the notions of power.

The alternative view of power by Lukes (2005) on the three dimensions of power of force, persuasion, and manipulation indicates that there must be a consideration for multiple actors rather than binary actors who hold divergent views in many situations and which generate their own particular interests. The third dimension of Lukesian power where the power consists, not in prevailing over the opposition of others, nor in imposing an agenda on them, but in influencing their desires, beliefs and judgments in ways that work against their interests raises questions about how to justify the 'real interest' ascribed to teachers for example and also where the power is to be conceived to be located, whether in those actors or agents like the DDE who have or exercise power or in impersonal structures. Again, in applying the third dimension of Lukesian power it would seem incumbent on DDEs to apply deeply rooted forms of political socialization (Swartz, 2007) in order to make actors like teachers unwittingly follow the dictates of power even against their best interests.

A narrow-centred view of the DDEs power entails power at work when it is exercised intentionally and positively. The DDE exercises such power by instituting certain disciplinary actions against teachers. Viewed from a broad angle agent power which entails power not only at work when it is exercised intentionally and positively but also power that agents never exercise the effects of which they do not intend such as effects resulting from inaction or failure to act. Thus holding the DDE responsible for consequences they neither intended nor positively intervened to bring about is problematic. Locating and tracking the other agents, who have the

capacity to affect the DDEs interests, as well as those of others may seem something practical to do. Another means would be to devise and maintain institutional structures that restrain the powerful from harming others' interests and from limiting their freedoms. Such restraint would be expected to prevent the powerful such as the politicians and technocrats at the central level and district assemblies at the district level from monopolizing policy-making and policy implementation power and to limit their attempts at controlling agendas and framing policy issues in a way that distorts or suppresses people's perceptions of their interests.

The DDE operates in social and institutional structures that consist of constraints and opportunities and in roles and norms that limit, guide, and shape the behaviours of teachers and other community members. They also constitute the frameworks within which politics and social life take place. The power of the DDE to achieve their objective interest of the realization of their professional role and to dominate the other agents in a bid to achieve this is always subject to the impact of the unintended consequences. Where the impact seems to be overwhelming the result is the director's pursuit of their subjective interest of working to earn an income for their family and exiting in peace rather than pursuing the objective professional interest of ensuring the education of the disadvantaged in society.

Taking a cue from these instances, DDEs appear to take all the necessary precautions in order not to subject themselves to such actions that might expose them to certain risks. Working then to make a living to provide for one's family and to leave the scene in peace on retirement takes the centre stage as a compromised alternative to the dealings with the complexities of rank and role. This seems to support the suggestion that the workplace landscape is very pervasive and demanding and identity is not static but rather dynamic, and changes with circumstances (Harber and Davies, 1997; Kirk, 2007).

Furthermore, despite the director position serving as a springboard to higher positions of director-general and deputy director-general, it is largely a terminal point for many directors. This stance appears to fuel in no small measure the perception that the DDE position is a reward for long years of service and toil. As such, the status associated with the rank and more so the tangible benefits to be derived from the position become the rewarding factors. This echoes the observation of Blunt and Jones (1992) that African employees (in sub-Saharan African countries) work primarily to earn money to pay for what they need in life and for their family, rather than to gain intrinsic gratification from work itself.

Mediation of family members on behalf of teachers who break other school rules presents another tension site where DDEs seem to be caught in a situation where there does not seem to be any way that they can enforce regulations. There are disciplinary actions which by the regulations are put into force depending on the gravity of offenses. These include warning/reprimand, forfeiture of pay, suspension with loss of pay, disciplinary transfer, reduction in rank and dismissal from GES. My experience shows that family members sometimes intervene to revoke or plead for leniency for their ward in what I term as the 'I beg you syndrome'. In many cases, the team includes a prominent member/s in the community in order to make the impact of the mediation more felt. Such pressures can be so overwhelming that it demands on the part of the director who may be torn between granting of the request and sticking to the code of conduct, all the will power to withstand such interferences. Such situations call for diplomacy in explaining the issues at stake and convincing the team of the need for such an action to be taken. This is to say that the action on the part of the mediators in their estimation is not translated as an act of interference. For them it is rather a cultural representation of the community's responsibility to deal with issues of wrongdoing according to their own terms instead of the terms of the organization that we serve as district directors. Thus the legitimacy of wrongdoing is brought into question and is increasingly becoming difficult such that a director may be liable to be punished if he or she attempts to implement policy fully.

The participation of family and community in the working life of their wards buttresses their involvement also in the selection of the teaching career of 4 out of the 6 participants in this study. The question is how does the district director apply the Lukesian three dimensional theory of power by making education staff and teachers act willingly in ways that appear contrary to their most basic interests without coercion or forcible constraint? This may seem difficult since an observer cannot see and define objectively people's 'real interests' and much more where real interests differ from individual to individual and may also be in conflict with each other.

Director Esi's account of her unannounced visit to one of the schools in her district and the ensuing reaction from teachers and community members is another example of tension between cultural viewpoints and work regulations. While the director's action privileges teaching and learning actually taking place in the classroom, the community defends a cultural expectation that in deference to the DDE's position she should not be seen to be carrying out

the management function of directly monitoring the performance of teachers. For them, at best this role should be delegated to subordinates despite its efficacy in checking punctuality, regularity and output of teachers and which has a positive effect on the performance of pupils.

These instances consistently demonstrate the tensions that exist between enforcing regulations to fulfill the policy of ensuring teaching and learning takes place and quality education is achieved and perceived culturally unacceptable norms. Such tensions have the propensity to dissipate the power of the director to effect change. It highlights the viewpoint that the Minister of Education's initiation of a 'zero tolerance for absenteeism' intervention as a stop gap to the poor performance of pupils may remain largely a rhetoric rather than achievable.

These tensions bring to the fore postcolonial dynamics where the DDEs are expected both to execute their professional duties of being drivers of school improvement within an organizational setting of rigid rules about attendance and at the same time to allow things such as going to funerals. These examples confirm postcolonial ideas of commitment to local conditions in view of the communalistic orientation of the African society. People see themselves as interdependent with others, responsibility shared and accountability collective as against the instrumental legacies of colonial institutions (Swartz and Davies, 1997). Jackson (2004) suggests a development of an understanding of the relationship between community/family life and work life and the creation of a high level of awareness of the factors that contribute to the way the organization is managed through principles, policies and practices.

The DDE's dealing with this tension of diversity of tradition, culture undergoing change as working to promote the values of the colonizer while also upholding that of the colonized is also indicative of the dynamics of power at work between the powerful and less powerful (Bhabha, 1994; Frenkel, 2008). The reality however remains that a lot of effort will have to be made by the individual directors about practically harnessing the wider societal collectivism to corporate life, integrating into a changing global economy (Carmody, 2011) and fostering commitment by employees in a reciprocal relationship.

Director Eben's succinct statement about 'things you cannot find in books' is very revealing. Under such pressure to enforce the regulations, the DDE adopts measures appropriate to the situation. These may include unconventional actions such as adopting an understanding, an 'inoffensive' posture towards their work by allowing some time and space for the fulfillment of social and communal responsibilities while also ensuring not great a departure from the work

regulations. By so doing the director may be seen to be combining collectivism, humane leadership style and performance orientation (Priem, Love and Shaffer, 2000; Jackson, 2004). Ensuring that conflicts between policies and practices are minimized entails a balancing act from the director. It is to ensure achievement of the corporate results through a pragmatic and humanistic approach to work while at the same time combining celebration and ceremonies with leadership that provides moral guidance. The suggestion by Harber and Davies (1997) that the success of education policy implementation in developing countries is influenced by an understanding of teachers' present beliefs, practices and their identity comes alive in these instances. This study has demonstrated as suggested by Beijgaard et al., (2004) and Connelly and Clandinin (1999) that institutional context and stories play important roles and are crucial influences on professional identity of participants including directors. The tensions that this study has revealed as having been created between agency reflected in the personal dimension of the director's work and structure as in the socially determined are examples of the institutional contexts that influence the director's identity. The director's workplace is also very demanding and aside the influences of family, social and cultural traditions, policy context also significantly shape director's identity formation.

Another factor which contributes to the shaping of the director's identity is the social network of directors known as CoDE. Newly appointed district directors enter into this community of practitioners and through their legitimate peripheral participation they attempt to learn the socio-cultural practices of the community and to take up more and more of the identity of group membership and central practices of CoDE. The central and defining phenomenon of this group is the reproduction and evolution of knowledge of these directors through the process of identifying with this community. The directors as a group of individuals participate in communal activity, and continuously create their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities. As social participants and meaning making entities where the social world is a resource for constituting an identity, the experience of the director is actively constituted, shaped, and interpreted through learning. However participants have their own experience of practice and their learning may entail realignment and involve some identity work. Thus identity reflects a complex relationship between the social and the personal. The motivation for the director's work of settling for earning an income to take care of one's family and to retire peacefully without being a change agent is one such example that entails realignment and can create a tension between the competence of some members of CoDE and the experience of new comers.

The experiences acquired from this network considered as a form of social capital have a lasting impression on directors and important to the success of their career outcomes. The more CoDE provided practical and relevant information to their work and welfare services to directors the more clear DDE's professional identity became. The director's identity construction can also be located within the complex and rapidly changing multicultural context and the relative influences of western and post colonial principles and practices (Jackson, 2004). Managing teachers with a split between the world of work and community/home life while upholding the historical legacy of promoting instrumental values of the colonizer creates multiple worlds (Skeggs, 2004) and results in conceptualizing identity beyond cultural and national identities. The effects, produced out of this situation is the creation of a paradox and conflicts between policies and practices (Jackson, 2004).

6.4 Developing appropriate management and leadership systems

The mandate of the district education directorate in Ghana is in transition. Apart from just implementing traditional routine tasks defined by others, the directorate must be seen to be acting in ways commensurate with the redefined boundaries in order to ensure a successful implementation of education policies. The office now serves as a link between GES and schools and also as a link between the district administrative authorities and the schools. The DDE's role even assumes more challenge within the District Assembly's system where one is expected to provide professional advice to the district chief executive on all educational matters.

The DDE's dealings with the political will enable a further understanding of the various challenges associated with the director's work and the gaps in the knowledge and experience base of the director within the contextual realities of the Ghanaian working environment. A challenge that presents to education management is the difficulty in managing the relationship with politicians in educational decentralization. In Ghana, a key feature of local governance is the adoption of a dual hierarchical structure in which central government institutions and local institutions "operate in parallel" (Ayee 2000). As such the district education office is answerable to both the MOE/GES and to the District Assembly. This study reveals three critical areas where participants' expressed their frustration at what they deem to be meddling of politics in issues they considered purely as professional educational issues and should have been treated as such without political undertones. These considerations are educational policy

decision making, funding mechanisms and community participation within a decentralized administration.

The national policy process of determining the duration of senior high schooling in Ghana presents an example of the way decision making is influenced by the political rather than by the professional. The duration of schooling in Ghana is a key educational policy decision. The Dzobo Committee constituted in 1974 for example led to changes in the content and structure of schooling in Ghana reducing it from 17 to 12 years and the introduction of the Junior/Senior Secondary School concept in 1987. Indeed the policy-making process of previous major educational reforms commenced with the setting up a national education review committee or commission with membership from a wide range of stakeholder organizations to address the demand for change. According to Little (2010) a conference of directors of education reviewed the Dzobo report and made recommendations. Then in 1985 when a National Education Commission (NEC) on education was established to advise the Secretary, the commission held extensive consultations across the country that involved trade unions, the heads of secondary schools, civil servants and university students. However this time round determining the 3 or 4 year duration of senior high schooling in Ghana was not seen to be subject to the views of educational technocrats including district directors. DDEs and other education experts were precluded from the process heightening participants' anxiety about interference in the professional work of educators by political elements. This state of affairs seems to fuel the perception that political party manifestos are increasingly influencing the education machinery such as policy decision making and the strategic planning of MOE/GES. Nudzor (2014) suggests that the factor of power relations existing between politicians and technocrats is at work in these instances as a result of the overriding interest of the political actors as a dominant group in decision making and also wielding power over finances. Director Eben's exposition on the motivating factor of 'catching the eye of the populace' in the spending pattern of the District Assembly accentuates political expediency overriding technical issues and creating tensions (Little 2010). It also confirms a key issue emerging from the review of literature on school processes, local governance and community participation in relation to access (Dunne et al., 2007) that the relationship between elected local authorities and education offices was usually characterized by conflict rather than collaboration. This reflected the confrontation inherent in their different legitimacies that while education officials refer to their professional legitimacy, local authorities emphasize their political legitimacy. It is to be

expected that decisions taken in the midst of such tensions may not necessarily be in the interest of the less privileged and the most in need of the policy on duration of schooling.

A similar challenge of dealing with the political finds expression in the context of financial disbursements within the educational decentralization system as it currently exists in Ghana. The district assembly concept is considered by the participants as a medium for providing budget supplements to education through the composite budget it draws up. This expectation is supported by the suggestion that the decentralization process would provide more authority and capacity to local authorities to supervise and manage service delivery and resource allocation activities (Darvas and Balwanz, 2014). It is also buttressed by the system where the district education office is answerable to GES and the Assembly. In a situation where thirty percent (30%) of the Government of Ghana budget is spent on education, 25% of which is for teacher salaries (Ministry of Education, 2008) there are constraints on monies that can be deployed into services and investment. For this reason it is anticipated that the Assemblies would stand in the gap to finance school activities such as sporting and cultural activities as expressed by directors Esi and Eben. However the District Assembly is not able to do this confirming a review of Dunne et al., (2010) that competing demands on districts meant that the affairs of schools were not always a high priority. The DDE on the other hand has no power whatsoever to influence financial decisions of the Assemblies other than engaging in negotiations based on a good social and interpersonal relationship with those who matter at the Assembly: the District Chief Executive and the Coordinating Director. This has contributed to the diversion of the director's attention from the professional role to a bureaucratic role of seeking for funds to support these activities. Participants' data on the state of implementation of decentralization in Ghana confirm that fiscal decentralization is crucial to the successful implementation process.

This state of affairs is supported by a conclusion that often emerges from studies on African decentralization that central governments on the whole have been reluctant to decentralize sufficient powers and resources to local governments. It is an attempt to curtail the growth of powerful local institutions that might challenge their monopoly over power and resources that are needed for local development (Helmsing, 2005; Conyers, 2007; Awortwi, 2011).

Another area where political interest seems to override the administrative and professional roles of the DDE is made evident in the participant's analysis of the working relationships within the Assembly structure. One of the tenets of decentralization is the expected shift of decision-

making closer to local actors and stakeholders (Chapman, 2000; Naidoo, 2002). This concept comes along with increases in the number of policy actors at the District Assembly and the school levels in terms of community participation. This ranges from subcommittees on education or District Education Oversight Committees (DEOCs) as the case may be within the Assembly setting to other school support systems such as the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs). According to Scott (2000) and Adam (2005), each group constitutes a policy site with its own set of rules about how truth is constructed, with some being more powerful and exerting pressure in various ways on those less powerful. Thus in Ghana, some district level policy actors can assert their political power through a call for change in education leadership where such leadership does not appear to be in their interest. Eben's data on 'change of [one's] working place' in reference to directors' inaction as a result of challenges related to their work supports this view. It gives credence to the suggestion that in reality, the process of decentralization in most countries, especially countries in sub-Saharan Africa has generally been driven by local and national political elites, by certain political realities at the center, and by 'external pressures', rather than by local-level democratic demand (Devas, 2005). Also at the school level, one can find tensions between PTAs and SMCs in their bid to participate in school decision making and management. Despite the different functions assigned to each group there are in some cases attempts at subsuming one group by the other. Pryor (2005) defines the situation as the dominant position of powerful professionals within the system making community participation problematic while Dunne et al., (2010) conclude that:

the relationship between education offices, local authorities, schools and communities, is clearly not an unproblematic one. There are different interests and priorities for each group ...the relationships can at times be tenuous and contradictory. It is not entirely clear whose involvement in school is being promoted by decentralization policy...(p.22).

Although the DDEs themselves get caught up in these tensions they are expected to intervene albeit unsuccessfully in some cases.

The educational background of DDEs relative to that of key personnel of the Assembly also constitutes a tension site. The place of education in the structure of the Assembly as explained in the data by director Eben makes it imperative that the DDEs subject their authority to that of the District Chief Executive (DCE). However the DDE as a key person heading a key department of the Assembly and appointed by the public service usually has relatively higher academic qualifications than the DCE. As espoused by Eben in the dataset, this contributes to the creation of fertile grounds for tensions between the Assembly and the DDE particularly in instances where the DCEs tend to use their political clout to their advantage.

Further to this, Jackson (2004) challenges managers and by extension directors to gather the courage to step beyond the comfort zone by implementing a hybrid approach to management and leadership. This calls for the need to document these contextual and authentic good practices in a manner that could be accessible to all managers.

Promoting the professional role of the director by creating an enabling environment that will promote teaching and learning despite the current challenges seems an uphill task. Disturbing the status quo that teachers are used to and at the same winning their support to pursue a new agenda is also a necessary mission that the director must pursue. For this to be achieved, the DDE should champion a change of mind about education and about how teachers and learners should teach and learn. For example, directors could start pursuing an agenda where the head teachers and circuit supervisors could be given job-specific training and more authority to address teacher work performance and disciplinary issues (Darvas and Balwanz, 2014). It also requires that finances such as capitation grant and supplies should also be available at the time they are supposed to be since school activities are time-bound. The inability of the GES to make these timely provisions as presented in the dataset of the newspaper publication (Daily Graphic of 21st October, 2013) complicates the system and makes it difficult for everyone and particularly those in public schools to be educated well.

For quality of education to be achieved, the single role of the director cannot suffice. The need for the creation of partnerships thus becomes indispensable. In this light, the education sector in Ghana has put in place measures to promote collaboration between the school on one hand and the community, parents and alumni in the light of the conclusion of Bray (2001) that the emphasis on partnership following the Jomtien Conference has been 'wise and generally appropriate' p. 38). Other key stakeholders such as government, politicians, development partners, public and private organizations, religious bodies, NGOs, chiefs, educational administrators, teachers, and students all have a key role to play in providing mutual support that facilitates service delivery, financial and logistics security, expansion of equitable access and improved learning outcomes. The complementary role to be played by the various stakeholders puts the director in a strategic local partner position. The director becomes the fulcrum around which these partners channel their support. Indeed in some cases where the personality of the director is strong he or she is able to develop a good Interpersonal relationship and a strong network with local politicians and others.

It is in the light of this that invitations are extended to the various partners of education to attend the regional and national CoDE meetings. In my observation of the regional CoDE meeting, I noted that the list of partners who attended included the chiefs and opinion leaders, a member of parliament, the district chief executive, representatives of the teacher Unions, proprietors of private schools and head teachers. These partners were engaged in an open discussion during the first part of the meeting where they raised their concerns and expectations and responsibilities. Yet beyond this, the process of smooth partnerships can be frustrated by what Lukes (2005) terms as the divergent and conflictual interests of these multiple actors, some based on politics, others on status and yet others on ethnicity and gender among others. It is these that militate against partnerships that are disruptive of the current order of serving the interests of the disadvantaged in public schools.

6.5 Summary of findings

I highlight the dynamics inherent in the rank and role of the DDE in education policy formulation and implementation in Ghana. I underline the power of the DDE as a policy actor to act and bring to light the factors that influence the formation of the director's identity within the Ghanaian corporate and socio-cultural context while highlighting the conflicts and tensions inherent in the various interactions. Insights from this inform what could be done to develop appropriate managerial and leadership properties to address the exigencies of their circumstances.

6.5.1 The DDE and policy making and implementation in Ghana

This study has explored the notion of a traditional rationalist approach to education policy making and implementation in Ghana and highlighted the hierarchical manner in which policy is formulated by political figureheads and technocrats at the centre and implemented in a similar traditional hierarchical fashion. An analysis of this approach shows that despite the strategic place the DDE occupies as the direct link to the school level where policy implementation actually takes place, the system does not promote devolution of power from the national policy actors to local-level actors such as the DDEs in a manner that will enable them to contribute and influence policy formulation and implementation.

Using the decentralized system of education in Ghana where District Assemblies have been given the mandate to supervise the decisions of DDEs at the district level, the adoption of a dual hierarchical structure in which central government institutions "operate in parallel" with local counterparts (Ayee, 2000, p. 49) creates tensions and conflicts between the DDE on one

hand and the DCE and/or CD of the Assembly on the other. The bases of these conflicts are the imposition of interests of the District Assembly as a result of their wielding of political and financial power over the DDE.

This study also shows that the five-level staircase of implementation of policies has implication for duplication of functions particularly at the grass root levels. The DDE's responsibility for managing school support systems in the district with particular reference to the DEOC, SMC and PTA, creations of education decentralization, places the DDE in an uncomfortable position of having to settle conflicts and tensions that erupt among these grass root policy actors and also between them and head teachers/teachers. In these cases the contradictions and over-elaboration of functions among these groups as well as the pursuance of individual interests are the sources of conflicts.

6.5.2 DDE's power to act as policy actor

District directorship is a multifaceted schedule ranging from the traditional to contemporary mandates in view of the changing contexts in which the director operates. The traditional role of the director is portrayed in the mission of the Ghana Education Service, which is essentially to provide quality education to school-going Ghanaian children. This translates primarily into a professional mandate of ensuring the implementation of education policies through the provision of pedagogical support and monitoring the quality of education. It also involves an administrative role of providing managerial services to teachers and collecting and analyzing school related data. As is clear from the study, that which seems to animate and preoccupy the DDE is the administrative role of ensuring that the established systems are kept running to the disadvantage of the professional. While the rank of DDE is ordinarily associated with a high societal status and an assumed overt power to cause change, in reality such power is only latent as status seemed more important than substance. Two factors were identified as contributing to this state of affairs: The first is non-engagement of the DDE in the substance of teachers' professional development programmes in a manner that will impact on the performance of pupils. The second is the inability of teachers, head teachers and circuit supervisors to report on matters that require change to the DDE.

These specific instances of the inability of the director to act can be located within a general perspective of agent power which entails power not only at work when it is exercised intentionally and positively but also power that agents never exercise and social and

institutional structures which consist in roles and norms that limit and shape individuals' behavior. These portray the frameworks within which general politics is conducted and economic and social life function. They produce an outcome where the director settles for a non-interventionist stance as their subjective interests to enable him/her earn income and to exit on pension in peace without necessarily being a change agent which is their objective interest.

6.5.3 Influences on DDE's identity construction

The study revealed that the performance of the DDE's functions can be located within three contexts: socio-cultural, organizational and political with each presenting specific challenges associated with work, culture and social interaction, the conceptual categories for exploring and understanding identity. Aside from the influences of family the formation of the DDE's identity assumes some level of complexity as it is shaped by other contextual and institutional factors determined by the communities and institutions in which they live and are members. The director as a product of society cannot extricate themselves from social and cultural dynamics which intrinsically support allegiance of time and resources to family and community. Teacher-community affiliation is articulated for example in terms of attending funerals and attending to sick family members, which ostensibly encourage teacher absenteeism. Conversely community-teacher support is expressed in relation to interventions in the disciplinary affairs of teachers. At the organizational level, the DDE must be seen to be committed to achieving the instrumental corporate goals of enforcement of rigid work regulations against absenteeism. This brings to the fore post colonial dynamics that arise out of the interests of each side of the bargain, community expectations and the corporate world.

The third context comes along with issues bordering on the political. Three challenges arise from this context. The first is decision making on educational issues at the national level, which seems to be influenced by political expediency while undermining the professional expertise of DDEs. The second is the application of political and financial power of the Assembly at the district level in the administrative and professional work of the DDE in ways that break the resolve of the DDE. The final is the power dynamics that regulate and influence the relationships among school level policy actors in their bid at community participation as a result of educational decentralization. These reflect the policy context of the director's work and coupled with the experiences of the social network of CoDE the director's identity is shaped.

6.5.4 *Preparedness for DDE position*

The basis for the appointment of a prospective candidate to directorship position in Ghana is essentially the formal academic qualification and training, professional experience and rank. Whereas academic qualifications of participants did not seem to be a challenge, professional exposure was varied and not comprehensive. An admission of shortfalls made in knowledge and experience base centred on skills in building good working relationship with other stakeholders in education delivery, computer literacy, and planning and budgeting among others. Some of these gaps emanated from previous work experiences, which did not predispose participants to some of these skills. Beyond these, other contextual realities and complexities inherent in the director's work described aptly as 'things you cannot find in books' make it difficult for a director to be adequately prepared for the directorship position. At best a director can do a lot of learning on the job making the Conference of Directors of Education (CoDE) a platform for exchanging ideas and experiences increasingly relevant.

6.5.5 *Strengthening capacity in leadership and management*

The work of the DDE is about leadership and management. An understanding of the complex multicultural context of the district director is critical for developing appropriate leadership and management methods in order to ensure efficacy in the implementation of educational policies.

This study has brought to the fore conditions and actions that will enable the director to address some of the challenges that confront her. Promoting the innovative role of the DDE to deal with critical issues such as absenteeism among teachers and disrupting the routine of teachers and staff while winning their support to pursue a new agenda is paramount. Playing out the strategic role through the active engagement of a network of education stakeholders including the District Assembly will also enable a critical reflection on education policies and implementation. Two other key ingredients have been identified in this study to be incorporated in the strengthening of the DDE's capacity to provide enhanced leadership and management. These are adaptation of the motivation and commitment of teachers to local conditions in view of the communalistic orientation of the African society and the creation of a high level of awareness of the factors that contribute to the way the Service is managed. By so doing, the DDE may be seen to be promoting a hybrid approach to management and leadership appropriate to the Ghanaian circumstance.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I define the contributions that this thesis has made to knowledge. I also draw from the emerging key issues, lessons I have learnt for my professional practice and the profession in general. I proceed to make recommendations based on the outcome of this thesis while deliberating on what and how I intend to enact them. I commit the latter part of this chapter to the prospects for future research.

7.2 Contribution of the study

From the onset of this study, I established that my topic has received little attention in terms of research. This is evidenced in the literature I reviewed and which makes me suggest that I was unable to find anything about my particular topic. This research has identified several areas about DDEs worth noting.

Firstly, the roles and responsibilities of the DDE with regard to policy implementation in Ghana have been well documented but the execution of these roles does not seem to have been subject to empirical analysis. This study has brought to the fore the complexities and tensions, opportunities, constraints and the way DDEs negotiate their challenges. While the major mandate of the DDE is the professional role of ensuring that teaching and learning of good quality takes place, this role seems to be overshadowed by the administrative. The study has established the constraints limiting DDEs' power to act recognizing that the status of DDE position is not adequate to secure compliance of teachers to school regulations on absenteeism as socio-cultural practices such as non-documentation of offences by teachers to be used as evidence for imposition of sanctions by DDEs and interventions in sanctions by family and community members on behalf of erring teachers are rife. The analysis of power raises questions as to how to justify the 'real interest' ascribed to teachers where the power consists, not in prevailing over the opposition of others, nor in imposing an agenda on them, but in influencing their desires, beliefs and judgments in ways that work against their interests.

This study makes a claim that even though DDEs could contribute significantly not only to the processes of policy implementation but also to policy formulation in consideration of the

strategic position they occupy as the direct link to the school level in the substructures of GES, this is not the case. Due to the inability of the decentralized system to promote adequate devolution of power from the national to local-level policy actors and the highly political nature of national education issues influenced by financial and legal power wielded by political authorities at the national and district assembly levels, the relative power and influence of district directors on policies are compromised. This study has also shown that the DDE is constrained in their power to act as a result of tensions emanating from conflicting interests among community participants in the affairs of the school associated with the decentralized system of education.

This thesis has also identified influences of family, social and cultural traditions, policy and institutional contexts as factors that shape directors' identity formation. Other factors include the social network of directors known as CoDE and the relative influences of western and post colonial principles and practices. Tensions created between agency reflected in the personal dimension of the director's work and structure as in the socially determined are factors as the study has demonstrated, that have the propensity to redirect the motivation of DDEs from achieving educational results and being change agents to working to earn income and proceed on retirement in peace.

This study also challenges DDEs to develop an understanding of the complex multicultural context in which they operate and to consequently derive and document appropriate management and leadership approaches with emphasis on the adaptation of motivation and commitment to local conditions to enhance their work and in preparation of future DDEs.

7.3 Personal professional learning

This research has offered me the opportunity to make some inferences with regard to my own professional learning and the profession of district directorship in general. First and foremost conducting this research has fundamentally changed my own perspectives on what it takes to be a district director. This study has potentially shaped my understanding of the phenomenon under study to the extent that I appreciate my workplace experiences as things not to be taken for granted but as having deeper meanings. Furthermore, my appreciation of the research process itself has been enhanced while consolidating my learning.

7.3.1 *Perspectives before conduct of research*

My views of the directorship position before my engagement as a DDE to be in charge of a district and preceding the conduct of this research were similar to the views of my participants. Having comparable educational track record and work patterns, I identified with my participants in their accounts particularly on their views of the position and status of DDE in the Ghana Education Service. Thus the motivating factor for me as I went into the position was to spend the rest of my pre-retirement period in the pride of the position and to go through the motions of a DDE of ensuring that the status quo was maintained as the status was more important than the substance. In view of this, emphasis on undertaking the day to day activities, that is, ensuring the wheels of administration was oiled to culminate in my peaceful exit from active service was my focus. Besides, I was not cognizant with 'what was not written in books' meaning I was not exposed to the complexities, paradoxes and tensions inherent in the system of district education governance in stark reality as demonstrated by this study. I however approached this research with an open mind to gaining new insights and to extend my learning.

7.3.2 *Perspectives after conduct of research*

Undertaking this research has served as a stimulus to reflect on various aspects of the position as DDE in a manner as never envisaged. Although the benefits of being a director seemed to be apparent, I did not appreciate the extent to which this research has taken me to another level of gaining significant insights, profoundly influencing not only my growth as a qualitative researcher but also influencing my role as a DDE. Primarily it has deepened my understanding of the position by questioning and analyzing the issues and tensions emanating from the contexts of the DDEs operations, how they influence the outcomes of their work and how they negotiate the challenges they encounter. All these issues have been taken-for-granted and assumed that they did not exist or that their existence did not have any impact on how DDEs do their work.

As a learning tool, this research has made me more critical of my own work environment subjecting it to higher level thinking. My horizon for example has been extended from a motivation of just settling on earning income for my family and retiring in tranquility to one of working from a perspective of promoting the professional aspect of the DDEs role to the benefit of the disadvantaged learners in society despite the challenges. I am inclined to believe that no other form of reflection whether through the directors' conference or meetings with higher authority would have challenged my ideas about what it means to be a DDE so fundamentally.

The probability of my colleague directors identifying with this inside view of directorship is very pronounced as coming from one of their own with an exposure too compelling to ignore. Beyond this group of colleague directors who would share in this research, other stakeholders in education in general and particularly those in more senior positions such as regional, divisional and directors-general as well as those in ministerial positions of the education sector are likely to appreciate how this research has potentially facilitated an understanding of the phenomenon under study. Another category of people who stand to benefit from this research is the prospective candidates who look forward to acquiring the position and status of district directors. From my personal experience despite the elation associated with rising to this position one entertains the fear of the unknown and begins to reckon with the daunting task once confirmed to the position. A perusal of this study therefore would provide a window into the known in advance of their placement and in preparation for the task ahead.

Finally, doing this research has provoked a depth of learning. I have experienced the extent to which the reconstruction of my own sense of professional identity has transformed. I situate the process of reconstruction within the context of culture and work as my central experience shaping my identity [re]formation (Kirk and Wall, 2011).

7.4 Recommendations of study

A set of recommendations underlie my study. They point to how the following questions could be addressed with the aim of achieving more results: the first is how could the role of the DDE be developed further to achieve more results? How could structures possibly be changed such that it becomes possible for DDEs to lead more radical change in their districts? And finally how community participation as an offshoot of decentralization can be made to work so as to ensure accountability on the part of districts in actually educating children?

7.4.1 Developing the professional role of DDE

This study has detailed out the three-fold role of the DDE as professional, administrative and non-professional and established beyond doubt that the preoccupation of the director seems to be skewed towards the administrative of keeping the system running. This stands in sharp contrast to the spirit and letter of the key function of the district director position which emphasizes the provision of quality education to Ghanaian children of school-going age and promoting matters of professional and educational policies. Thus re-orienting the role of the director in line with the envisaged though may seem a daunting task is a necessary and obvious option. In line with this, the first point that comes up for discussion is the recruitment

procedures for the DDE position. The question of who might be recruited to do the job is vital. As previously discussed the position is essentially a terminal point in one's working career in the Service. This is as a result of the protracted grading system which ultimately produces pension-bound candidates for the position. This trend potentially engenders a self-centred motivation for the job. A reversal of this trend requires a re-evaluation of the ranking system in a manner as to reward primarily professional accomplishment and not simply number of years of experience as is currently the case. Secondly, taking into account that the entry points of candidates to the position are varied: from the school system that is basic, second cycle and college of education level; education office system: headquarters, regional, district education or educational unit settings, each context presents an orientation that is deficient in many ways. It is thus recommended that a mentoring programme could complement the performance-oriented approach to grading which makes it expedient for identified prospective candidates to undergo with the objective of adequately preparing them for the DDE job. Such a mentoring programme could focus on the professional role laced with case studies that could be crucial to the provision of appropriate leadership and educating children. This could replace the current 5-day orientation for candidates who have passed the DDE interviews in preparation for their job.

Based on the review of ranking and appointment procedures, an accountability system which focuses primarily on whether the districts are actually making improvements in educating children in alignment with the professional role of the director should be developed. It is worth noting that an assessment of the DDE's performance based on the performance of schools at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) held at the end of 9 years of basic education and the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) after a total of 12 years of schooling could be misleading and not altogether helpful. This is because such a mechanism could be subject to abuse as pressure could be brought to bear for the results of the examinations to be manipulated. Again priority would have to be given to the making of improvements rather than achieving absolute results.

7.4.2 Promoting working relationships among decentralized partners

A problematic working relationship between the DDE and the District Assembly with an effect on the decentralization agenda and specifically on education provision and delivery has been one of the findings of this study. An area of concern which became apparent is the application of political and financial power of the Assembly over the administrative and professional work of the DDE. The practice of the development of the composite budget of the Assembly for

example is a statutory requirement and in principle a laudable practice in all its intent and purpose. However the discretionary nature of the disbursements by the District Assembly based in some instances on considerations other than promoting the professional practice in education is not helpful. Instituting a quota system of the Assembly's receipts for education purposes would not only minimize the discretionary disbursement decisions of the DCEs on education but also ensure sustainable programmes and activities like science and mathematics clinics for girls.

Another area of concern raised by this study is the boundary conflicts between community participants who in the scheme of educational decentralization are expected to support the provision of educational services and ultimately to promote accountability. Boundary conflicts between SMCs and PTAs can be located on two fronts. The first is at the level of the personalities at the helm of affairs of these groupings. In many instances where the personality of one of the groups is more influential, they tend to exercise control over the other thus unsettling the boundaries. This leads to a situation where it seems like there is only one group in operation at the school. At the second level, head teachers and teachers may be seen not to be cooperating with the community members in areas they think are not inclined to the professional knowledge of the latter. These situations have implications for the accountability that community participation seeks to promote. In view of the relevance of the SMC and PTA in matters of imposing accountability on head teachers in the utilization of capitation grants for example in the case of the former and mobilization of much needed funds for the development of the school in the latter case, it would be crucial that the selection of the executives of these groups is not left in the hands of head teachers alone. In cases where the head teachers are able to influence the process of selection, there is the probability for compromise of the executives. There is the need for the DDE to be more involved in the affairs of the two bodies in order to ensure conformity to the guidelines that set them up. The creation of platforms by the DEO for constant engagement of SMC and PTA members with head teachers and teachers is also noteworthy for a clearer understanding of active community engagement with schools. There will also be the need to clear the areas that are subject to duplication of functions.

7.5 How to enact recommendations

The recommendations of this study can be located at three levels: district directors' level, local district assembly level and policy making level of the Ministry of Education. The enactment of my recommendations no matter the level commences with a dissemination of the findings of this research. Thus priority will be given to the maximization of opportunities that are available

to me for such dissemination to take place. These include the quarterly regional CoDE meetings and the annual national CoDE congresses. These provide fertile grounds for debating the issues emerging from this research such as the need to review the promotion system of the Service and mentorship of district directors and incorporating some of these issues in the communiqués issued at the end of each annual congress to the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service. At the policy decision-making level, national annual education review meetings to which selected district directors are invited also provide such an avenue to continue to debate such issues. At the local level, it will be crucial for me to continue dialoguing with the District Assembly to enable them appreciate the need to make education financing one of their priority areas. This can also be enhanced by making regular submissions to the Assembly in the form of reports and invitations of the District Chief Executive to joint monitoring and inspection of schools. Finally, my greater involvement in the affairs of school community participants such as SMCs and PTAs by regularly attending their meetings at the school level can help address some of the boundary conflicts they are confronted with.

7.6 Implications for further research

Delving into various areas of relevance to my research topic, I recognize some other opportunities for further empirical work. The first is in the area of comparative research. The 215 districts of the 10 regions of Ghana may present varied and similar subcultures and other contextual realities. For example the three northern regions still have issues with access for marginalised and underserved populations despite the giant strides taken to bridge the gap between the north and south (CREATE, 2010). Studies have also shown that high opportunity cost, traditional beliefs and values, or the lack of interest are among reasons why children are not enrolled in school in northern Ghana even after cost reduction or elimination (EQUIP2 Discussion Papers, 2007). A comparative case study research between the northern and southern districts may reveal the similarities and differences in the social and cultural contexts and the influences they may have on the practice of district directorship.

Secondly, the role of the district education office vis-à-vis the policy of decentralized system of education governance in Ghana is well articulated in policy documents. However the office of the district directorate of education having existed as such over a period of time has not been subject to a more sustained and deeper policy analysis. Following from the traditional rationalist model of education policy making in Ghana characterized by a multi-stage cycle of agenda-setting, formulation, implementation, feedback and evaluation which provides a means

of thinking about the sectoral realities of public policy, research findings from such a research could provide useful feedback as to whether the desired outcomes of the office are being achieved or whether there will be the need to influence future policy direction. Interviews with those policy makers who have designed the system of education decentralization in Ghana including technocrats and political figureheads could be undertaken as part of such a research.

Finally, there are other policy actors other than DDEs in the implementation of the decentralized education system in Ghana. These include the District Assemblies, DEOCs, PTAs and SMCs. A research with a larger sample of these key stakeholders from different parts of the country with a focus on how their mandates are being played out as well as the influences on the implementation of decentralization as designed by the policy makers could be an opportunity to provide more insights.

7.7 Summary

Having persisted at every stage of this research I have learnt a great deal as it has led to a deeper appreciation of the nature of qualitative research process, and a fuller understanding of the nature of the work I am involved in as a DDE in Ghana. Informed by stories of my participants and my own fledgling practice, what has turned out to be is a very personal and powerful learning experience. By and large, writing this narrative has enhanced my confidence in my ability to accomplish a project such as this and consolidated my ongoing development as a researcher.

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Appendix 1 CONSENT FORM FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

University of Sussex

PROJECT TITLE: A study of the role and professional identity of district directors of education (DDEs) in Ghana

Project Approval Reference: 1112/10/10

I agree to take part in the above University of Sussex research project. I have had the project explained to me and I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement, which I may keep for records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the interview to be audio taped
- Make myself available for a further interview should that be required

I understand that any information I provide is confidential. However, in view of the very small sample size, there is a risk that your views could be attributable to other participants in the reports on the project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way. I can also ask for interview tape to be destroyed and/or data removed from the project until it is no longer practical to do so.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

I believe that _____ (name) understands the above project and gives his/her consent voluntarily.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET TEMPLATE



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET TEMPLATE

STUDY TITLE

A study of the role and professional identity of district directors of education (DDEs) in Ghana

INVITATION PARAGRAPH

'You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully'.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The District Director position in Ghana is a prominent one in the scheme of education governance in Ghana. The significance of this position is derived from the important landmark period of 2010 to 2020 set for the gradual devolution of education management from central government to district decentralized system of education in Ghana. The purpose of my study is to undertake an in-depth investigation into the workings of the District Director in a complex organization as the district education office in order to deepen my understanding of the position of district directorship in terms of a set of complex dynamics.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You have been invited to participate in the study based on the fulfillment of the following selection criteria:

- You are a district director/deputy district director of education at post in a district education office
- You are a deputy director of education with one to three years experience at the district office
- Your district is predominantly urban/rural

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

'You are free to decide whether or not to take part in this study. In case you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet and be asked also to sign a consent form. In case you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason'.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME IF I TAKE PART?

You would be engaged in two interview encounters: a first round of semi-structured interview which will centre on broad areas such as your background and that of the district, your role and professional identity and training needs. In the second round you would be presented with your life narrative constructed from the interview but which does not fit together in neat and predictable ways for you to examine and allow for alternative views. Each round of interview may last between 1 hour – 1.30 hours. I will omit or change more specific data, in order to guarantee better confidentiality and anonymity.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

As professionals in the field of education, your participation contributes to our understanding of the phenomenon of district directorship and how district directors can improve on their practice. It may also help you to reflect on your professional practice and situation.

WILL WHAT I SAY IN THIS STUDY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

This study is primarily in fulfillment of a major requirement for my doctoral study. I will therefore ensure that the information you give remains confidential. Furthermore your identity and that of your district will not be disclosed. I will use pseudonyms and any aspects that you feel are likely to compromise this will be omitted or changed.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I WANT TO TAKE PART?

I would encourage you to take part in the study by signing the consent form after reading the information sheet. We would then arrange for the interview dates and time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY?

The results of the study will be used in my thesis of my doctoral studies at the University of Sussex, UK. It is possible that my research work will be published. I will inform you through your contact numbers that I will obtain as to how you can obtain a copy of my work.

WHO IS ORGANISING AND FUNDING THE RESEARCH?

I am conducting the research as a doctoral student at the University of Sussex, UK as a distant student and working full time at the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Service is providing funding for my studies. However, I am personally funding my thesis.

WHO HAS REVIEWED THE STUDY?

My research will be subject to the approval of a Cluster-based Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) of the University of Sussex, UK.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Sarah Aynsley
Education and Social Work

University of Sussex

If there are any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact my supervisor whose contact is stated above.

THANK YOU

I am grateful for taking time to read this information sheet.

DATE

3rd September, 2012.

Appendix 3 Interview Guide for Deputy Directors of Education

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My goal is to learn more about the District Director of Education in Ghana and how their capacities can be enhanced to manage education at the district level.

Part 1 Background of deputy district director/and cultural context

Before we start, could you just remind me of the following:

- 1a What is your name?
- 1b What is the name of your District?
- 1c What is your position in the District Education Office and for how long have you been in this position?
- 1d What is your highest academic achievement?
- 1e What was your position prior to your appointment as Deputy District Director?

Part 2 Deputy District director professional identity

- 2a What actions and events influenced your decision to work in the education sector?
- 2b How did you make a career choice of becoming a deputy district director?
- 2c Why are you interested in becoming a district director?
- 2d In your opinion how will your previous knowledge and experience impact on your work as district director?
- 2e What do you hope to achieve if you become the district director?
- 2f How do you think your capacity to manage the district can be enhanced?

Part 3 Conference of Directors of Education (CODE) and training needs

- 3a What do you know about CODE?
- 3b What do you hope to achieve from the membership of CODE if you become a district director?
- 3c What would you like CODE to promote with regard to the work of district directors? 2

Closing Question

Is there anything else you would like me to know which I have not asked?

Thank you.

Appendix 4 Interview Guide for Directors of Education

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My goal is to learn more about the District Director of Education in Ghana and how their capacities can be enhanced to manage education at the district level.

Part 1 Background of district director

Before we start, could you just remind me of the following:

- 1a What is your name?
- 1b What is the name of your District?
- 1c What is your position in the District Education Office and for how long have you been in this position?
- 1d What is your highest academic achievement?
- 1e What was your position prior to your appointment as District Director?

Part 2 District director identity

- 2a What actions and events influenced your decision to work in the education sector?
- 2b How did you make a career choice of becoming a district director?
- 2c Why are you interested in this position?
- 2d In your opinion how has your previous knowledge and experience impacted on your work as a district director?
- 2e How do you manage the challenges you face as a District Director?
- 2f What do you hope to achieve as the district director?
- 2g How do you think your capacity to manage the district can be enhanced?

Part 3 Membership of CoDE

- 3a In your view, how is CODE a relevant body to your work?
- 3b How does your membership of CODE shape you as an individual district director?
- 3c What specifically are you learning through CODE?
- 3e What would you like CODE to promote with regard to your work as district director?

Closing Question

Is there anything else you would like me to know which I have not asked?

Thank you.

Appendix 5 Observation of Conference of Directors of Education (CoDE) in Ghana

Outline of Research

Topic: A study of the role and professional identity of district directors of education (DDEs) in Ghana

Purpose of study

The District Director position in Ghana is a prominent one in the scheme of education governance in Ghana. The significance of this position is derived from the important landmark period of 2010 to 2020 set for the gradual devolution of education management from central government to district decentralized system of education in Ghana. The purpose of my study is to undertake an in-depth investigation into the workings of the District Director in a complex organization as the district education office in order to deepen my understanding of the position of district directorship in terms of a set of complex dynamics.

This study is primarily in fulfillment of a major requirement for my doctoral study as a researcher. Any information to be collected is not meant for supervisory intent.

Research Questions

Specifically, it will research four questions bordering on roles and responsibilities of DDEs within policy making and implementation, power of DDE as policy actor, factors that influence the identity construction of the DDE, needs of DDEs for developing appropriate management and leadership systems.

Methods for Data Collection

My primary source of data collection is interviews. It is about interviewing of experiences relating to career choice and development, identities and work experiences. 6 interviewees (2 district directors and 4 deputy district directors will be subject to two rounds of interview).

My second source of data collection is observation. I will adopt an unstructured participant observation approach over the week-long period of the annual conference of directors of education in Ghana, data of which will be integrated with the narratives from the interviews to form a synthesized and coherent account. My personal experience and a reflective research journal were also sources of data collection.

Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity

I will ensure that the information obtained from the observation remains confidential and will be accorded all the privacy it deserves. I will use pseudonyms and any aspects that are likely to compromise this will be omitted or changed.

Appendix 6 C-REC 2010 CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL



Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee	
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL	
Reference Number:	1112/10/10
School:	ESW
Title of Project	Education policy development and implementation : a gendered perspective of district directors in Ghana.
Principal Investigator: (Supervisor)	Hilda Eghan (Dr Sarah Aynsley)
Expected Start Date:*	30 January 2012
<p>*NB. If the <u>actual</u> project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the <u>expected</u> start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures</p>	
<p>This project has been given ethical approval by the Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (C-REC). Please note the following requirements for approved submissions:</p> <p>Amendments to research proposal - Any changes or amendments to the approved proposal, which have ethical implications, must be submitted to the committee for authorisation prior to implementation.</p> <p>Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events - Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.</p>	
Authorised Signature	
Name of Authorised Signatory (C-REC Chair or nominated deputy)	Dr Elaine Sharland 29 January 2012

Appendix 7 Selected Interview transcript of Esi

Q: Good afternoon Director, thank you for accepting to be interviewed despite your busy schedule. My name is Hilda Eghan, the HIV&AIDS Coordinator of the Ministry of Education. I am conducting this interview as part of my doctoral studies which I am doing on the topic: **The study of the role and professional identity of district directors of Education (DDEs) in Ghana** at the university of Sussex, UK.

As a Director of education, you are very crucial to my study. I would be grateful if you could just take a few minutes to read the details about my research from this participant information sheet. I would also like you to sign this consent form after you have read it as proof of your acceptance to be interviewed.

Esi: Here you are.

Q: Thank you very much. Please what is your name?

Esi: Esi

Q: Your office is located in the heart of the capital. What is the name of your district?

Esi: Leket West.

Q: Is it a municipality?

Esi: Yes.

Q: I know this is a relatively new district. When was it established?

Esi: It was one of those districts that were created in 2008. This was previously a submetro.

Q: Does that mean that all submetros have been made districts?

Esi: No. After the creation of this district which used to be known as Leshie submetro, I know that two other submetros have also been turned into municipalities.

Q: What makes your district a municipality?

Esi: The facilities and population are key factors in determining the municipality status. For example we have a lot of schools even though there are more private schools than public.

Q: Do you still supervise private schools? Do you still supply them with school materials such as textbooks?

Esi: Yes, we supervise those which are registered with us. We also supply them with textbooks when they are available. For instance we have supplied them with the NALAP readers for the teaching of English.

Q: I know you are the director, but could you confirm your position?

Esi: I am the director of education. I oversee the LEKET directorate of education.

Q: Have you been the director since 2008 when the district was created?

Esi: No. The education directorate was established in 2009 and that is when I became the director.

Q: Was it the time you became a DDE by rank and position?

Esi: Yes. But we went for our interview in 2008 and had the results in January 2009.

Q: What is your highest academic achievement?

Esi: MBA Human Resource

Q: From which institution did you obtain this qualification?

Esi: From one of the Universities in Ghana.

Q: Prior to your appointment as DDE of Leket, what position did you occupy?

Esi: I used to be the head of the human resource management unit of a regional directorate of education.

Q: Is that what influenced your masters programme in HRM?

Esi: I did the course before I was taken to a regional directorate.

Q: So where were you working before you went to the that office?

Esi: Before I went to the office, I was an assistant headmistress at Lasec secondary school and after that I went for further studies.

Q: This means you have been in the school system all this while. So may I asked what influenced your working career in the education sector?

Esi: It was destiny. Initially people thought I could not be a teacher because I was too quiet then. So they were wondering how I would be able to teach. In the secondary school, we were having a mathematics lesson and the teacher asked me to work a question on the board. As I did it he remarked: "You, you will be a teacher one day". I got annoyed. I was a science student but I did not like biology. I had not thought of becoming a teacher. I did not really know about teaching neither had I had any close contact with one.

Q: So did what the teacher say influence you to become one?

Esi: No. It was when I became a teacher that I remembered that during my secondary school days a teacher ever told me so. I was not admitted for the first term at the TTC, because I did not qualify in terms of age. That was when we thought the three year post secondary would lead us to be awarded with Diploma certificates but it was not so, it was a certificated course. It was the second term that I was able to join the school. I had applied to the nursing training college but after attending the interview for admission I realized that I could not be a nurse. I could not cope with blood.

Q: What happened after training college?

Esi: I taught at my former school, ie Mofat School in the Antish region for three years. Then I pursued further studies at the then College of Education where I did a diploma course in home economics. After that I taught at a training college in for another three years after which I went to pursue my first degree at the University in Bsc home economics. After teaching for a year at the training college I went to teach in another training college in the Central region.

Q: What occasioned your move to the this current region where you are working?

Esi: Well, you know women and marriage, I came to join my husband in Accra.

Q: Did you move straight to the regional education office?

Esi: No that was the time I came to teach at Lasec.

Q: Why did you move from the classroom to the office?

Esi: It was after I had pursued my MBA that the Service posted me to the regional education

office.

Q: You have traced your career from secondary school to your current position, all in the Service. Did you at any point in time desire to move out of the Service?

Esi: No..no.. no. Infact if I had wanted to, I would have done so after my MBA ie before I became a director but I told myself that I would remain in education.

Q: Do you have any regrets?

Esi: No...no... no. I have risen through the ranks to the highest that everyone would like to attain.

Q: But the highest position in the Service is Director-General.

Esi: Yes but it is all directorship position. I am aiming at that too.

Q: How does it feel to be a DDE?

Esi: It is the highest rank and it is a prestige to get to a director position. In years past one retired on the rank of assistant director and they were happy to refer to this rank. But now we have deputy directors and director II levels. Over the weekend I went for a funeral and in the biography I realized that the person retired as an assistant director of education and I told myself that in these modern times assistant director is not a high position but in those days they were the directors of education. If I had started with the new ranking system which is currently operating I would have risen to this level a long time ago. I remember we were very happy in those days after our diploma course to be put on the superintendent rank.

Q: Director, You have a lot of knowledge and experience in home economics and human resource management as well as teaching in general. How have these experiences helped you in your work as DDE?

Esi: They have all really helped me, especially the teaching. Our work is not to stay in the office. We need to move out. With the teaching experience, I am able to go to the schools, observe teaching of lessons and I am able to make inputs. I remember some reactions to this practice. Some of the teachers and community members came to me in my office and thought that as a director I should not be seen to be doing that. I always responded by telling that I am a teacher. They had not experienced that before so I explained that that was my work. You are

able to detect things that are not proper and which need some interventions.

Q: Were they unexpected visits?

Esi: Yes. Sometimes it helps me to block the salaries of some teachers. When you study the attendance register, you will realize that some of them have not booked for more than 10 working days and the head would not have reported. This term I have done quite a lot of the visits. You have a situation where after I have visited and left, some of the teachers who had not earlier on booked will now come and write their names. In this case I indicate “not present during visit”. The field officers also visit the schools. We even have officers from the Economic Crime Office (EOCO) who also come to the schools from time to time to check to see whether the teachers are in the schools. They saw the field officers from my office and they expressed surprise at the presence of these field officers checking on teachers because they claimed having gone to a lot of districts without meeting such field officers. I confirmed that every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays I send officers to the field. Fridays is report writing for submission on Monday to me before the approval for the next field visits. It is not only the Circuit Supervisors who go to the schools. The assistant director in charge of basic schools, the officer in charge of guidance and counseling, the girl child coordinator also go to the schools.

Q: How many secondary schools do you have in your district?

Esi: We have two public secondary schools and one technical school. One of the secondary schools in the region has been relocated to my district. They all took part in the match past today in preparation for the forthcoming Independence celebration on 6th March.

Q: What is the difference in the supervision of Basic and SHS?

Esi: The full decentralization concept has it that the SHS will be directly under the Regional Directorate of Education but we are not there yet but when I came at first some SHS wrote directly to the regional office and even to the HQ without passing through the appropriate channel of my office so I drew their attention and fortunately our new regional director has also insisted on the right channel so they are complying.

Q: Do they have a lot of issues at the SHS level?

Esi: Right now we have been asked to bring a situational report on challenges that the SHS

will be facing during this year's WASSCE because you know the 3rd year and 4th year candidates are all sitting the exams together. Otherwise we do not have serious issues with them. The technical school is relatively new, in their 2nd year. It was the latter part of last year that my district fully took control of it.

Q: Director, you were elaborating on how your experience and knowledge have helped you.

Esi: Yes. The HR work at the region has really helped me and also the financial management I did as part of my MBA has also been of immense benefit to me. Right now as I speak, I have gone for the accounting books because the auditors are coming to audit the books and going through I have realized that a lot of attachments are missing. And the whole week the accountant has not come to the office. He is not a serious man. He is preparing to go on retirement.

Q: How far is it true that because of our long promotion system where DDEs attain their ranks a few years to their exit from the Service, they think more of their pension than the work.

Esi: Our time, things are quite difficult. You need to be innovative, think outside the box to see how you can raise funds outside GES to support district activities. We now do what they call composite budgeting with the Assembly so they are supposed to support us in a lot of ways. Sometimes when you want to access the money, it becomes a problem.

Q: Which other competence or skill areas do you think is necessary to acquire as a DDE?

Esi: If you are serious about the work you can do it. We had an orientation as new directors so there we were exposed to the work. Even though it was just a five day programme, it is better than not being oriented at all. The orientation is good even though it came late. From the orientation some of us realized that we had already made mistakes in the field. So I wish it had come on earlier than it did for our time. It was really good and it was recommended that immediately officers are appointed, they need to be given the orientation before going to the field. In our case, it was because our training school in Mako had been taken away by the University and it was a big challenge. Now there is a new training school at Panom but I understand they are still working on the accommodation. I regret the taking away of our old training school because the funds that were used in rehabilitating the place could have gone to improve basic education rather than tertiary education.

Q: Don't you think that if you have not done some financial management as you did for your

masters, that aspect would have been a big challenge?

Esi: Well, I believe the secondary school mathematics was helpful too. The other thing too is that you have to make the work open and once in a while you call for the books to look through. When I started there was a problem so I called my accountant and made him understand that my knowledge in accounting was higher than his so this made him sit up. I told him that was not my schedule that is why I had given him the free hand to work but I would not allow him to do whatever he wanted.

Q: What about the area of ICT. Does the DDE necessarily have to be computer literate?

Esi: It is an advantage to be computer literate, because it is not everything that needs to be put out there. Some things are confidential and can be handled at the director's level if computer literate.

Q: So generally do you feel adequate as a director?

Esi: We are fortunate to have our own office accommodation soon. But I know a number of districts do not have it. The executives of regional CoDE and a few national executive members met with the Minister on Tuesday. We told her that the lack of classrooms is a big challenge. We are still running the shift system. One of my secondary schools is also undergoing rehabilitation so they hold some of their classes under canopies. A new structure is being put up for them, that is, a new girls' dormitory to make way for a new road to be constructed.

Q: What do you think your role as director is and what do you hope to achieve as a Director?

Esi: I hope to achieve proper quality of education in the municipality and we are seeing signs of improvement each year. The 2012 BECE produced some aggregate 6, 7, 8, ie the single digit from public schools which was a good achievement. I am incorporating that in my address at the 6th march celebration. The schools are competing in the BECE so if you do not do well, you have to come and answer. I have even demoted a head teacher. The Minister asked us during the interaction with her what we do to headteachers who do not perform. One of the DDEs said he wanted to do transfers and a teacher union took him on. In my case when they came, I asked them whether they employed me? I told them being a head is just an appointment. It is not a hierarchy in GES. I brought the affected headteacher to the office for more than a year with no schedule. I have taken her to a new school and she is now a

reformed person. Since I did that all the heads have sat up. We want to improve upon the quality of education. If you do not put your foot down you cannot work. Those of us who do not come from this area are considered strangers so you need to prove yourself and insist on doing the right thing. I also had problems with some of the teachers. Some feel they started with me as a teacher or knew me in my teacher days so they can't accept the fact that I am now a director over them. I had a big challenge. There was an officer of the sub-metro in those days who thought he should have been the director. When I took over I made him my HR against the wish of my regional director. I thought as a stranger, he could be of help to me. But alas that was not the case. I ended up taking back the position from him. He has even gone on pension. Could you believe he came to confess to me some of the things he used to do and to beg for forgiveness? I forgave him and assured him that it is God who brought me there so nothing plotted against me would work. My office had an end of year get-together and there again he talked about the issue even though I was against it but he said he wanted to use that to talk to the whole staff to desist from such behaviour. He wasn't the only one. There were others who I transferred. So these are some of the challenges.

Q: Can we talk about Decentralization? What is the current state of decentralization?

Esi: At least in some cases the Assemblies are up and doing. Right now we are going to have the 6th March Independence Day celebration. They are going to foot all the bills.

Q: Do you join the main celebration at the Independence square?

Esi: No. We have been celebrating it in our own municipality since 2009. We rotate where we hold the match past. Last year we used the northern cluster of schools in my district. Decentralization is good. With that we have gotten a lot of classroom infrastructure. The Assembly knows that the schools are theirs. When other districts are complaining about furniture, we do not have that problem.

Q: So does the personality of the Chief Executive count?

Esi: Yes especially the DCE but the current coordinating director is very difficult. So if you are doing things and he is putting impediments in my way, I go back to the DCE to let him know about the issue. You see even though it is the DCE who gives approvals, the coordinating director and finance officer sign the cheques. They can cause unnecessary delays. In this district, decentralization works. Sometimes the problem is that the heads of the departments

like me in Education and that of Health are oftentimes far more qualified than the DCE and his coordinating director so then it becomes a bit difficult working under them. Indeed in some districts, there are conflicts between the DDEs because the CDs entertain the fear that the DDEs may be appointed in their positions because of their higher qualifications and ranks. When I took over as DDE the assembly took me for a course at the District Assembly Training school and the CD probably thought I was being trained for his position.

Q: How does your district deal with the issue of investing in areas where the results can easily be seen than in education?

Esi: We usually budget for activities like sports, culture, STME so when we attended a meeting of the social services committee of the district assembly, I was asked to make an input. I raised the issue about asking us to do a composite budget but when it comes to disbursements then we have all sorts of problems so why do they waste our time in doing the composite budget. Last year they did not sponsor the sports and culture activities and so it was a big issue for us. With the STME, it was recently that they paid. We even want the assembly to organize mock exams for the BECE candidates but they say it is only one that they can pay for. This is the first mock that the assembly is sponsoring. The previous years, it is the parents who have been paying for the mock exams.

Q: What about the issue of award of contracts? I understand contracts are awarded at the Headquarters of the Local Government and sometimes this poses a problem.

Esi: That is if the contracts are awarded outside the jurisdiction of local government like GETfund. But if it is Local Government then it is awarded at the assembly level. We go for tender and I am part of the committee.

Q: Now let us turn our attention to CoDE. What do you do in CoDE?

Esi: We learn a lot when we go for our annual conference like the good practices. For instance we have instituted a welfare scheme for our members in my region and that is some form of financial security for us in preparation for retirement. We contribute 100 cedis each month. We invest the amount in Treasury Bills so that whoever goes on retirement can get something handsome to take home. We learnt this from one of the regions. I attended their send-offs and I realized they had big send offs so at one of our meetings we raised the issue and agreed to the scheme. We as a municipality also contributed to the sendoff of our former regional

director. She had her heart's desire of getting her a 4 wheel drive. Teachers contributed 5 cedis towards the sendoff. At our annual conferences companies also come to sell office items on hire purchase, for example photocopiers and other office items.

Q: So personally as a DDE what good practice did you learn?

Esi: Concerning the work I learnt about things they used to do and which are no longer in practice. One of our colleagues who had a problem as a result of a transfer from the Headquarters to the district stopped attending our meetings because he claimed CoDE did not come to his aid. CoDE attributed this inaction to politics and therefore could not do anything about it.

Q: What about the silence of CoDE compared to CHASS?

Esi: CHASS is in the schools so it is easy for them to get funds from their internally generated funds to support their activities. They relate to parents and government to get funds. We work on the quiet. For instance we are currently working to address our concerns about the WASSCE exams to management.

Q: Is there anything else that you want CoDE to be doing?

Esi: Yes, we proposed a day of relaxation during the 5-day annual conference because we find the programme too packed. Well the last day is usually an excursion day but again travelling takes up the whole day and we come back tired so sometimes people do not go just to take that day off. When the excursion day coincides with a market day for instance people do not want to go on the excursion. They rather want to do marketing to take along to their homes. So one was organized in Duakrom and because of the market day people did not go for the excursion. In Anta a similar thing happened though some went. The excursion was to the industrial companies and the harbour. Those who were able to go however said they had a nice time. They came back with hampers.

Q: With the creation of the 45 more districts, was it not going to create a large gathering of DDEs during the annual conferences?

Esi: No. It is better. CHASS membership is a lot more over 500 that is why they are able to do things. Sometimes at the end of the annual conference, seeing retired people off becomes a problem so the bigger the numbers the more we can pay as welfare dues to take care of such

issues.

Q: Thank you very much, madam. We have come to the end of the interview. If you however have anything else to say which will be helpful to my work I would be grateful for it.

Esi: I am an executive member of my regional CoDE. I have been in this position for three years. I want to hand over but they do not want to accept it. There are new DDEs in the system who can take up my role so I am going to insist on that.

Q: Thank you once again.