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**THE ROLE OF HEADTEACHER LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY  
PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT 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****STEPHEN ADU, DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (Ed. D)****THE ROLE OF HEADTEACHER LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN GHANA****ABSTRACT**

School improvement in public schools remains a challenge in many developing countries, including Ghana. Many researchers have highlighted the need for strong headteacher leadership and the active participation of the community, including parents, in the efforts to improve public schools. Research in developed countries' education systems have brought to the surface some of the factors underpinning successful public schools, however in developing countries there has been a lack of research surrounding how headteacher leadership and community engagement with schools affect schooling outcomes. This lack of research has resulted in the use of recommendations tendered by global research regarding school effectiveness and school improvement to inform developing country policies on how to improve public education. In many cases, private schools have been used as the model for failing public schools, yet from national basic education certificate examinations (WAEC, 2012) it is evident that some public schools, even in disadvantaged areas, are managing to provide quality education. The key questions that this thesis explores are: What conditions prevail in high performing public schools serving disadvantaged communities? What has been the role of headteacher leadership and community participation in securing improvement of these schools?

Thus, this study has sought to investigate the conditions prevailing in high performing public schools and what role school headteachers leadership and community engagement played in creating the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. Using a qualitative case study research design data was collected through interviews, observations and documentary reviews to explore the views and experiences of headteachers, teachers and parents regarding the improvements in the schools. Results show that conditions, such as the existence of safe and protective classroom infrastructures, critical engagement of parents and community members in all aspects of the school's development, adoption of diverse proactive teaching and learning approaches; and the strong visionary and transformational leadership exhibited by the headteachers appear to have been driving forces in these successful schools. The thesis concludes with key recommendations for policy makers in developing countries on strategies that might be taken to turn failing public schools into more functioning schools. These recommendations include:

- Targeting the beneficiaries of capitation grant to needy students or increasing the grant
- Providing school infrastructure to take the burden from schools
- Encouraging community participation in school improvement strategies
- Enhancing competencies of headteacher leadership to influence school improvement strategies

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examinations
CDD	Centre for Democratic Development
CRDD	Curriculum Research and Development Division
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
CS	Circuit Supervisor
CSSPS	Computerized School Selection and Placement System
D/A	District Assembly
DES	Department of Education Service, UK
DEOC	District Education Oversight Committee
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESPR	Education Sector Performance Report
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GES	Ghana Education Service
GH	Ghana
GIMPA	Ghana Institute of Management Planning and Administration
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
GNECC	Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign

GoG	Government of Ghana
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HMI	Her Majesty Inspectorate
ICT	Information Communication Technology
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
ISLLC	Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium
JHS	Junior High School
KG	Kindergarten
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
L/A	Local Authority
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MMDA	Metropolitan Municipal District Assembly
MoE	Ministry of Education
MP	Member of Parliament
MTN	Mobile Telecommunication Network
NAR	Net Admission Ratio
NEA	National Education Assessment
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NESAR	National Education Sector Annual Review
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NIB	National Inspectorate Board
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration



OECD	Office for Economic Cooperation and Development
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
PTTR	Pupil Trained Teacher Ratio
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
SER	School Effectiveness Research
SHS	Senior High School
SMC	School Management Committee
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SPAM	School Performance Appraisal Meeting
SPIP	School Performance Improvement Plan
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TED	Teacher Education Division
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WAEC	West African Examinations Council

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background

Many education studies in Ghana have revealed the challenges faced by ‘public basic schools’<sup>1</sup> regarding the performance of schools and students’ learning achievements (MOE, 2012; Ampiah, 2010, Anamua-Mensah, 2002; MacBeath, Swatffield, Oduro & Bosu, 2010; and Center for Democratic Development (CDD, 2008). The challenge of poor students’ learning outcome is confirmed by the results of the National Education Assessment (NEA) where over 61% of primary level six students are not able to read with proficiency (NEA, 2013). This study argues that there is a strong evidence of learning crises in Ghanaian public basic schools. Alternatively, it is evident from the results of the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) that a proportion of public basic schools are achieving high performance (WAEC, 2013). The key question is: what are the key characteristics that differentiate the high performing public basic schools from the many others that are failing? Specifically this thesis asks: what has been the role of headteacher leadership and the extent of community participation in the development of these high performing schools? The assumption is that headteacher leadership and community participation play key role in school improvement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; and Uemura, 1999).

The problem of educational quality in sub-Saharan Africa has regional dimensions and often solutions are proffered that suggest a one-size-fits-all policy. However, it could be argued that these broad policies struggle to address the educational challenges confronting the sub-Saharan African countries. Fertig (2000) suggests that this is because the one-size-fits-all policies do not take into consideration the local context and therefore may not lead to improvements in education.

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<sup>1</sup> Public basic schools are state funded schools from kindergarten, through the primary and to the junior high level of education.

Globally, schools are experiencing increasing pressure for improvement from governments, parents and the civil society, specifically associated with the perennial poor performance of students. In sub-Saharan Africa a major concern has been the persistence of students' low learning achievements where in some cases students having spent over nine years or more in basic level schooling lack basic literacy and numeracy skills (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2012). As a result, the need to create a school environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning leading to high students' learning achievement is imperative. The numerous global initiatives that have emerged such as: "no child left behind", "no child can wait"; "every child can"; "every child can read"; "learning for all"; "reading by every child"; and 'leadership for learning', are all indications of the quest for quality basic education.

Researchers have defined school improvement as an educational change initiative that emphasizes the need to enhance students' learning outcomes by strengthening schools' capacity in managing change (Akyeampong, 2004, Harris, 2002, Hopkins, 2001, Barth, 1990). Ghana, like many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, has adopted a number of the international conventions such as 'Education for All', 'Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education' and 'Millennium Development Goals' as part of the countries' efforts at improving basic education delivery. These conventions are aimed at improving the quality of basic education for all children. However, as noted by Chapman (2005), externally driven reform can only work when the right conditions are in place. In this regard any approach or strategy adopted should not consider schools globally as a homogeneous group but instead should take the singular context and cultural capacities of these schools into consideration (Fertig, 2000, Harris, 2002, Hopkins, 2001).

It is in this regard that Fertig argues that research surrounding school effectiveness in developing countries needs to move towards a more contextual model, one which takes account of the internal processes within the school, the socio-economic, political and cultural contexts in which the schools operate (2000, p. 395). This therefore calls for an exploration of a variety of good practices prevailing in high performing schools taking into consideration the local context.

Education is widely known to play a vital role in providing individuals with the knowledge, skills and competencies to participate effectively in society and the economy (OECD, 2013). The EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR, 2012) illustrates the importance of education and reports that: if all students in low income countries left school with basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty. This would contribute to reducing the global poverty rate by 12% (GMR, 2012). The report also indicates that one extra year of schooling increases an individual's earnings by on average 10% along with raising the average annual GDP growth of a country by 0.37% (GMR, 2012). Achieving quality 'education for all' has therefore increasingly become crucial in the strategic improvement plans of many countries, especially, developing countries, using education as a means of alleviating poverty. As quoted in the EFA report: "We had to leave behind all of our possessions, the only thing we could bring with us is what we have in our hands, what we have been taught – our education" (GMR, 2011). As expressed by Akyeampong, Djangmah, Oduro, Seidu and Hunt (2007), sustained access to meaningful learning that has value is critical to long term improvements in a country's productivity, leading to the reduction of inter-generational cycles of poverty, demographic transitions, preventative healthcare, women's empowerment, and the reduction of inequality. It is for these reasons that quality basic education is awarded its high position on the development agenda of many governments such as Ghana.

Since the introduction of "education for all" as a strategy for improving access to education, and the subsequent abolition of school fees at the basic level, Ghana has made great strides to increase access to education in the country. The report of Education Management Information System (EMIS) of Ghana (2012) attests to the rapid increases in the enrolment of students in basic schools. For example, enrolment at the primary level has grown by 57% in ten years from 2,586,434 in 2001/02 to 4,062,026 in the 2011/12 academic year (EMIS, 2012). This high enrolment growth however appears to outweigh the growth in quality learning as performance of students in schools remains low (NEA, 2014). This low performance is confirmed by UNESCO in its Global Monitoring Report (2012) which indicates that although Ghana has made significant strides particularly in respect of

access and participation of children at primary level in sub-Saharan Africa the literacy rate in Ghana remains low (UNESCO, 2012).

This study seeks to investigate the conditions prevailing in successful high performing public basic schools based on students' achievement in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE); along with the roles played by headteacher leadership and community participation in creating the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. As indicated by Luyten, Visscher, & Witziers, "if we know the features of effective schools, we can improve underperforming schools by encouraging them to adopt the characteristics of effective schools" (2005, p. 273).

### **1.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to find out how high achieving public basic schools in Ghana are providing quality education, based on students' learning achievements, contrary to the low students' performance in most public basic schools. It is important for educational policy makers to draw on how improvement is achieved in particular contexts, especially with the numerous known challenges, such as high teacher absenteeism, low time on task, low quality of learning outcomes, etc. (NIB, 2014, CDD-Ghana, 2008; Abigail, 2009). This thesis investigates how the high performing schools are operating to ensure quality provision of education; and what good practices could be learnt from such schools if the problem of low students' achievement is to be adequately addressed.

The findings of the study will contribute to the current discourse of finding solutions to the perennial low learning achievements of students in public basic schools in Ghana.

## **1.2 Rationale for the Study**

My motivation for pursuing this research comes from my own experience of working with the Ghana Education Service (GES) for over 35 years, and more recently as a member of the senior management of GES. The growing concern that public basic schools were failing and as a result created a sense of disillusionment with these schools concerned me as a policy maker. Given my own experience where as a classroom teacher and a headteacher of a basic school, I had been able to turn around a dysfunctional basic school to a more successful school, ensuring that opportunities were given for effective teaching and learning in the school. This success story prompted my belief that not all public schools were dysfunctional. If we could understand how some public schools were providing quality education even under difficult circumstances, this would provide insights for how other failing schools can be turned around. Also in my capacity as Director, Basic Education and also Deputy Director General of the Ghana Education Service, I was determined to find out how the more successful public basic schools had created conditions for their success. Unfortunately, I had not come across any empirical study undertaken in Ghana to investigate the dynamics that accounted for improvements in public schools and the implications for policy on school improvement. Thus, my interest in this research topic was shaped by my own professional experience as a headteacher where I undertook reforms to improve a failing school, and my quest for insights that can inform policy to improve public schools, especially those serving disadvantaged communities.

Despite the generally perennial low public basic school performance in the BECE, performance in some schools is high. The assumption is that these high achieving public basic schools are operating under a different set of conditions that would be of importance in the search for solutions to the generally low achievement levels of students in Ghana today. There is high expectation from the civil society for improvement in the public basic schools as many parents have embraced the importance of education and are willing to access quality basic education for their children so that these children could further their education (CDD, 2008).

The high interest of parents in the education of their children is manifested in the increasing number of private schools springing up across the country. For example, enrolment of children in private basic school increased by over 100% from 472,635 in 2001/02 to 949,341 in 2012/13 (EMIS, 2013). Parents defy the government's 'fee free' basic education in public basic schools to access private basic education in which they have to pay for tuition and other services compared with the government public basic schools where tuition and other educational goods such as textbooks are free. The increasing concern of the civil society through the Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign (GNECC), attests to the demand for quality basic education.

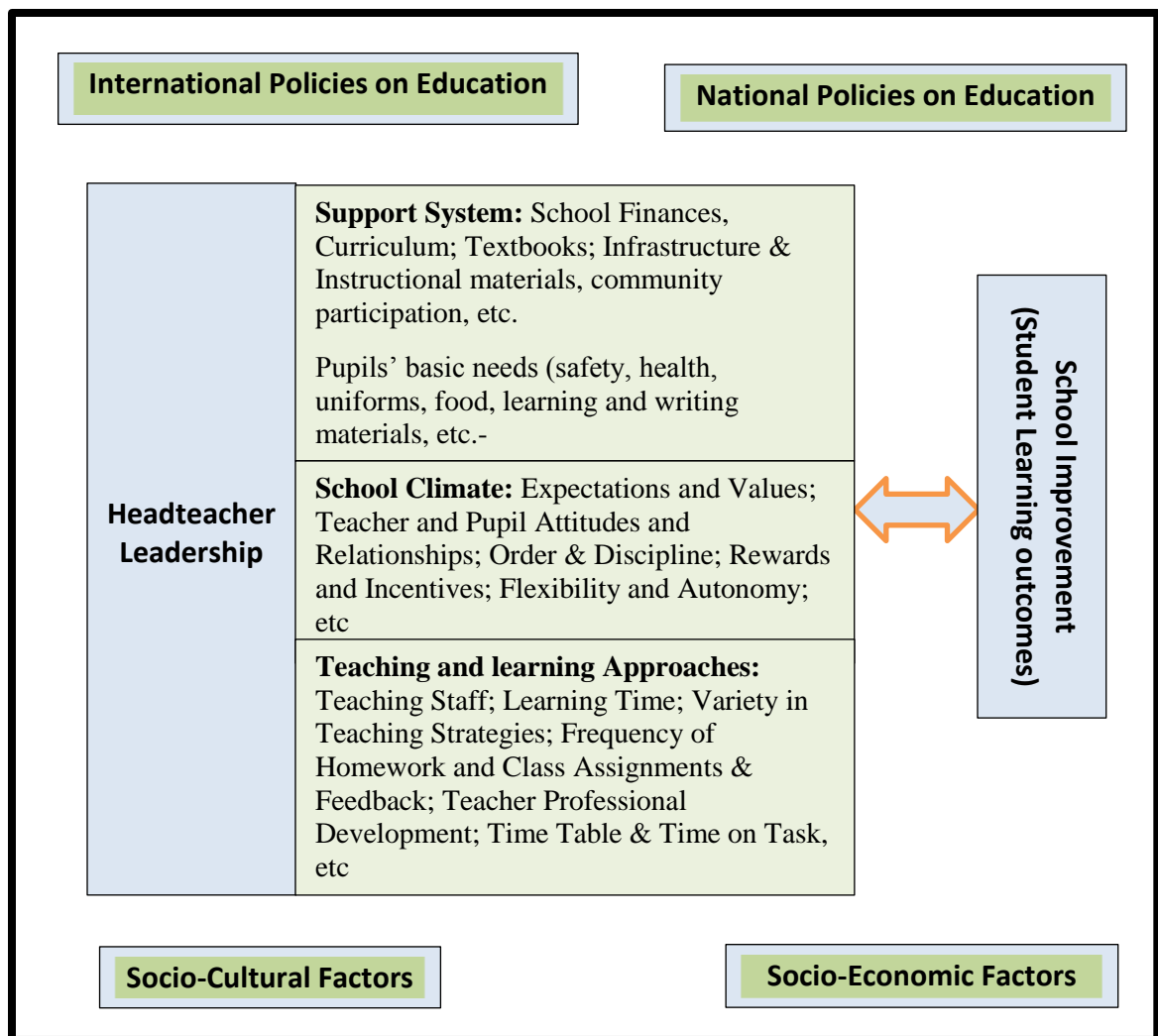
The high rate of over 400,000 'out of school children' resulting mostly from children dropping out of school because of unfavourable conditions at home or in school is of great concern (UNESCO, 2011). Apart from the waste of the limited resources on students who drop out of school, it also defeats the government's policy of achieving 'education for all'. This study argues that, unless the basic level of education, the foundation upon which the future of the individual pupil and the consequent country's development depend, is improved, the national aspiration of reaching the higher income level as a country will be a mirage.

### **1.3 Conceptualizing the study**

There exists a pool of research that has revealed a range of characteristics accounting for effective schooling and which has been incorporated in many school improvement strategies (Heneveld, 1994; Leithwood, et al, 2004; Lockheed and Levin, 1993; Pennycuick, 1993; Boissiere, 2004). The conceptual framework (fig. 1.1) was adapted from Leithwood et al (2004) on how school leadership help to shape the nature of school conditions to impact student learning outcome. According to the framework (Figure 1.1, page 7) the headteacher plays critical roles identifying and supporting learning, structuring the social settings and mediating the external demands (Leithwood et al, 2004). According to the figure, features of the national and international policies on education and other socio-cultural and economic factors influence what school leaders can do. These policies

and factors also exert influence on school climate and classroom conditions as well as the teaching and learning approaches which the headteacher leadership will have to interplay to impact student learning. This conceptualization of the study informed the design of the study. It more or less became my starting point, but I was interested in how it will play out in a low-income country and urban poor context.

**Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework for school improvement**



*Source: Adapted from Leithwood et al, (2004)*



## 1.4 Research Questions

### Main research question:

What are the key characteristics that exist in the high performing public basic schools?

### Sub-questions

1. How do the specific characteristics and conditions in high performing public basic schools contribute to an environment which enables high student performance?
2. In what ways does community participation help to create an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning?
3. What role does headteacher leadership play in the creation of an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning?
4. What school level policies promote and maintain an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning?

Several researchers of school improvement in Ghanaian basic schools appear to have concentrated on the factors accounting for the low learning achievements (Ampiah 2010; Akyeampong, 2010; Abigail, 2009; Oduro et al, 2008). Such researchers reveal findings such as the existence of high teacher absenteeism, low time on task, poor supervision, weak or non-existent leadership, lack of parental support, inadequate infrastructure and other learning facilities in Ghanaian schools today. These factors to the researchers are vital to help find solutions to the low performance of students in schools. However, good practices that exist in the high achieving public basic schools that could provide insights for addressing the perennial low performance in other schools must be considered. This study explores the specific characteristics of high achieving public basic schools. Of critical consideration are the roles of headteacher leadership and community participation in contributing to producing an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The findings of this study will contribute to the current discourse of finding solutions to the low learning achievements especially in the public basic schools in Ghana. Although I do

not intend to generalize the findings from this study, the findings would provide insights into how particular contextual factors are important in constructing policies to respond to challenges of underperforming public basic schools in developing country contexts.

## **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is presented in eight chapters. Chapter one contains an introduction, background and the conceptual framework of the study. This introduces readers to the background of the study beginning with what motivated the research questions. The importance of basic education is then outlined along with the underlying factors of the study, purpose, rationale and the research questions to guide the collection of data. In Chapter two, the context forming the basis for the research is reviewed, along with the basic education structure in Ghana, the management and financing of basic schools, the basic school curriculum and challenges, especially, with emphasis on students' low learning achievements.

Literature relevant to the study is reviewed in chapter three. This includes the concepts and theories of school effectiveness, school improvement, school leadership, and community participation in education. These theories and concepts explain the characteristics necessary for school improvement in the creation of environments conducive to effective teaching and learning. This chapter provides an understanding of how these concepts and theories have evolved over the years providing experiences and empirical studies for school improvement. In chapter four, the research perspective and design based on my ontological and epistemological assumptions are discussed. The data collection and analysis methods are also discussed along with the theoretical considerations that guided the choice of methodology.

In Chapters five, six and seven the main themes that emerged from the data based on the research questions are analyzed. Chapter five analyses the prevailing conditions in respect of infrastructure, school finances and teaching and learning approaches that appear to have contributed significantly to creating the conditions for effective teaching and learning in the selected schools. Chapter six looks in depth at the participation of the community in

schooling. This includes individuals and group of persons such as parents, chiefs and elders, the church, district assemblies (local government), the parent teacher association, and the school management committees. Chapter seven analyses the leadership of the headteachers of the two selected schools, including, their exemplary visionary and transformational leadership roles that appear to be driving the improvement processes.

Chapter eight is the concluding chapter of the study. The chapter interprets the findings of the study in the light of the literature and concludes with the implications of the study for fostering effective teaching and learning and high students' learning outcomes in Ghana. This chapter also examines the implications for educational policy in Ghana and makes recommendations based on the findings for policy makers to consider in their effort to improve quality basic education delivery in the country. This chapter concludes with suggestions for further studies and contributions to knowledge.

## CHAPTER 2: THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

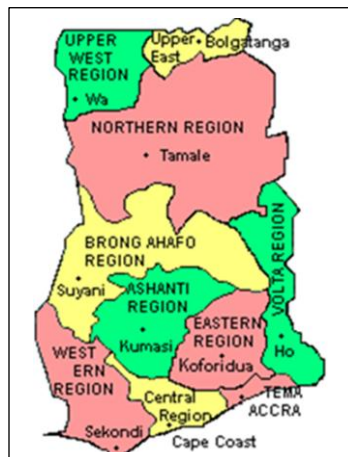
### 2.0 Introduction

Chapter two summarizes the Ghanaian basic education system including the socio-political context, philosophy of basic education in Ghana, basic education structure and curriculum; management structure; financing of basic education; and challenges of infrastructure and other essential requirements. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the overall poor level of students' learning achievement that has provoked the study.

### 2.1 Brief Socio-Political History of Ghana

Ghana is located on the west coast of Africa and shares boundaries with Togo to the east, Cote d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south. Ghana covers an area of 235,500 square kilometers with a population of 25.4million (GSS, 2010). There are ten administrative regions (figure 2.1) and two hundred and sixteen districts upon which the delivery of basic education in the country is managed.

**Figure 2.1: Administrative Map of Ghana**



*Source: GhanaWeb (www.ghanaweb.com)*

## **2.2 Philosophy of Basic Education in Ghana**

In the view of Anamuah-Mensah (2002) in a report presented to government on the review of education reforms in 2002, the education system in Ghana should create well-balanced (intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, physically) individuals with the requisite knowledge, skills, values, aptitudes and attitudes for self-actualization and for the socio-economic and political transformation of the of the nation (p. 12). In this regard, the education system should support the country to build a knowledge-based economy that will help the people to become enterprising and adaptable to the demands of the fast-changing world driven by modern science and technology. Additionally, the education process should lead to the improvement in the quality of life of all Ghanaians by empowering the people themselves to overcome poverty and raise their living standards. The people should be equipped to create through their own endeavours, the wealth that is needed for a radical socio-economic transformation of Ghana.

As enshrined in the 1992 Constitution, Ghanaians strongly believe that continuous growth of the economy can be achieved if the delivery of education is improved to produce the workforce needed for development. The government's commitment to education is evidenced in its constitutional mandate for providing universal quality basic education in order to build the human resource base for development. This commitment of government is fulfilled through its educational strategic plans (ESP) and also the country's subscription to the principles of 'education for all', the 'free compulsory universal basic education', 'fee free basic education', 'millennium development goals' (MDG) and 'child rights to education'. These commitments notwithstanding, the education system appears challenged by the low students' learning achievement, especially, at the basic level (NEA, 2014).

## **2.3 Basic Education in Ghana**

### **2.3.1 Legal Backing of Basic Education in Ghana**

Formal education in Ghana has gone through a number of reforms since 1924 in the times of colonial administration. For example, the 1951, 1961, 1987, 1995 and 2008 education reforms have in most cases aimed at improving the quality of basic education delivery in the country after identifying challenges with previous education systems. The current education system takes its mandate from the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which makes provision for ‘Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education’ (FCUBE)<sup>2</sup>. The 1992 Constitution requires the government to provide quality basic education for all Ghanaian children, irrespective of their race, gender, religion, location or tribe. Hence, basic education is considered a fundamental right for all Ghanaian school-going children.

In the enforcement of the right of all Ghanaian children to basic education, the Constitution provides that:

“All persons shall have the right to equal education opportunities and facilities and with a view of achieving the full realization of that right. In this regard basic education shall be free, compulsory and should be available to all”. (The Constitution of Ghana, Article 25 (1))

In fulfillment of the constitutional mandate, the government of Ghana has also signed up to a number of international protocols that seek to further protect the right of the Ghanaian child to quality basic education including ‘Education For All’ (EFA) and the ‘Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs).

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<sup>2</sup> The FCUBE was introduced in Ghana in 1995. It was in fulfillment of the 1990 International Convention of Education for All (EFA) for which Ghana was a signatory.

### 2.3.2 Basic Education Structure

Basic Education in Ghana is structured on the premise that every Ghanaian school-going child should acquire basic literacy, numeracy, problem-solving skills, as well as skills for creativity and healthy living (Education Act 778 of 2008). It is for this reason that the Government of Ghana is committed to providing 11 years of free, compulsory, universal basic education, comprising, two years of kindergarten (four to five year olds), six years of primary (six to eleven year olds), and three years of junior high school education (12-14 year olds). These levels of education, according to the basic school curriculum of Ghana (MOE, 2007), are to reflect the learning stages and development of Ghanaian children. According to Anamuah-Mensah (2002), basic education provides the opportunity for children to build the foundation for lifelong learning and knowledge-based economic and social development.

### 2.3.3 Enrolment in Basic Schools

The total enrolment in basic schools (both public and private) as of the 2014/15 academic year stood at 7,700,309 (EMIS, 2015). The data shows higher Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)<sup>3</sup> as compared with Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)<sup>4</sup> at all levels. For example, as the primary GER stands at 110.4% the NER is 91.0% an indication that there are over 19% of children in the primary level who are not in school, or are in school but not at the appropriate stage or class based on their ages, an implication for policy consideration since it undermines the country's effort at achieving quality education for all Ghanaian children. Table 2.1 (page 15) shows the basic statistics of basic education (EMIS, 2014/15).

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<sup>3</sup> Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is defined as the number of student enrolled in a particular year divided by the total number of school-age individuals

<sup>4</sup> Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) is defined as enrolment of the official age-group for a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population.

**Table 2.1: Basic Education Statistics (2014/15)**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Number of School</b>			<b>Enrolment of Schools</b>		
	Kindergarten	Primary	JHS	Kindergarten	Primary	JHS
<b>Public</b>	13,819	14,142	9,445	1,286,209	3,248,710	1,241,118
<b>Private</b>	7,141	6,360	4,395	480,506	1,098,605	350,081
<b>Total</b>	20,960	20,502	13,840	1,766,715	4,342,315	1,591,279
<b>Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)</b>				82.7%	91.0%	49.0%
<b>Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)</b>				128.8%	110.4%	85.4%

*Source: EMIS (2014/15)*

### **2.3.4 Basic Education Curriculum**

Basic schools in Ghana follow a centralized curriculum across the country. At the end of 11 years of basic education the final year students (JHS 3) take a common examination referred to as Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The BECE, though for certification, is also used for placement into the senior high schools (SHS) and technical institutes (TI). With the introduction of the computerized school selection and placement system (CSSPS)<sup>5</sup>, the placement of candidates (JHS 3 students) into the SHS and TI is based on students' performance at the BECE since the CSSPS uses a merit system for the placement.

The basic education curriculum is spread over five days in a week (Monday – Friday) with each day starting officially at 8.00am and ending at 1.30pm for kindergarten and primary

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<sup>5</sup> CSSPS stands for Computerized School Selection and Placement system. It is a system that is used by the Ghana Education Service to select junior High School graduates and place them into the Senior high School using a merit system to place the candidates.



level and 2.10pm for the junior high level. Teachers follow the standard public service working day of 8.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. and the understanding is that the time after the normal school hours would be used by teachers to prepare their lesson plans, mark students' exercises and give feedback and also provide remedial support for needy students (GES Guidelines on School Instructional Hours, 2010).

The syllabi for the three levels (kindergarten, primary and junior high) are designed in a spiral form with each topic of the various subjects linked across the three levels. English language, Mathematics, Ghanaian Language and Culture, Information Communication and Technology, Physical Education, Religious and Moral Education, are the subjects that are taught throughout lower primary, upper primary and junior high levels. The teaching of 'Creative Arts' is taught at the lower and upper primary levels while Integrated Science is introduced at the upper primary level to the junior high level. Citizenship Education is taught solely to the upper primary while Social Studies, Basic Design and Technology (Pre-technical Skills, Home Economics and Visual Arts), French, Music and Dance are taught only in the Junior High School (JHS). In effect, the GES proposes a minimum of eight subjects to be taught at both lower and upper primary levels and a minimum of ten subjects at the JHS. Table 2.2 (page 17) shows a proposed sample JHS time table indicating how the subjects are allocated and instructed over the five-day period in a week.

**Table 2.2: A Sample JHS One Time-Table**

Day/ Time		8.00 - 8.40	8.40 - 9.20	9.20 - 10.00	10.00 - 10.40	10.40 - 11.20	11.20 - 12.00	12.00 - 12.30	12.30 - 1.10	1.10 - 1.50	1.50 - 2.30
Mon.	Assembly	English Language		Break	Basic Design & Technology		French	Break	Integrated Science		ICT
Tue.		Mathematics			English language		BDT		Ghanaian Language		BDT
Wed.		RME			Information, Communication & Technology		Integrat ed Science		Soc. Stud.		Library
Thu.		Ghanaian Language			Mathematics		Social Studies		RME		Library.
Fri.		Integrated Science			English language		Maths		French		Co-Curriculu m

*Source: Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD)*

In Ghana, the number of subjects studied in basic schools, the allocated time for these subjects, and also which subjects are examined at the end of basic education for the BECE. This dilemma has raised questions about whether there are too many subjects at the basic level or the time available for preparing students before they write their BECE is inadequate (Anamuah-Mensah, 2002; Education Sector Performance Report, 2012).

## **2.4 Management of Basic Education in Ghana**

Basic Education in Ghana is currently managed by the Ghana Education Service (GES) under the GES Act of 1995 (Act 506). This Act provides for the hierarchical structure of authority from the national level through the region, district, and circuit to the school level. The national level (headquarters) is headed by a Director-General supported by two Deputy Directors General and ten Divisional Directors. The regional level (representing the ten

administrative regions of the country) is headed by a Regional Director for each region while a District Director heads each of the two hundred and sixteen administrative districts of the country. The basic schools (comprising kindergarten, primary and junior high) are headed by designated headteachers<sup>6</sup>. The basic schools are further grouped under circuits with each circuit on average 12 schools that are supervised by circuit supervisors (CS) from the respective district education directorates who then support the headteachers to manage the schools.

Ghana operates two categories of public basic schools - District Assembly (D.A.) schools (formerly Local Authority schools) and Faith-based schools (Mission or Unit schools). Though the mission or unit schools are public basic schools and therefore funded by the government, these schools receive additional assistance from their respective faith-based institutions. Figure 2.2 (page 19) illustrates the administrative and management structure of the Ghana Education Service as per the GES Act of 1995 (Act 506).

The implementation of the 'Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education' (FCUBE) also identifies management efficiency as one of its key objectives. In this regard, the Ghana Education Service Act (Act 506) of 1995 provides for the establishment of School Management Committees' (SMC)<sup>7</sup>. The SMC is the governing body of public basic schools responsible for ensuring that students in basic schools receive the best education as possible. Its role is to assist the headteacher in organizing and managing school activities in an effective and efficient manner to improve school performance. In effect the SMC represent the community in the delivery of basic education in the country. The voluntary activities of parents, formalized under Act 506, through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA)<sup>8</sup>, also support the schools with their developmental initiatives and interventions such as maintaining school buildings, providing teaching and learning materials, and

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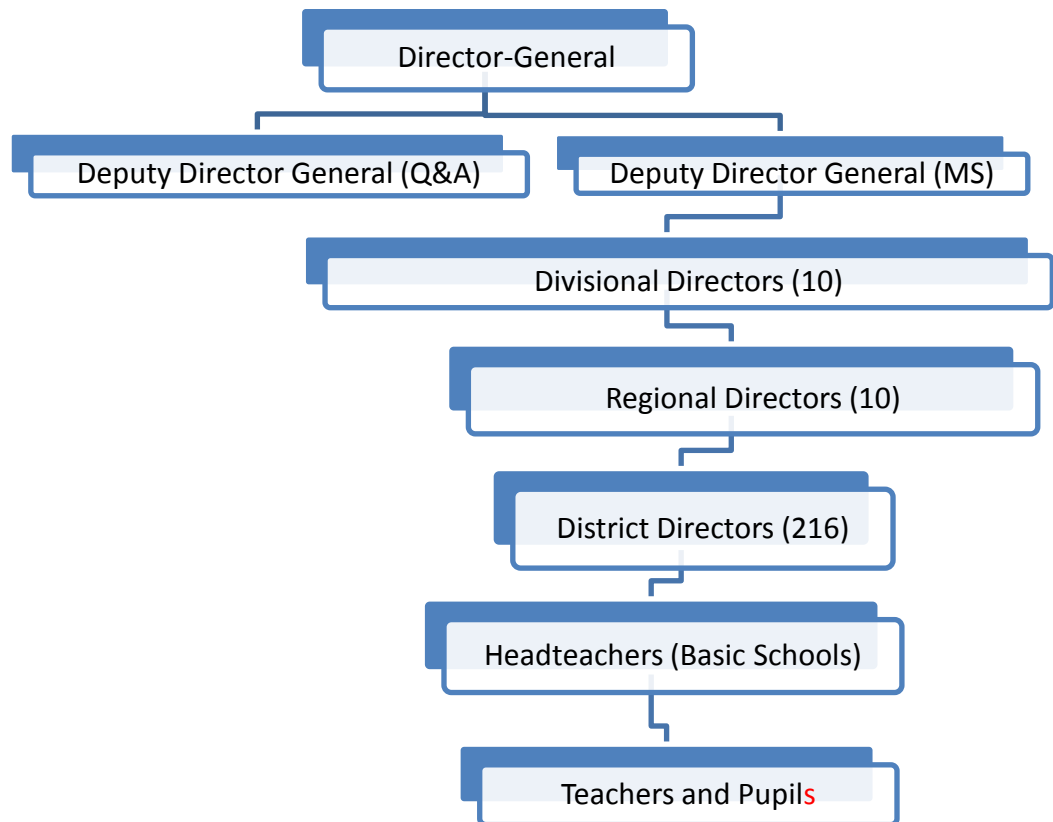
<sup>6</sup> The headteacher is the head of basic schools (kindergarten, primary and junior high) charged with the responsibility of ensuring that teachers and pupils are in school, teachers are teaching and pupils are learning.

<sup>7</sup> School Management Committee (SMC) was established by an Act of Parliament (GES Act 506 of 1995) aimed at strengthening community participation to improve efficiency in the management of public basic schools under the 'Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education' (FCUBE) policy of 'Education for All (EFA).

<sup>8</sup> The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) was formed for all basic schools to ensure that the school and the home take the collective responsibility of ensuring the total development of learners under their care.

constructing toilet facilities (SMC/PTA Handbook (2010). The SMCs and PTAs are in place to strengthen the school-community partnership to ensure mutual responsibility and accountability for the well-being of the school-going children.

**Figure 2.2: Administrative Management Structure of the GES**



*Source: Author*

## 2.5 Headteacher Leadership Policy Initiatives

The need to build leadership capacity among headteachers in Ghana has been identified as a key issue if education quality is to improve (Oduro, et al, 2008). Consequently, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service with assistance from international development partners initiated several training programmes for headteachers in the country.

Two prominent ones were: the “Whole School Development (WSD)’ and the Leadership for Learning (LfL) programmes:

### **2.5.1 Whole School Development**

The DFID funded WSD was introduced in 1998 and designed as a holistic strategy to improve the quality of primary education in Ghana. Among the key strategies was the training of headteachers to promote change in the culture and organization of schools to improve performance (Akyeampong, 2004). Under the WSD, all primary school headteachers were trained in the promotion of primary practices in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills, and the preparation of teaching and learning materials. Headteachers were also trained in the use of performance appraisal instruments to supervise the work of teachers to improve teaching and learning (GES, WSD Report, 2004). WSD left legacies for the education system in Ghana, some of which included: the emphasis on literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills, teacher accountability through improved headteacher supervision, school appraisal system, use of variety of teaching and learning materials, school-based and cluster-based in-service training, and renewed emphasis on child-centred approaches to teaching and learning. The WSD ended in 2003. Although it made significant impact on basic education in Ghana, the recent concern about poor quality public schools, suggests there is more to understand about how to sustain whole school improvement.

### **2.5.2 Leadership for Learning**

Another more recent school improvement initiative which started in 2009 is the collaboration between the Centre for Commonwealth Education at the University of Cambridge and the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, on how to improve the quality of pedagogy in Ghanaian basic schools through learner-centred school leadership (Oduro, et al, 2008). This initiative was termed, ‘Leadership for Learning’ (LfL). Under this initiative basic school headteachers at the center of promoting learning, were trained to focus on five key leadership principles: maintaining a focus on learning as an activity, creating

favourable learning conditions as an activity, creating a dialogue about leadership for learning, practicing shared leadership, and a shared sense of accountability. These principles, according to Macbeath, et al (2008), permeate through student learning, professional learning, and organizational learning. The leadership for learning initiative, more or less, extended the WSD initiative as it focused on how headteachers can provide a more collaborative approach to school improvement through a leadership style that focuses on learning. What has been missing in the leadership for learning initiative is an equal emphasis on how headteachers can engage effectively with the school community to achieve effective learning outcomes.

## **2.6 Financing Basic Education**

The 1992 Constitution, and other legislations (Act 87 of 1961, Act 506 of 1995 and Act 778 of 2008), mandate the government (central/local) to provide free basic education for all Ghanaian children. This mandate includes the provision of qualified teachers and other subsidiary staff for the schools, school buildings (classrooms, toilets, urinals, workshops, libraries, and so on), furniture for students and teachers, storage facilities, approved textbooks, and other essential teaching and learning materials, such as; chalk, registers, teachers' notebooks, syllabus, chalkboard, and students' cumulative record cards. The facilities also include play grounds and security for the school (FCUBE Implementation Guidelines, 1995). In recent times the government has also introduced a number of flagship programmes under the Social Intervention Programmes (SIPs) by providing for example one free school meal per day, free school uniforms to needy school children and also free exercise books for all basic school children (MOE, 2012).

### **2.6.1 The Capitation Grant**

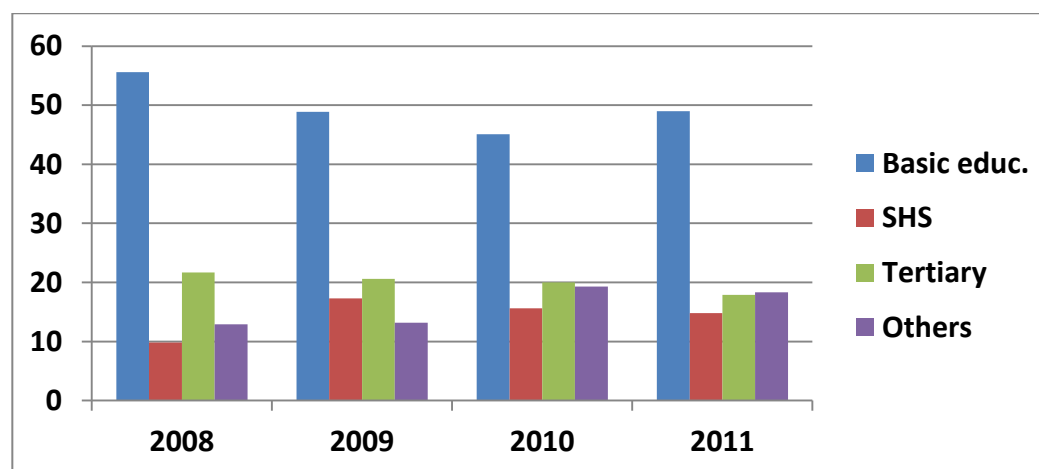
The Capitation Grant Policy was introduced in 1995 by the government as part of its strategies in the fulfillment of the 1990 'Education for All' International Convention. The objective was to abolish all forms of levies that the schools were charging to ensure that no school-going child was denied access to education because of the payment of levies by

parents. In this regard, all levies charged for activities such as sports, culture, sanitation, maintenance and teaching and learning materials were abolished. The policy was initiated in 2005 in which the government paid GH¢3.00 for each pupil per year. From 2009 until today the government payment has been increased to GH¢4.50.

### 2.6.2 Basic Education Share of the Education Sector Budget

The financial commitment of the government of Ghana over the years in the delivery of basic education is manifested in the country's expenditure at the basic school level. The expenditure as indicated in fig. 2.3 shows that basic education takes about 50% of the total education sector budget as compared with the other levels - senior high, and tertiary (MOE, 2012). It is noted however that though basic school receives the highest expenditure compared with other levels, per capita terms the expenditure might not be adequate because of the high enrolment at that level.

**Figure 2.3: Percentage of Education Expenditure by Levels (2012)**



*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2012*

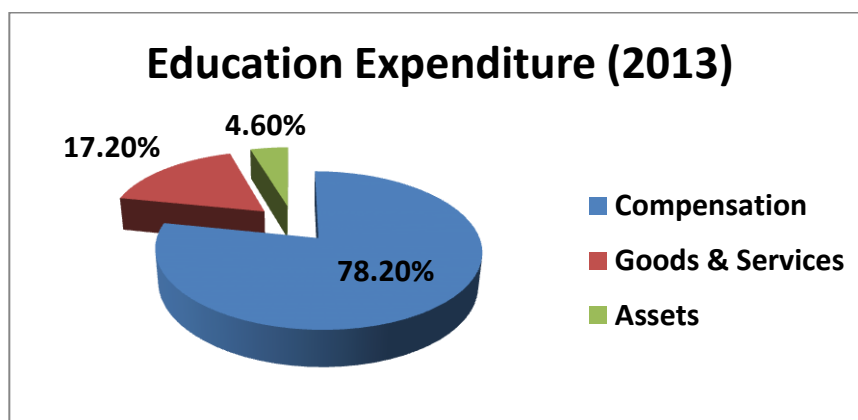
## 2.7 Challenges of Basic Education Delivery in Ghana

Basic education delivery in Ghana is bedeviled with a number of challenges, including, financing, school infrastructure and other essential facilities, Student-Trained Teacher Ratio, and Student Learning Outcomes.

### 2.7.1 Challenges with Basic Education Financing

These commitments in providing education in general appear to place huge financial responsibility on the government and which invariably affect expenditure on basic education. Figure 2.4 illustrates the government's expenditure as per the three components of the budget – compensation (salaries and allowances), goods and services (for example, stationery and training) and assets (for example, school buildings and furniture). As the data shows, compensation received 78.2% of the total expenditure in 2013, goods and services received 17.2% of the total expenditure, while assets received 4.6% of the total expenditure. The implications are that while compensation took large proportion of the expenditure there was very little left for teaching and learning materials (goods and services) and classroom infrastructure (Assets). This trend has been repeated over the years placing huge challenge on the government to provide quality education in the country.

**Figure 2.4: Percentage Share of the Education Sector Budget (2013)**



*Source: Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR), 2014*



## **2.7.2 Challenges with School Infrastructure**

Many public basic schools in Ghana face difficulties regarding school infrastructure. The problem is that most basic schools lack the needed infrastructure such as classrooms, toilet facilities along with other essential facilities (portable water, furniture and teaching and learning materials). The challenges tend to affect the conditions in the schools and appear to hinder effective teaching and learning.

### ***2.7.2.1 Classroom Infrastructure***

Figure 2.5 (page 25) shows the variety of typical school structures of Ghanaian basic schools as exist across the country. The range of school structures include: trees (figure 2.5a); palm fronds or grass roofs (figure 2.5b); pavilions (figure 2.5c); and wooden structures (figure 2.5d, 2.5e, 2.5f, 2.5g, and 2.5h). These structures are sometimes unduly affected by strong winds and heavy downpours which force school authorities to shut schools to avoid endangering the lives of students and teachers. A number of these structures as mentioned above are also exposed to dangerous reptiles and insects. In some cases there are unusual interruptions such as noises and other activities from outside the school premises due to the openness of classrooms. Some roofing structures cause hot temperatures inside the classrooms making it difficult for students to learn. However, despite these challenges, there exist school classroom structures, such as those in figure 2.5j, 2.5k, 2.5m, and 2.5n that are relatively conducive though there could still be further improvement to promote effective teaching and learning.

**Figure 2.5: Catalogue of typical classroom infrastructure in Ghanaian Basic Schools**



*Source:* Author (May, 10, 2012; Sep. 18, 2012, and Oct. 23, 2012)

### ***2.7.2.2 Classrooms Needing Major Repairs***

The classroom infrastructure as illustrated in figure 2.5 (page 25) shows the extent of repairs and maintenance that are required in providing safe classroom infrastructure. The situation is confirmed by the EMIS data which put the percentage of public basic schools needing ‘major repairs’<sup>9</sup> to 23% on average (EMIS, 2012). Table 2.3 shows the percentage of classrooms in need of major repairs at the various levels (kindergarten, primary and JHS). As the data shows, there are between 23% and 27% of public basic schools that need major repairs.

**Table 2.3: Percentage of classrooms needing major repairs**

<b>Level</b>	<b>No. of Schools</b>	<b>Classrooms</b>	
		<b>Total</b>	<b>%. of classrooms needing major repairs</b>
KG	13,305	20,117	27%
Primary	14,112	79,651	21%
JHS	8,818	30,724	23%

***Source: EMIS 2012/13***

### ***2.7.2.3 Schools with Toilet Facilities and Potable Water***

Table 2.4 (page 27) shows the number and percentage of public basic schools with toilet facilities and portable water. As the data shows about 40% of schools at kindergarten, primary and JHS are without toilet facilities while over 50% of schools at all levels of basic schools are without potable water. The implication for policy regarding the poor toilet and water facilities is how the schools could provide safe and healthy school environment.

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<sup>9</sup> Major repairs include re-roofing, repair of cracks in buildings and foundations, repair of broken walls and change of windows and doors

**Table 2.4: Schools with Access to Toilet Facilities and Potable Water)**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Total No. of Schools</b>	<b>% of Schools with Toilet</b>	<b>% of Schools with Drinking Water</b>
KG	13,305	7,891 (59%)	6,028 (45%)
Primary	14,112	8,455 (60%)	6,415 (45%)
JHS	8,818	5,631 (64%)	4,235 (48%)

*Source: EMIS, 2012/13*

#### **2.7.2.4 Seating and Writing Places**

Table 2.5 shows the seating and writing places for students in the public basic schools. As the data shows (table 2.5) on average, all students have to share tables and chairs. For example, ten students at the kindergarten share seating places for six students, while at the JHS ten students share writing places for eight students.

**Table 2.5: Seating and Writing Places for Students**

<b>Level</b>	<b>No. of Seating Places</b>	<b>Place per Pupil</b>	<b>No. of Writing Places</b>	<b>Place Per Pupil</b>
<b>KG</b>	679,759	0.6	599,497	0.5
<b>Prim.</b>	2,363,468	0.7	2,283,084	0.7
<b>JHS</b>	958,418	0.8	942,687	0.8

*Source: EMIS 2012/13*

### 2.7.3 Challenges with availability of Core textbooks

Table 2.6 shows the availability of core textbooks in the public basic schools. Mathematics, English and Science are the three core subjects to be learnt by students of the primary and junior high schools. In this regard the government provides the textbooks for these subjects with the aim of ensuring the pupil to textbook ratio 1:3 (that is, one pupil to each of the three textbooks – Mathematics, English and Science). However, for example, as the 2012/13 EMIS data shows (table 2.6), four students in primary (4:1) share one mathematics textbook while five students share one science textbook (5:1).

**Table 2.6: Availability of Core Textbooks in Schools**

	Core Textbooks			
		Mathematics	English	Science.
Prim.	No. of books	1,200,227	1,236,351	1,473,032
	No. of books per pupil	0.4	0.4	0.5
JHS	No. of books	491,586	602,386	595,406
	No. of books per pupil	0.4	0.5	0.5

**Source: EMIS, 2012/13**

As shown by the data regarding financial commitments and school infrastructure for school improvement, Ghana has a long way to go in fulfilling its Constitutional mandate of providing adequate resources for basic schools. It appears with these huge commitments there would be the need for a strong collaboration with all other stakeholders to provide complementary support to schools in order to ensure quality basic education across the country.

### 2.7.4 Challenges with School Infrastructure at the Ga South Municipality

The inadequate school infrastructure and facilities in the Ga South Municipality (study district) is similar to what prevail at the national level. For example, in the Municipality on average, 10 students in the public basic schools share 7 seating places. 122 out of the 261 basic schools representing 47% of the schools are without potable drinking water. The data also suggests that on the average, three students share one textbook for Mathematics and English in the public basic schools. Table 2.7 shows the infrastructure situation in the public schools in the Ga South Municipality as compared with what prevail at the national level.

**Table 2.7: Facility-Status of Basic schools in the Ga South Municipality**

	% of basic schools with toilet	% of basic schools with drinking water	% of classrooms needing major repairs	Ratio per pupil Seating places	Ratio per pupil writing places	Mathematics textbooks per pupil ratio	English textbooks per pupil ratio
<b>National (Public)</b>	61%	46%	23%	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.3
<b>Ga South</b>	71%	53%	17%	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.2

*Source: EMIS, 2012*

### 2.7.5 Challenges with Student –Trained- Teacher- Ratio

Many public basic schools, especially those in the rural areas have low Pupil-Trained Teacher Ratios (PTTR). With the exception of the junior high level where the PTTR is within the national norm, though on the lower side, the PTTR of the kindergarten and primary level is below the national norm. For example, at the kindergarten level the PTTR is 1:72 compared to the national norm of 1:35 and this has serious implications for

providing strong foundation for quality basic education. Table 2.8 shows the PTTR at the kindergarten, primary and junior high levels.

**Table 2.8: Student-Trained-Teacher-Ratio**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Enrolment</b>	<b>No. of Teachers</b>	<b>No. of Teachers Trained</b>	<b>PTTR</b>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	1,226,132	33,108	17,070	1:72
<b>Primary</b>	3,156,572	94,905	65,889	1:48
<b>Junior High</b>	1,157,827	72,777	60,906	1:19

*Source: EMIS, 2013*

### **2.7.6 Challenges with Students' Learning Outcomes**

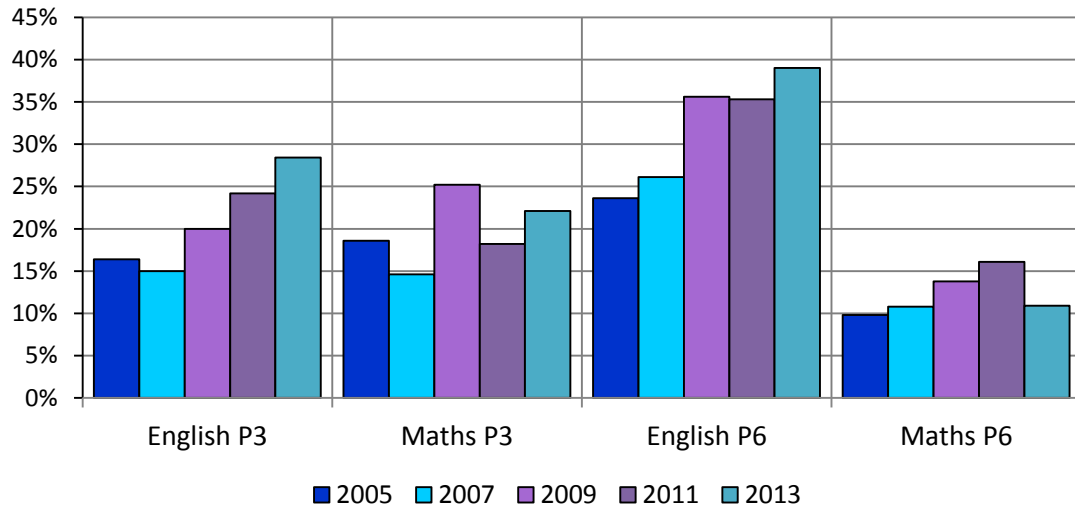
Ghana has experienced a significant increase in access to basic education over the years. For example primary enrolment had increased from 3,809,258 in 2009/10 academic year to 4,117,152 in 2012/13 (about 8.0% increase in four years) and gross enrolment ratio from 94.9% in 2009/10 to 107.3% in 2013/14 (about 12.4% in four years) (EMIS 2014).

However, as the biennial assessment report of the National Education Assessment (NEA, 2013) indicates and as shown in figure 2.6 (page 31), the proficiency levels of students in the two core subjects: English Language and Mathematics are low. As indicated, students' proficiency<sup>10</sup> in English language and Mathematics are below score point of 55%.

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<sup>10</sup> The minimum competency describes pupils reaching 35% and the proficiency level describes those reaching 55% score point of the total score on the test as determined by the National Education Assessment

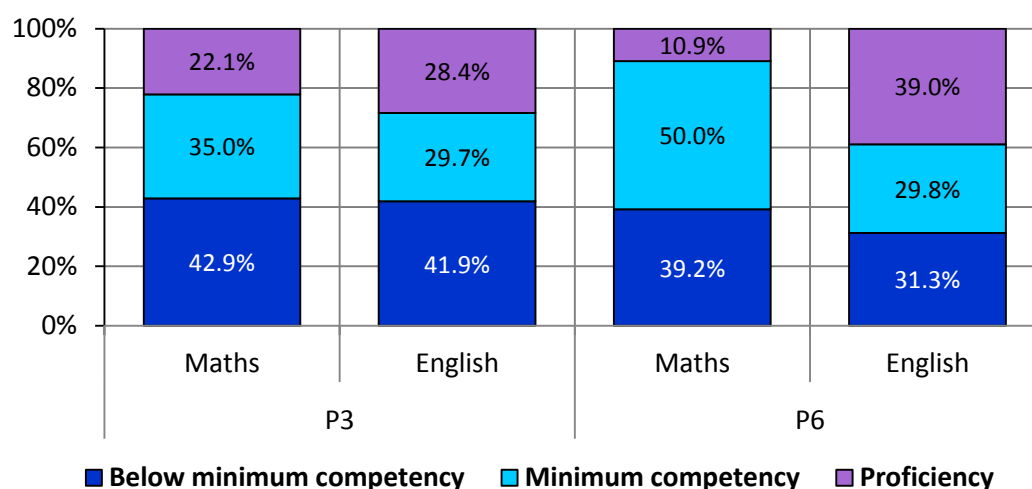
**Figure 2.6: Proficiency levels of primary 3 and 6 students in Mathematics and English**



***Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2014***

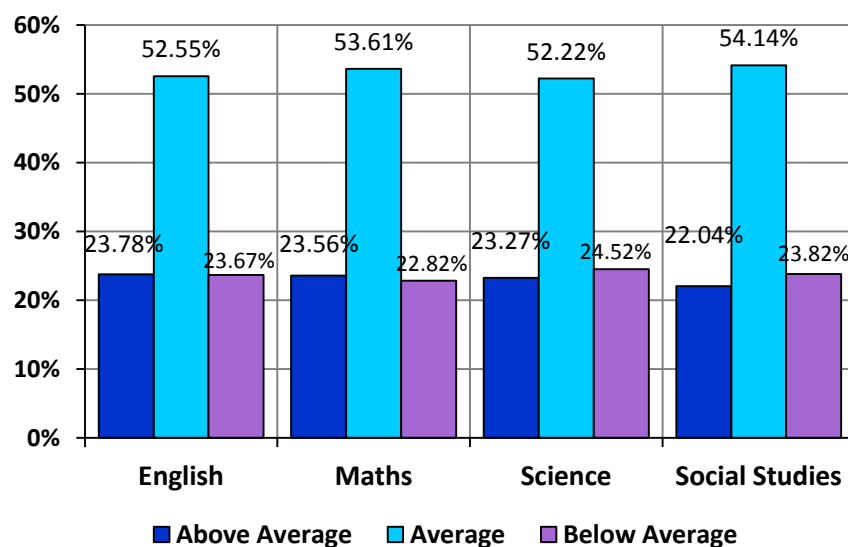
For the 2013 NEA results, as shown in figure 2.7 (page 32), only 10.9 % and 39.0% of primary 6 students reached proficiency level in Mathematics and English respectively, while only 22.1% and 28.4% of primary 3 students reached proficiency level in Mathematics and English language respectively.



**Figure 2.7: National Education Assessment Results (2013)**

*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2014*

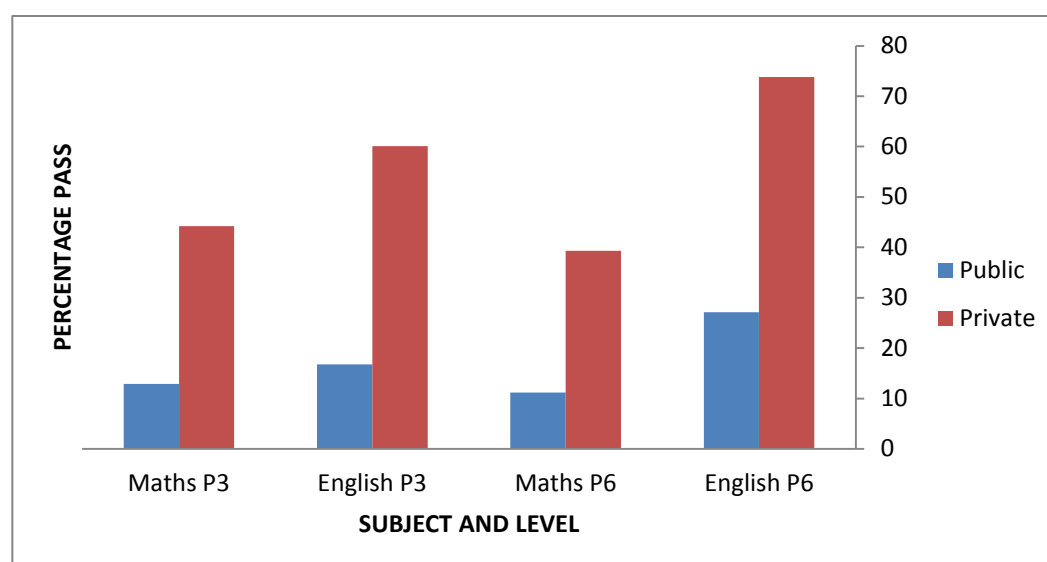
The grades in the performance of students at the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) are equally low with about 25% of students in the four core subjects (English Language, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) graded below average (figure 2.8).

**Figure 2.8: Distribution of National BECE results by subject, (2013)**

*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2014*

Many studies that have compared the performance of students in national examinations for example, the NEA, have placed the private school students ahead of the public schools (Ampiah, 2010, CDD, 2008). This is confirmed by the NEA results (2011) that show more students from private schools on average reached the higher proficiency levels than their counterparts in the public basic schools in both English Language and Mathematics (Figure 2.9). In all subjects and levels as indicated in figure 2.9, students in private schools did better on average than their public school counterparts.

**Figure 2.9: NEA Proficiency Achievement: Public and Private (2011)**



*Source: NEA Report, 2012*

The trend by the performance of students in the public basic schools as compared with that of the private schools appear to motivate some parents to send their children to private schools which has led to the increasing number of private schools in the country. For example, while primary enrolment in the public basic schools rose by 49.3% from 2001/02 to 2012/13 academic year that of the private basic schools rose by 121.9% in the same period (EMIS, 2013).

This thesis does not aim to compare public schools and private schools, or low achieving and high achieving public basic schools but to draw lessons from high achieving schools that could be of importance in an attempt to provide quality education for all Ghanaian children.

## **2.8 Summary**

The concerns for poor students' learning outcomes as shown in the National Education Assessment and the Basic Education Certificate Examinations need serious attention. The education sector accounts for a substantial proportion of public expenditure of the government of Ghana. This leads to a significant and legitimate demand for public accountability in public schools. Education is vital for the development of Ghana and unless efforts are made to address the poor learning outcomes at the basic level the probability of these children acquiring basic literacy and numeracy as required by the 1992 Constitution and leading to accessing further education is bleak. The conditions that account for the generally low achievement in public basic schools as compared to the growing level of access into basic schools should be considered. All Ghanaian children have the right to quality basic education as the 1992 Constitution mandates. The situation where many of them have failed to meet the proficiency level of achievement levels raises concerns. It is however interesting to note that while many of the public basic schools are failing, there are some of them who appear to be succeeding and achieving high achievements. It will be important to know what accounts for the high achievements in these successful schools and if there are any lessons that could be learnt from them to improve other failing schools. It is on this premise that this research is based.

## **CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.0 Introduction**

Chapter 3 discusses the literature review relevant to the study. It reviews literature on school improvement drawing on some factors of school effectiveness research that are relevant to the school improvement discourse. This chapter also discusses headteacher leadership role and community participation in school improvement which is considered critical in school improvement strategies (Leithwood, et al, 2004 and Uemura, 1999).

### **3.1 School Effectiveness Research**

School Effectiveness Research (SER) according to Luyten, Visser and Witziers (2005) flourished in the late 1970s in an attempt by researchers to refute the claim that “schools-don’t-make-a-difference” in students’ learning achievements, and that the family background is more important. In contrast, other studies while acknowledging for example, that pupils’ background characteristics is key, have also demonstrated that schools can make a difference (Leithwood, et al, 2004; Myers, 1995 and Hallinger and Heck, 1998).

Emerging from the school effectiveness research are lists of characteristics that are identified with effective schools. These include: strong instructional leadership, high expectations for pupil achievements, positive reinforcement, safe and orderly climate conducive for learning, and frequent evaluation of pupils’ progress which have become a recipe for implementing school improvement initiatives (Weber, 1971, Jansen, 1995; Heneveld and Craig 1996; Boissiere, 2004; and Lee, Zuze & Ross, 2005; Fuller and Clarke, 1994).

Many arguments have however been raised by researchers such as, Wyatt, 1996; Fertig, 2000; Fuller and Clarke, 1994, Sammons et al, 1995; and Creemers, et al , 2005, about schools being designated effective or ineffective based on characteristics of school

effectiveness research. According to researchers such as; Fuller and Clarke (1994); Sammons, et al, (1995); and Creemers et al (2005), school effectiveness research does not provide a blueprint or recipe for the creation of effective schools, and should therefore not be applied mechanically without reference to the particular contexts of a school. Fertig (2000), for example, argues for greater contextualization of school effectiveness, and that it should take into account the internal processes as well as school socio-economic, political and cultural contexts in which the school operates along with the perspectives of the different stakeholder groups actively involved in the activities of the school (Fertig, 2000, p. 395). In effect, the school environment and what happens within and outside of it, are of crucial importance when it comes to understanding how schools add value to pupils' learning.

School effectiveness research and school improvement efforts though are seen to be different with opposing paradigms, however, researchers such as Reynolds, Hopkins and Stoll (1993) had earlier advocated for linkage between school effectiveness and school improvement for their mutual benefit. In their view, school effectiveness research and theory can provide insights and knowledge to be used in school improvement while school improvement also provide insights for new possibilities for effective school factors which could be analysed further in effective school research. According to Creemers and Reezigt (1997), school effectiveness tradition is a programme for research with focus on theory and explanation whiles the school improvement tradition is a programme for innovation focusing on change and problem-solving. It is in this respect that in this study, reference is made of the school effectiveness research as a means of having better insights into the effective school factors which are of relevance to school improvement which is the focus for this study. As Borman et al (2000) argues, every child has the capacity to succeed in school and what a school has to do is to add value to the child's potential through schooling, depending on contextual factors that impact on the way in which the characteristics inter-relate to create conditions for effective learning outcomes to be achieved. Hence, school effectiveness research serve as a planning tool to determine the conditions by which school improvement initiatives ensures a successful school, not only

measured by the pupils' learning achievement, but including a deep understanding of the conditions and contexts under which these achievements can be produced. This perspective influenced my focus on researching school improvement because I was interested in understanding how conditions and context shape successful schools.

### **3.2 School Improvement Research**

School improvement has evolved over the years in many different contexts, all in an attempt to define school improvement strategies based on the assumption that students' learning achievements are influenced from a range of different factors including the school, the community and home factors (Borman et al (2000). According to Barth (1990) school improvement is an effort to determine and provide from within and without conditions under which the adults and youngsters who inhabit schools will promote and sustain learning among them (p.45). To James (2008), the purpose of school improvement is to impact ostensibly on the relationship between the teaching and learning process and the conditions that support it. Hopkins (2001) also looks at school improvement as a distinct approach to educational change that aims to enhance pupils' outcomes as well as strengthen the school's capacity for managing change. To Hopkins (2001) school improvement efforts should make schools better places for students to learn, and also provide a strategy for educational change that enhances pupil outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change.

According to Akyeampong (2004), these two statements as indicated by Hopkins are based on the assumption that it is those managing the school from within who are critical agents of change, and that the internal conditions in terms of management, ethos, support systems, and so on are important factors to motivate and sustain the school's effort to improve. As indicated by Akyeampong (2004) school improvement has come to stand for how schools are able to improve their effectiveness over a period of time and particularly concerned with activities that bring about change. Harris (2002) perceives school improvement from two dimensions: as a way of schools achieving organizational development and growth; and, the moral dimension linked to the life chances and achievement of all students (Harris,

2002, p. 18). Harris (2002) is of the view that school improvement should involve some form of reform and educational change which can be small or large scale, centralized, decentralized, and externally or internally initiated. Chapman (2005) however cautions that large scale and externally driven reform can only work provided that the right conditions are in existence and that the reform effort takes the singular context and cultural capacities of the school into consideration. Chapman posits that the externally driven reform should not take an approach whereby schools are treated as a homogeneous group.

School improvement is therefore a change in the management system aimed at ensuring that schools maintain improvement in all the factors that contribute to creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

### **3.2.1 Elements of school improvement initiatives**

Many models of school improvement initiatives have emerged across the globe where many countries have placed emphasis on different improvement strategies and structures. According to MacGilchrist (2000), most of these successful school improvement models require establishing a clear vision and a shared institutional mission. MacGilchrist argues that the strategies should include: determining the schools' accomplishment, identifying areas for improvement, developing plans to change the running of the school and implementing those plans or new programmes effectively.

MacGilchrist (2000) advocates that for school improvement efforts to be successful, teachers, parents, community, civil society, education authorities, students, and all partners must share in the improvement process. MacGilchrist (2000) asserts that school development plans should be identified with shared ownership and purpose along with shared leadership and management. As indicated by Akyeampong (2004), school improvement as a change in management strategy is concerned with changing the whole school's organizational culture and structure along with the school community relations. In these changing relationships as advocated by Akyeampong (2004), headteachers and teachers are to adopt a more open and participatory management style where parents,

school management boards and students are considered crucial partners in the day-to-day functioning of schools. This is in support of Senge's (1990) view that the headteacher's role in school improvement must change from that of a top-down supervisor to a facilitator, architect, steward, instructional leader, coach, and strategic teacher.

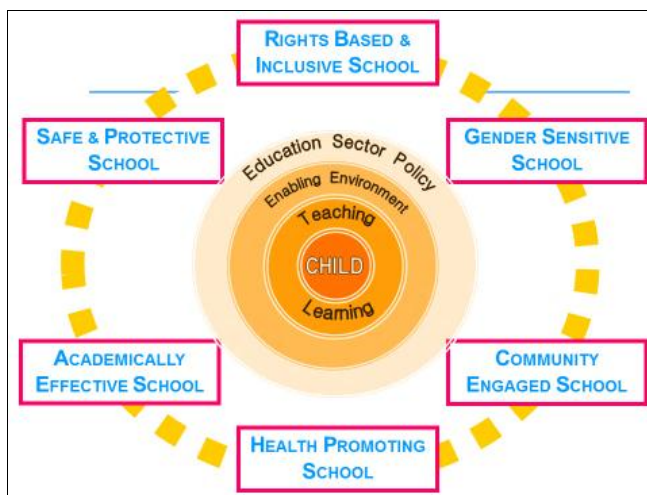
The Teacher Education Division (1998) of Ghana as part of its strategies to improve schools and pupil's learning, through a holistic and coordinated approach introduced the "Whole School Development" (WSD). The WSD approach identifies six essential indicators for improvement: 1) competent teachers, 2) motivated teachers, 3) motivated students, 4) informed and concerned community, 5) effective use of resources, and, 6) improved professional leadership of headteachers. This approach of WSD places the students' learning at the center of change in the school improvement strategies through the collaboration of all stakeholders at the national, district, community and school level. The model focuses on the pupils as critical for school improvement; however, it acknowledges the concerted efforts of all stakeholders in support of the change process.

UNICEF (2007) building on the school improvement strategy also introduces the 'child friendly school' concept that also identifies six key factors that contribute to the child's learning. The understanding of this concept is that the child should be at the center of all efforts that attempt to effect change in the school improvement strategy. The concept also focuses on the classroom teaching and learning with the child at the center which is similar to the 'whole school development' concept. The six key indicators for the 'child-friendly school' concept as identified by UNICEF include: the right-based and inclusive school where the rights of every child is not tampered upon; gender-sensitive school where the boy and girl as individuals are given attention; community-engaged school where the community is actively involved in school decisions to improve the school; health-promoting school where the health of the child is guaranteed; academically-effective school where the child's achievement is the focus of all instructions; and safe-protective school where the safety of the child is considered paramount. According to UNICEF, the model acknowledges three important components of schooling that should support the child's



education which are linked to the six key indicators: the teaching and learning process, an enabling environment to promote effective teaching and learning, and the education sector policy that outlines the strategic objectives and goals (UNICEF, 2009). Figure 3.1 illustrates the six key indicators acknowledged by UNICEF and how link to the three components of schooling that should support the child to learn under enabling environment.

**Figure 3.1: Child Friendly School Concept (UNICEF)**



*Source: UNICEF Global Evaluation Final Report, 2009*

Hattie (2009) in his study into areas that also contribute to school improvement with focus on the child identifies six critical areas: 1) the pupil, 2) the home, 3) the school, 4) the curricula, 5) the teacher, and, 6) the teaching and learning approaches. This study was the result of 15 years of research and synthesis on 800 meta-analysis relating to the influences on achievement in school-aged student. The study is based on the notion of visible teaching and visible learning which implies that what works best for students is similar to what works for teachers. To Hattie (2009), what prior knowledge of learning the child brings to the classroom lead to expectation about learning which to him, are powerful enhancers of the opportunities provided in school. He found that the key to making a difference to

students' learning was to make teaching and learning visible across the critical areas as identified. This model supports the need for a stronger collaboration of the various factors that surrounds the child's learning and which should be considered in the process of school improvement.

### **3.3 Concept of School-Community Participation in Education Delivery**

School community participation has received increasing attention over the years due to the mutual benefits realized from such collaboration. Researchers have identified community participation as a vital strategy in efforts by policy makers to work with members of the community to improve education (Bray, 1996; Uemura, 1999; Heneveld and Craig, 1996, and Epstein and Levy, 1995). The terms 'community' and 'participation' have been used in many different contexts based on the common understandings of the parties involved. The following sections review the concepts underlining the two terms: 'community' and 'participation'.

#### **3.3.1. 'Community'**

'Community' defined by Concise Oxford Dictionary is a group of people living together in one place, especially, one practicing common ownership (Soanes & Stevenson, 2009). 'Community' has been used in many contexts as a place where people live, for example a hamlet, village, town or city (from the archeological perspective); or as a group of people living near one another who interact socially (from the social science perspective). A community is therefore generally referred to as a social unit of any size that shares common values, being it national, international or 'virtual'<sup>11</sup> (Uemura, 1999). In this regard, community in its many different forms could be referred to as a group or network of persons with diverse characteristics but share common perspectives that are connected to each other beyond immediate genealogical ties. The connections may extend beyond

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<sup>11</sup> In the advent of internet the concept of community has less geographical limitation as people can now gather virtually on line community and share common intent regardless of physical location.

immediate genealogical ties through mutually defined relationship which may be important to their social identity and social practice (Smith, 2001).

Shaeffer (1992) argues that some communities are homogeneous while others are heterogeneous; and, some are united while others conflictive. To Shaeffer (1992) some communities are governed and managed by leaders chosen democratically or imposed from above and represent central authorities. Shaeffer suggests these leaders may act relatively autonomous from other levels of government and some as he advocates are governed by leaders. Bray (1996) also presents three types of communities: a) geographical community which he defines according to its members' place of residence, such as a village or a district; b) ethnic, racial or religious identification which according to him commonly cuts across membership based on geographical location; and, c) community based on shared family or educational concerns which include parents' associations and similar bodies that are based on families' shared concern for the welfare of students.

In the context of this study, the community is geographical in origin but encompasses people with diverse characteristics such as ethnic, and religious, but who are bonded by a common interest, that is, the education of their children. In this respect the community in this study comprises parents and families of the children in a particular school, the parent teacher association (PTA), the school management committees, the people in the geographical community where the school is located, the teachers and students, and also those linked to the school by distance. For example, people who may be indigenes of that community but may be residing outside the community in the cities or elsewhere where they work but come home once in a while during festivals, Christmas, or funerals.

### **3.3.2 'Participation'**

'Participation' according to the World Bank (1995) is a rich concept that varies with its application and definitions. The way 'participation' is defined also depends on the context in which it occurs (World Bank, 1995). It argues that for some researchers, 'participation'

is a matter of principle or practice; while for others it is an end in itself. In this regard, the context in which participation is defined is very critical to its understanding.

The World Bank Learning Group on Participatory Development (1995) defines ‘participation’ as a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them”. (p.3). Shaeffer (1992) explains the different dimensions of participation from the different contexts of what participation entails as schools collaborate with the community in the development of the school. He clarifies the different degrees or levels of collaboration which could be either ‘involvement’ which to him connotes largely passive collaboration, for example, enrolling children in school or attending parents’ meeting; whereas ‘participation’ implies a much more active role, for example, participating in decision-making in finding solutions to a problem.

### **3.3.3 ‘Community participation in education’**

‘Community participation’ as explained in different contexts by the various researchers remains an important component in the development of schools through the collaboration between the school, families and the community. According to Weil, and Gamble (1995) in social work, ‘community participation’ refers to the active voluntary engagement of individuals and groups to change problematic conditions and to influence policies and programmes that affect the quality of their lives and others. In other words, community participation provides opportunity for individuals, families, or communities to assume responsibility to contribute to the development of their community. Many research studies have identified various ways of ‘community participation’ in education providing specific channels through which communities can be involved in children’s education. Colletta and Perkins (1995) illustrate various forms of community participation, including: a) research and data collection; b) dialogue with policy makers; c) school management; d) curriculum design; e) development of learning materials; and, f) school construction. Similarly, Shaeffer (1992) also provides some specific activities that involve a high degree of participation in a wider development context which can also be applied in the education

sector: a) collecting and analyzing information, b) defining priorities and setting goals, c) assessing available resources, d) deciding on and planning programmes, e) designing strategies to implement programmes, and dividing responsibilities among participants, f) managing programmes, and, monitoring progress of the programmes; and, g) evaluating results and impacts.

Heneveld and Craig (1996) recognize parent and community support as one of the key factors to determine school effectiveness in sub-Saharan Africa. They identify five categories of parent and community support that are relevant to the region. According to them by the collaboration of parent and the community: 1) children come to school prepared to learn; 2) the community provides financial and material support to the school; 3) communication between the school, parents, and community is frequent; 4) the community has a meaningful role in school governance; and, 5) community members and parents assist with instruction. Epstein & Levy (1995) also explain this concept of community participation in six types of involvement on how schools, families and communities could work productively together: parenting by which all families establish home environments to support children's learning in school; designing effective form of communication whereby parents learn about school programmes and their children's progress and teachers also learn about what children do at home; recruiting parents as volunteers to help and support school development activities; providing information to families about how they could help the children at home with their home work; including families in decision-making to improve the school; and identifying and integrating resources as well as services from the community to support the school programmes.

Williams (1994) argues for three models of education in defining the role of the government and the community in the provision of quality education for the citizenry: the traditional community-based education in which communities provide the young people with the education necessary for transmitting local norms and economic skills (e.g. carpenters training their children to be carpenters); government-provided education in which government assumes responsibility for providing and regulating education with little

or no input from the community; and the collaborative model that are triggered from the governments' inability to provide the community with adequate educational delivery, fully equipped school buildings, teachers, teaching and learning materials. In this regard the community plays a supportive role to the government in the provision of education.

Uemura (1999) in a paper prepared for the World Bank on community participation in education emphasized that education not only takes place in schools but also within families, communities and wider society. In this regard he argues that, despite the various degrees of responsibilities taken by each group, none can be the sole agent to take the full responsibility for educating children. He advocates that, communities and society must support parents and families in the upbringing, socializing, and education of their children while schools as institutions prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they operate by equipping them with the relevant skills important to society. Uemura is of the view that since each group plays a different role in contributing to children's education there must be efforts to develop partnership between schools, parents and the community (Uemura, 1999). Pryor, J. (2005) however argues that if community participation is desirable then the state, through the schools, should be active in trying to create it rather than looking to the community to develop the school.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ghana Education Service (GES) recognize the importance of reciprocal partnership of school-community leaders in effecting changes in the schools. They also advocate for the establishment of school management committees (SMCs) and the parent teacher association (PTAs) to facilitate community participation in school improvement. According to the SMC/PTA manual (2010) this concept is based on the assumption that communities have an important role to play in enforcing standards, developing and maintaining school infrastructure, and creating a partnership between school leaders, teachers, students and local authorities to bring about needed changes. In this regard, communities are engaged to take part in planning, resource mobilization and reflecting on the principles of ownership, empowerment and participation.

### **3.4 School Leadership and School Improvement**

Research has demonstrated that the quality of education depends primarily on the way schools are managed, more so than on the availability of resources, and that the capacity to improve teaching and learning is strongly influenced by the quality of leadership provided (Dinham, 2004; Gentilucci & Muto, 2007; Kearney, 2005; Janerrette & Sherretz, 2007). Gudmund (Ed) (2000) argues that “as an orchestra’s performance relies largely on the quality of its conductor, so does the school or pupil performance depends mainly on the headteacher” (p. 1, Gudmund, 2000). The National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) in a study on ‘successful schools’ in the Philippines, reports that making a school successful is not just the effort of one person, though a concerted effort of all stakeholders. It argues that what is needed however, is one person (the school head) to bring all these players to contribute and to do their best in order to achieve a common goal to bring about improved quality of learning (NUEPA, 2011). There are also other researchers who have argued that the school climate in which the headteacher exercises control is a key ingredient in the successes and failures of a school (Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995), Creemers and Reezigt (2005). Bottoms and O’Neil (2001) characterize the headteacher as the chief executive officer who assumes the ultimate responsibility for the success of the school.

Much research on school effectiveness and improvement from a wide range of countries and school contexts has consistently highlighted the pivotal role of headteacher leadership in making schools more effective (see Hart, 1993; Murphy & Hallinger, (1992); Bush (2007); Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004); Pont, Nusche, Moorman (Eds) (2008); Scheerens and Bosker, (1997); Teddlie and Reynolds (2000); and, Townsend (2007). For example, Bush (2007) argues that though schools require trained and committed teachers, however, the need for an effective leadership to support the teachers to improve students’ learning is very critical. Research findings from diverse perspectives in different countries have also revealed the powerful impact of school leadership in securing school development and change (Cheng, 1994; Hopkins, 2001a, West, Jackson, Harris, & Hopkins (2000).

These findings from school effectiveness and school improvement research have brought about a shift towards educational leadership in relation to students' learning achievements (Firestone & Riehl, 2005). Firestone & Riehl (2005) argue that after years of focus on the effective management of schools whereby leadership emphasized the maintenance of the status-quo, the spotlight has changed and focused on leadership for teaching and learning. In their report to the American Educational Research Association, Firestone & Riehl (2005) concluded that the time that educational leaders were judged routinely on their effectiveness in managing fiscal, organizational and political conditions in their schools and school systems was over. Instead, they were expected to influence pupil learning and were therefore to be held accountable for the performance of students under their care. Robinson (2006) also argues that educational research should be redirected towards a stronger link with curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and pupil learning and give less emphasis on what she termed as 'generic leadership' where emphasis is on the influence process involved in leadership.

The important role of the headteacher in school improvement, especially, pupil learning, is also strongly supported by many researchers who have conducted studies into school effectiveness and school improvement (Hart, 1993; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992; Leithwood, et al 2004). They hold the view that schools that make a difference in students' learning are led by headteachers who make a significant and measurable contribution to the effectiveness of staff and in the learning of students placed in their care. Chapman and Snyder (2000) suggest that the headteacher plays a significant gatekeeping role in shaping the school development shared goals, promoting collaborative work structures and conducive learning climate. According to Leithwood, et al (2004), school leadership is widely regarded as a key factor accounting for differences in the success with which schools foster the learning of their students. Initiatives such as, 'school-based management' (SBM) or 'school management committee' (SMC) concepts as part of efforts by governments to empower local people in decision-making testify to the growing expectation of enhancing the headteacher leadership. In this regard school leaders have been given an important role in initiating and implementing school improvement programmes (Kruger, 2009).



School leadership in Ghana according to MacBeath, et al (2010) is influenced by distant and cultural factors. They claim that issues like the learning culture of teachers and pupils, attitudes of learning, fear of sharing, acceptance of change and more deeply embedded cultural practices and ethnic issues influence conceptions of learning. Overcoming these practices according to MacBeath, et al (2010) depend to a larger extent to which school leaders are able to have impact on the cultural environment within which their school operate. The school head therefore need to understand the existing culture before any attempt if made to change the school culture. Oduro (2003) also argues in terms of power and authority which according to him are embedded in the country's cultural values and practices. This notion had earlier been attributed by Kondor (1993) to the traditional belief that those who ascend to leadership positions have special relations with the ancestors and are therefore given divine authority to lead others.

These cultural beliefs of power and authority under the influence of r divine authority bring to bear the need for school leaders to have a better understanding of the principles of leadership to guide them in their leadership dispensation. The belief is however minimizing as education appear to increasing the understanding of the theory and practices of leadership which should guide school headteachers instead of relying on those powers and authorities which are becoming gradually difficult to explain.

### **3.5 Cultural Leadership and Community Participation in Ghana**

School leadership in Ghana, according to MacBeath, et al (2010), is influenced by distant and cultural factors. By this they mean the learning culture of teachers and pupils, attitudes to learning, fear of sharing, acceptance of change, and more deeply embedded cultural practices and ethnic issues constitute major influences on conceptions of learning. Overcoming these requires leadership that can change or improve the cultural environment within which the school operates so that these factors have less of a negative influence over the running of a school. According to Oduro (2003), power and authority are deeply

embedded in a country's cultural values and practices, and that this is significant in understanding the school culture and how it might be transformed. Traditional belief that leadership is conferred and is of divine origin has the potential to create resistance to change on the part of the leader (Kondor 1993).

Thus cultural beliefs about power and authority especially if it is seen as coming under the influence of divine authority would need to be displaced for more effective leadership to take root. Although leadership behavior may be influenced by cultural beliefs, it is certainly the case that culture is not static and that under the appropriate conditions and incentives, it is possible achieve more consultative approaches to school leadership. But it is important, to achieve this outcome, for space to be created for greater collaboration with the community to place value on their contribution to school improvement.

### **3.6 Headteachers' Leadership Style**

Emerging from the different perspectives of leadership are the different forms or styles of leadership. For example, 'instructional leadership', 'participative leadership', 'democratic leadership,' 'transformational leadership' (Gronn, 2002, Leithwood, et al, 2004) 'moral leadership', 'strategic leadership', distributive leadership', 'collaborative leadership', and shared leadership (Jandaghi et al, 2009, Griffith, (2004); Marks & Printy (2003); Ross and Gray, (2006); Heck, (1992); Spillane, (2006). These forms of leadership in a sense capture the different methodological approaches with the intent of explaining the elusive concept 'leadership' (Leithwood, et al, 2004). Leithwood, et al (2004) argue that, all these adjectival labels capture different stylistic or methodological approaches to accomplishing the same two essential objectives critical to any organization's effectiveness, these are: a) helping the organization set a defensible set of directions, and, b) influencing members to move in those directions (Leithwood, et al, 2004, p. 6).

According to Leithwood et al (2004), ‘instructional leadership’ focuses on improving the classroom practices of teachers as the direction for the school. In this regard teaching and learning are kept at the forefront of decision-making. ‘Transformational leadership’ on the other hand according to Leithwood et al (2004) draws attention to a broader array of school and classroom conditions that may need to be changed to facilitate learning. ‘Distributed’ leadership’ is essentially concerned with how decisions are made about both school priorities and how to pursue them. In this sense headteachers for example count on key stakeholders such as, teachers, parents and other officials to take a lead and so they delegate. According to Leithwood et al (2004) leadership practices such as setting directions, developing people and redesigning organizations have survived on developing shared understandings about any organization, its activities and goals. To them people are motivated by goals which they find personally compelling and by such goals people make sense of identity for themselves within their work context.

### **3.6.1 Evidence of empirical study on successful headteacher leadership**

The following are empirical studies that were conducted by some researchers on schools in respect of the impact of headteacher leadership on the performance.

Southworth (2002) looks at successful schools in England and highlights five key characteristics of successful headteacher leadership: working hard, determination, positive disposition, approachability and teamwork.

Working Hard: the study shows that headship is demanding. The heads acknowledged that they worked hard, but did so without complaining and regarded their work as a matter of headship, rather than something they might be able to avoid or change.

Determination: the study shows that the headteachers were determined individuals who were resolute about the schools doing well and therefore worked tenaciously towards increased levels of success. According to Southworth (2002) sometimes the headteachers’

ability to secure additional learning resources was seen as another sign of their commitment to the school and not prepared to tolerate poor teaching and learning conditions.

Positive Disposition: To Southworth (2002) all the ten headteachers were positive people. He claims that each headteacher believed the school could improve and achieve more because the children and the staff deserved to be successful. They acknowledged successes in the school and described them as resulting from the children's or the staff's efforts. The heads were also remarkably optimistic about the future and their schools' prospects.

Approachability: the study shows that the heads knew that their schools' successes were dependent on everyone pulling their weight, supporting one another and working together. This Southworth (2002) claims applied to all staff, including office and classroom support, and more importantly, on the teaching staff functioning as a combined teaching unit with the heads orchestrating teacher and staff collaboration.

According to Southworth (2002) for some of the headteachers it was due to the school under-performing, while for others it was a case of enhancing already high level of success. Whatever the context, according to Southworth (2002) none of the heads were satisfied with the school's performance levels and all the heads wanted to improve on their previous results.

Cotton (2003) in his study of successful schools concludes that the following types of behaviours by a principal have a significant impact on pupil achievements:

- Establishing a clear focus on pupil learning by having a vision, clear learning goals, and high expectations for learning for all students
- Maintaining good interactions and cordial relationships with relevant stakeholders and ensuring effective communication, emotional and interpersonal support, visibility and accessibility, and promoting effective parent/community participation;

- Developing a school culture conducive to effective teaching and learning through shared leadership and decision-making, collaboration, risk taking leading to continuous improvements;
- Providing instructional leadership through discussions of instructional issues, observing classroom teaching and giving feedback, supporting teacher autonomy and protecting instructional time; and
- Being accountable for affecting and supporting continuous improvements through monitoring progress and using pupil progress data for program improvements

Cheng (1994) in his studies into headteacher leadership and students' achievement concludes that strong leadership shows that a headteacher can be:

- a. Supportive and foster participation of teachers.
- b. Able to develop clear goals and policies and hold people accountable for results.
- c. Persuasive at building alliances and solving conflicts.
- d. Inspirational and charismatic
- e. Able to encourage professional development and teaching improvement

Cheng argues that strong leadership is associated with high organizational effectiveness; strong organizational culture; positive principal-teachers relationship; more participation in decision-making; high teacher esprit and professionalism; less teacher disengagement and hindrance; more teacher job satisfaction and commitment; and more positive pupil performance, particularly, on attitudes and learning. These attributes that can be controlled by the headteacher leadership contribute significantly to pupil learning (Cheng, 1994).

Leithwood, et al, (2004) in their studies on headteacher leadership and students' achievement concluded that three sets of practices make up the basic core of successful leadership practices that account for students' high achievement: (1) setting directions; (2) developing people; and, (3) redesigning the organization. They suggest that setting directions account for the largest proportion of a leader's impact aimed at developing a clear vision focused on students' academic progress. Such goals and vision help

headteachers to make sense of their work and enable them to find a sense of identity for themselves and the context in which they work.

According to Leithwood et al (2004), developing or motivating people is a practice that is considered essential to the leader's effect on learning. To them, while clear and compelling organizational directions contribute to members' work-related motivations, such motivations are influenced by the direct experiences organizational members have with those in leadership role. They suggest experiences such as offering intellectual stimulation, providing individual support and providing appropriate models of best practices and beliefs as being fundamental to the organizational success. They also argue that successful educational leaders develop their schools through practices that are associated with the redesigning of the organization. These practices to them include: strengthening school culture; creating productive relations with parents and communities; connecting the school to its wider environment; providing incentives for learning; and fostering shared beliefs, sense of community and cooperation. Others are: modifying organizational structures; building collaborative processes; recognizing and celebrating school accomplishments and acknowledging failures; and involving teachers in design and implementation of important decisions and policies.

These practices as elaborated by Leithwood et al (2004) bring to the forefront the need for leaders to build a new culture to create a school climate that could guarantee strong community of learning aimed at establishing an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. As the empirical studies show, there is enough evidence to presume that the role of headteacher leadership is critical in creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. It is evident that with headteacher leadership at the center of change, school improvement strategies might be exercised in our schools to improve performance from the different perspectives.

### **3.7 Summary**

School effectiveness and school improvement research has identified various characteristics and features that contribute to improved students' learning outcomes. As

clearly demonstrated, an effective school should not only be concerned about the learning outcome that is measured by the value added concept but also the overall improvement that provides for an effective learning environment. It is in this regard that the school, parents and the community playing their different complementary roles are critical in contributing to the children's education. The characteristics of effective schools as listed by the various researchers though are not a panacea for solving the numerous educational challenges; they help shape the school improvement strategies. School leadership has also come out strongly in the literature as key to transforming schools to create positive school environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. The role of school leadership and community participation in education delivery therefore has implications for quality education and should be given attention in developing educational policies for school improvement.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **4.0 Introduction**

Chapter four discusses the methodology adopted for this research. The factors underpinning the methodology used for this study are: the ontological position that reality is a construct of the individual rather than any independent external essence (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) and, the epistemological assumption with the notion of a subjective, descriptive and interpretive study (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, and Gronhaug (2001). The research methods used are discussed along with the sources for the data collection. Finally this Chapter discusses the ethical issues associated with qualitative research as well as the potential limitations posed by the methodological approaches chosen for my research.

### **4.1 Research Methodology**

Social research as explained by Bryman (2008) is a reflection of modern social life and something that can be motivated by developments and changes in society. This thesis attempts to employ social scientific research methods to illuminate the school improvement discourse in addressing students' low learning achievement, a phenomenon of general concern. The foci of the research are the school conditions that appear to account for the high achievement levels, the role of headteacher leadership, and community participation in the system of basic school education in Ghana.

I drew on my professional experiences, both present and past, as a classroom teacher, headteacher, teacher educator, and a senior policy maker as director of education in the Ghana Education Service to undertake the research. My research journey (see appendix 8) was directed by my responsibility as a senior policy maker and also a researcher. I started with a clear interest in the way in which school leadership and community engagement with schools might transform schools. As pointed out earlier, this arose from my long term professional experience as a headteacher in which I saw how headteacher leadership in collaboration with teachers and the community, interacting in the appropriate manner, can



bring about change. However, I needed to ‘test’ this and ground any interactive effects from an empirical perspective. So after identifying schools that were demonstrating consistent and positive learning outcomes, and which reflected my hunches and what the school improvement literature was suggesting, I focused on understanding at a deeper level through case study research what might be going on in two successful schools as defined in large part by their academic results.

My aim therefore was to re-evaluate the important linkages and relationships that were critical in shaping how these schools were being transformed into successful schools. Thus my approach could be described as a ‘quasi’ constructivist grounded approach (see Charmaz 2000), as it involved an iterative process of moving from basic assumptions about school improvement gleaned from my experiences and the literature, to exploring real cases, to revisions based on emerging data, and finally to what became my eventual conceptualization of the processes for achieving school improvement in the particular context of Ghanaian public basic schools in an urban poor environment as illustrated in my concluding chapter (see chapter 8, page 143).

This thesis draws upon qualitative and interpretive-based research methodology. According to Luyten, et al (2005) qualitative approaches are particularly suited for exploratory studies, in which key concepts are not yet clearly defined and the causal links between them are unclear. This includes cases where for example, schools in areas that serve predominantly low-income population achieve higher than average students’ learning outcomes. The interpretations of these complex and inter related factors responsible for public schools improvement must be considered.

Interpretive qualitative research as indicated by Carson et al, (2001), involves value-laden socially constructed interpretations. Researchers in this respect often follow more personal and flexible research structures. The assumption is that interpretive studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and inter-subjective meanings as they

interact with the world around them (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). Walsham (1993) also argues that interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors and this applies equally to researchers. Personal experiences from the Ghanaian education bureaucracy are used in this thesis in order to make a more in-depth critical analysis of the findings. This study seeks to understand experiences of the headteachers, teachers, and parents forming the school community and how these experiences and interactions shape the school climate for improvement.

An aim of this study is to cast light upon the social structures that exist surrounding the community stakeholders of the school such as the headteacher, teachers and parents and the role they play in the success of the students. Participants were selected on their requisite experience to share and enrich the research based on their interest and willingness to participate. My aim was not to seek an 'objective reality' which could be replicated by others but was to understand the collaborative sense of the community in the context of the Ghanaian school system. Understanding social process involves getting inside the world of those generating it (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991).

In testing for plausibility, transferability and confirmability of the data collected a multi-method approach was used to triangulate the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). That is, in addition to the data collected through interviews, the study also uses data collected from documentary analysis and some events observed. The events observed included: staff meetings, in-service training programmes, parent teacher association meetings, school performance appraisal meetings, and other co-curricular activities such as debates, sports and games and spelling competitions.

## **4.2 Research Design**

The study involves two cases in two high achieving public basic schools in the Ga Municipal Assembly (formally Ga Rural District) in the Greater Accra Region. The two cases were to allow for an in-depth study. The study investigates the specific conditions in

the two schools that appear to have influenced the high achievement levels of students based on the BECE results. The case study approach was appropriate since it provides a unique example of real life situations enabling researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation rather than solely relying on abstract theories or principles (Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007). Case study research approach was adopted in order to understand the complexity of the school context that accounts for the high achievement of the selected schools and to stimulate further research (Thomas, 2011). Kumar (2011) points out that case studies provide an in-depth understanding of a case, process and interactional dynamics within a unit of research. This makes case studies appropriate for investigating the kind of school level processes and conditions that shape the school learning environment. As argued by Yin (2003), case study research can be split into exploratory, descriptive and explanatory methods in an attempt to deal with the ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions (Yin, 2003, pp. 5-6.).

### **4.3 Research Setting**

The study used a staged approach to select the two sample schools. Firstly the region was selected, followed by a district and finally the sample schools. Following the approach suggested by Cohen et al (2007) convenient purposeful sampling techniques were used. These were based on three main criteria: 1) proximity in terms of closeness to the researcher, 2). context in terms of rural/urban setting, and, 3) students’ learning achievement in the BECE. These criteria bear the theoretical importance to the study, in that one important theoretical strand states that school improvement is a highly contextual phenomenon. In this regard, the particular and peculiar characteristics of schools and school communities and the cultural factors are a critical contextual issue in the study.

Though there are many outcomes of schooling such as attitudes, physical outcomes, belongingness, respect, and the love for learning that could be measured by performance, however, this study focused on students’ learning achievements measured by performance in the BECE. This method was chosen as the performance of students in the BECE is the only standardized and credible examination with results over the years and available.

BECE is organized by the West Africa Examinations Council (WAEC) which is accredited by the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service.

Guided by the selection criteria as discussed the Greater Accra Region and the Ga South Municipality were selected. The Greater Accra Region has 16 administrative districts, in both rural/urban settings and on average high achieving public basic schools in the BECE. The Ga South Municipality is a unique district as it has both urban and rural settings, hence its former name ‘Ga Rural District’. Ga South Municipality has a total population of 485,643 with 248,085 being females. 54,863 of the total population representing about 11.1% live in the rural setting where the schools were sited (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). However, the performance of the district in the BECE over the years is high above the national average. While the national average has stood around 60%, the Ga Municipality average performance in the BECE has stood at over 80% (see table 4.1)

**Table 4.1: Ga South Municipality and National BECE Pass Rate (2009-2012)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>National Average BECE Pass Rate (Ag. 6-30)</b>	<b>District Average BECE Pass Rate (Ag. 6-30)</b>
2012	60.7%	83.2%
2011	59.5%	87.6%
2010	59.4%	81.2%
2009	62.4%	82.8%

*Source: Compiled from the Evaluation, Monitoring, Information System, 2012*

#### **4.4 Selection of Sample Schools**

Two sample schools were selected to allow for an in-depth study typical of qualitative case study research methods (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002; and Kumar, 2011). Junior high schools (JHS) whose candidates take the BECE were selected in view of the BECE results being used as the basis for this study. The JHS forms the last level of basic education in

Ghana and it is at that level that BECE is conducted. In collaboration with the Ga South Education Directorate and with the support of the District Director of Education and the Examination Officer, five top performing JHS were selected. The five high performing schools were then visited to identify specifically two of them that have improved over the past four years by creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. The selection process led to Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS to form the two case studies for this thesis.

#### **4.4.1 Performance of Selected Schools in the BECE**

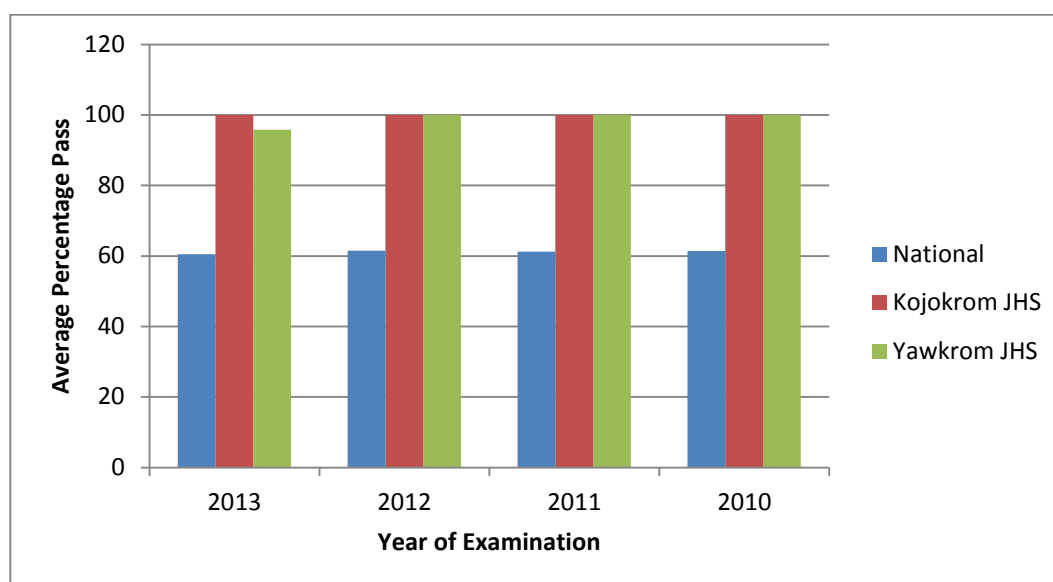
The two schools (Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS) that emerged as appropriate for the study have high performance over the past four years in the BECE. As shown in figure 4.1 (page 61) the performance of the two schools using the BECE results over the past four years has been consistently high. For example in the 2011 BECE results out of the 68 and 109 candidates presented for the BECE by Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS respectively, all the candidates had high achievement rate of 11.4 and 13.0 ‘mean aggregate’<sup>12</sup> respectively (WAEC BECE Results, 2010-2013). The two schools were the first and third best public schools respectively in the district. It is interesting to note that Kojokrom JHS shares a compound with two other schools Ampiah JHS and Ato JHS; however, their performance in the same 2011 BECE was 16.4 and 19.6 mean aggregate respectively, which were below that of Kojokrom JHS. This phenomenon appears to suggest that it may not be the environmental setting that leads to the performance but something specific about the school itself.

Figure 4.1 (page 61) shows the performances of the two schools (Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS) at the BECE as compared with the national average performance. Both schools have high achievements of 100% as compared with the national average of about 60%. This means that all the candidates from the two schools meet the qualifying grade for admission into the senior high school.

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<sup>12</sup> Mean aggregate refers to the average of the set of aggregates achieved by the individual candidates in the six subjects used to grade the candidates for placement into the senior high school.

**Figure 4.1: Sample Schools' Performance at BECE Compared with the National Average Performance (2010-2013)**



*Source: Compiled from WAEC BECE Results, 2014*

#### **4.4.2 Profile of Selected Schools**

Kojokrom JHS is a district assembly (D/A) school formerly referred to as local authority (L/A) school. The school started with a wooden classroom structure which has now been transformed into a modern classroom infrastructure (made of cement blocks) with additional library and computer facilities, staff common room and a headteacher's office. The staff room was originally the office of the headteacher, however the store room has now been converted into an office for the headteacher. It is situated in a new development area among a 'cluster'<sup>13</sup> of two other schools. The school has no toilet and teachers and students use a public toilet outside the school. Sometimes the teachers use the toilet facility in the headteacher's bungalow situated at the school premises. The community members of the school community are mostly of low income status dealing in petty-trading, fishing and

<sup>13</sup> Cluster of schools are typical of the urban setting where because of land space, the public local government schools are located at one place and in most cases they share many things in common, for example, compound, playgrounds, and sometimes toilets and urinals.

fish-mongering, carpentry, apprenticeship, and masonry. There are a few public/civil servants living in the area who are mostly not originally from the community but have secured land in the community to build their houses. The school has an enrolment of 185 students with staff strength of eight trained teachers. There is no access to potable water and students are forced to fetch water from a nearby public pipe-borne water system. Students fetch water in a plastic bucket with a valve and each class is provided with one bucket. Despite the poor water access conditions the school has electricity connected from the national power grid. The school has no wall and so the compound is open and used as a through way for students of the other schools and also passers-by in the community. It shares a common playground with the other schools. It has a strong and viable PTA and an effective PTA chairman who is also the SMC chairman.

Yawkrom JHS on the other hand is a public basic school with a faith-based origin. This school has also been transformed from a 'school under trees' to its current outlook of six-unit classroom blocks made of concrete and also a six-unit toilet block. Constructions are on-going, the buildings are yet to be plastered and painted. Construction of new buildings for a computer laboratory and a library are in progress along with the construction of a new playground. The headteacher's office currently serves as an office and a staff common room awaiting the completion of the new common room. The original people in the community are mostly fishermen and farmers, and the women are mostly engaged in stone cracking for living. The youth are mostly enrolled in apprenticeships such as carpentry, tailoring and masonry while others are engaged in jobs that do not require trained personnel to earn a living, for example, carrying of items in the market. The school has no pipe borne water and no access to mains electricity, however there is tapped electricity from a nearby home belonging to a parent of the school connected to only the two final year classes (JHS 3). It is a two stream school with currently an enrolment of 384 and staff strength of 11 trained teachers.

#### **4.3.3 Profile of Participants for the Study**

In all, ten participants were selected from Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS for the study. They were two headteachers, four teachers and four parents (SMC/PTA members). The

participants are referred to in this study by pseudonyms (Table 4.2). All the parents have their children or wards in the two schools and they also live in the communities where the schools are located. Table 4.2 shows the list of participants including Kojo the Headteacher; Kodua the Mathematics and Science Teacher; Kuntu the ICT and Religious and Moral Education Teacher; Kwarteng the PTA/SMC Chairman and Koranteng a member of the PTA, all from Kojokrom JHS. Participants from Yawkrom JHS include: Yaw the Headteacher, Yaro the French and ICT Teacher; Yonso the Social Studies and English Language Teacher; Yilo the PTA Chairman, and Yoofi a member of the PTA. The participants were selected based on basically their interest and willingness to participate in the study and the long experience they have with the schools. This was necessary to enrich the study with their experiences.

**Table 4.2: List of Participants for the Study**

School	Head teacher	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Parent 1	Parent 2
Kojokrom JHS	Kojo	Kodua: Maths & Science Teacher	Kuntu: ICT and Religious & Moral Education Teacher	Kwarteng: SMC/PTA Chairman	Koranteng: PTA Member
Yawkrom JHS	Yaw	Yaro: French and ICT Teacher	Yonso : Social Studies & English Teacher	Yilo: PTA Chairman	Yoofi: PTA Member

#### **4.4 Data Collection Methods and Techniques**

Data is critical in any research and following the methods of Kumar (2011) in the context of this qualitative research primary and secondary data was collected. Primary data was collected through direct observations and in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions. The following number of activities was observed: two classroom lessons, two PTA meetings, two in-service training, and two staff meetings. Interviews also involved ten participants. Secondary data was collected through documents such as school performance improvement plans (SPIP), school time-tables, teachers' lesson notes, teachers and



students' attendance books, class exercises and homework. Data collection took effectively six weeks between Oct. 29 and Dec. 08, 2012 for the first term of the 2012/13 academic year. This involved spending three weeks in each of the schools. During this period, interviews were conducted with each of the five participants in both schools along with focus group discussions with the five participants in each school. Table 4.3 summarizes the methods used for the data collection.

**Table 4.3: Data Collection Methods**

Observations	Textual materials (Documentary Analysis)
<b>Events</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SMC/PTA Meetings</li> <li>- INSET Programmes</li> <li>- Classroom teaching/learning</li> </ul>	<b>Documents</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers' lesson notes/plans</li> <li>- Pupils' Exercise books/workbooks</li> <li>- School Performance Improvement Plans (SPIP)</li> <li>- Pupils' Attendance Registers</li> <li>- School time table</li> <li>- Teachers' Attendance book</li> <li>- Minutes' Books (staff and PTA)</li> </ul>
<b>In-depth Interview and focus group discussions</b>	
<b>Participants (10)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Headteachers (2)</li> <li>- Teachers (4)</li> <li>- Parents (4)</li> </ul>	

#### 4.5.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the data instruments, specifically, the open interview questions and observation tools designed for the interviews and observations. The pilot phase was put in place to identify any modifications necessary to the research tools, in

terms of the type of questions, the language, the flow of the interviews, how the questions were understood by the participants, and the posture of both interviewer and interviewees. The pilot study was conducted in one of the schools where a mini-research as part of my Ed.D programme of the University of Sussex was conducted, that is, the Critical Analytic Study (CAS). The key modification that was a result of the pilot study was the additional focus of the research tools on community participation in addition to the initial focus on headteacher leadership. Three people were interviewed in the pilot study – a headteacher, a teacher, and a parent. The initial research questions were focused on how the participants perceived the leadership role of the headteacher in creating the conducive learning environment to enhance students' performance. However, realizing the in-depth knowledge of the parent participant at the interview and the contributions of the PTA in the school improvement strategies as elaborated by the parent participant called for further investigations into the role of community participation in shaping the school's teaching and learning environment.

#### **4.5.2 Interviews**

Interviewing as indicated by many researchers such as Kumar (2011) is one of the most common methods used for collecting data in qualitative research. Research interviews are based on the conversations of daily life and are professional conversations. Interview is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee (p. 2, Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As argued by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), 'If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, the best way is to talk with them' (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. xvii.).

In this study, the objective of the in-depth interview approach was to seek the opinions of the selected participants (headteachers, teachers, and parents) through the following:

1. How they appreciate the improvements in the schools they represent
2. What in the opinion of participants have contributed to the improvements in the schools they represent

3. What role the individuals or groups of stakeholders in the school and community, especially, headteachers, teachers, parents/community as individuals or group of persons have played to influence improvements in the schools they represent
4. What school policies have influenced the improvements in the school they represent
5. How the schools have been able to maintain or sustain the improvements over the years in the schools they represent

It was mostly face-to-face interviews. Guided by Gall, et al (2003) approaches to interviews, there was free and informal conversation during the initial interactions with the participants in order to establish rapport. Later, the more focused research questions were introduced in an attempt to focus the discussions towards the objectives of the thesis. Telephone conversations were sometimes used in order to verify certain responses and to gain further clarifications from participants.

In addition to the in-depth interviews with the individual participants, there were focus-group discussions with the participants (headteacher, teachers and parents) in each of the sample school. In each school therefore the focus-group discussions involved five participants. The focus-group discussions were used to gain a better understanding of the issues that emerged from the initial data collected. This was to help discover 'common language' as suggested by Lindlof and Taylor (2002).

#### ***4.5.2.1 Conducting the interviews***

Ten participants, five from each of the two selected schools, were interviewed. The interviews with each of the participants took between 45 and 60 minutes. The initial data analysis prompted the need for follow-up interviews using face-to-face or sometimes through telephone conversations to clarify earlier views and statements. All interviews conducted in the school were audio-taped after permission had been sought. The interviews were arranged to take place during the early part of the day, in most cases before formal instructional lessons started (before 8.00am) or after formal instructional hours (after 3.30pm). However, at times it became necessary to interview headteachers during break

hours to cross-check further emerging issues especially from some observations and responses from earlier interviews with teachers or parents. Interview protocols were developed for each group of the participants (headteachers, teachers and parents). Appendix 1a, 1b, and 1c show the interview schedules for the headteachers, teachers and parents respectively.

There was no problem with language as all participants except one could speak fluently and understand English. In one case the Ghanaian language (Twi) was used for Yoofi (second parent of Yawkrom JHS) who appeared not to be very fluent in the English language. A multi-approach as suggested by Gall, et al (2003) was used to manage the flow of the conversation. That is, using the free and informal conversation, in some cases using the Ghanaian language to emphasize a point to establish rapport and to allow the flow of discussions taking into consideration what the participants were fond of. For example, knowing that Kwarteng (PTA Chairman of Kojokrom JHS) was a retired public servant, the interview was started in a more informal way discussing his retirement. For Koranteng, (fisherman and PTA Member of Kojokrom JHS) the interview was conducted on a Tuesday (13/11/12), the day in which he would not go fishing.

Openness methods were adopted during the focus-group discussions allowing each individual to be heard and in order to avoid rushing to make research conclusions. It was ensured that all participants respected the views of others adopting open-ended discussions. Different views on particular issues were also allowed to enrich the discussion however in the end common agreement was sought. The focus-group discussion at Yawkrom JHS, due to the case of Yoofi, was organized in both Twi and English languages to allow for the voice of Yoofi in a language she best understands and could speak.

#### ***4.5.2.2 Focus Group Discussion***

Focus group discussions were organized for the five participants in each of the two schools involving: headteacher, two teachers and two parents. The discussions took place in the first week of Dec. 2012 when all other individual interviews have been conducted and all

other observations and documentary analysis have been completed. This was to allow me to collect enough data to direct the focus group discussions. Each discussion took about one hour. The focus-group discussion for Kojokrom JHS was organized on Tuesday after normal instructional hours (between 4.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.). This was to allow for all participants to be present, especially, for Koranteng (the fisherman) to participate. That of Yawkrom JHS was organized on a Sunday afternoon (from 3.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.) which was considered convenient for all participants.

At Kojokrom JHS we spent 45 minutes but Yawkrom JHS we spent one hour because we had to manage the two languages (English and Twi). Sometimes the views from Yoofi and other participants were translated into appropriate languages to allow for better understanding of all participants. The discussions remained enjoyable throughout the two focus-group discussions, no body felt intimidated and discussions were frank. The PTA/SMC chairman from Kojokrom could not hide his feelings about the focus-group discussion and called on the headteacher to organize such a forum regularly for key stakeholders of the school.

#### **4.5.3 Observation**

Observation, according to Kumar (2011) is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place (Kumar, 2011, p. 128). Simple observation tools were used in order to observe the events such as: classroom teaching and learning, in-service training of teachers, PTA meetings, and other co-curricular events. The data collected was as follows:

1. The aims and objectives of the events in relation to the improvements of the school.
2. The extent of participation of the key actors in decisions to improve the schools.
3. The outcomes of the events taking into consideration the objectives of the events.

In all, two classroom lessons, two staff meetings, two PTA meetings, and two school-based in-service training sessions were observed, one from each of the two selected schools.

Classroom Lesson Observation: This session aimed to observe classroom instructions with the headteachers and lessons delivered by two teacher participants, one in each of the two schools. A lesson from each of the two teacher participants in each school was selected and their lesson notes (lesson plan) investigated. One topic was selected for observation. The major features of the lesson notes were checked. These features include: the objectives of the lessons, the time and duration, the teaching and learning materials stated and prepared for the actual lesson, the approach or methodology chosen for the lessons with emphasis on the teacher and learner activities, and also the assessments for feedback. The actual lessons were then observed in the classroom on the scheduled days and time as indicated in the lesson notes.

During the observations, a number of aspects of the lessons to be delivered by the teacher participants were studied. These aspects included: the classroom management, seating arrangement, the logical flow of the lessons, how the lessons fitted into the previous knowledge and also led to the follow up lessons and the students' participation in the lesson. Additionally, the use of teaching and learning materials and the effectiveness of the feedback assessment were observed. The observation involved the use of simple observation tools as outlined in appendix 6 (page 186)

Staff Meetings: Each school organizes two regular staff meetings every term and as part of the data collection one staff meeting in each of the selected schools was observed. The meetings were usually organized during the beginning and end of each term. Permission was sought from the headteachers before attending any of the staff meetings. A number of aspects were observed at the staff meetings including issues discussed and decisions taken; and, how relevant the decisions were related to improving the schools. There was special focus on how the headteachers used their leadership to influence decision-making.

PTA Meetings: One PTA meeting was observed in each of the two schools. One PTA meeting each was organized in both schools for the term during the data collection period. Again, permission was sought from the headteachers and PTA Executives. Observation

was made for the entire duration of the PTA meetings attended. Proceedings at the meetings were observed by critically looking at the interactions regarding the relationship between parents and the teachers and headteachers along with the issues discussed; the importance of the issues to school improvement, the participation from parents in the decision-making, and finally the leadership role of the headteachers and PTA executives.

School-based In-service training: One INSET session in each of the two schools was observed. These two INSETs were organized at the beginning of the term when the schools met to learn new ideas and skills regarding strategies for improving the competencies of staff. The observation focused on the aspects of the training that were related to building the capacities of the teachers to enable them deliver quality education. These include: the topics, how interesting and challenging to the needs of the teachers, the facilitation at the training alongside the participation of the teachers, the interactions among teachers and facilitators, the materials used at the training, the leadership and the training that would help the teachers to improve their delivery.

In all the observations, the emphasis was on what happens at these places and being a passive observer I made sure that my presence at any of such places did not interfere with proceedings. Though they were aware of my presence, I remained passive in all cases.

#### **4.5.4 Documentation**

To augment the data collected from the interviews and observations (primary data), I selected and reviewed some documents in the two schools that were related to improvement in the schools. Documentary materials are considered as legitimate source of data, provided that they are treated as produced and their context taken into consideration (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997; and Silverman, 1997). In this regard no material was altered. Documentary evidence as argued by Marshall and Rossman (2006) is useful as it provides information and facilitates analysis along with providing validity checks and triangulation as a secondary data source (Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

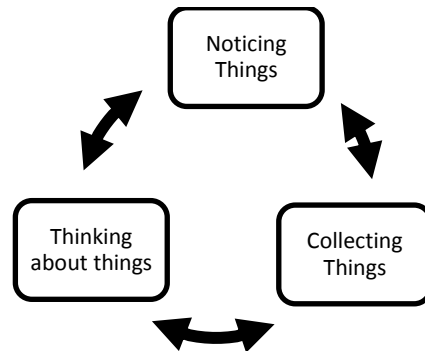
Key documents were selected from the Ghana Education Service, such as policies on school documentation and support for the delivery of basic education. These were used to further understand the school improvement practices. The documents included: the school timetable, teachers' lesson notes, students' attendance register and class/homework exercise books, teachers' attendance book, school performance improvement plans (SPIP), and minutes of PTA and staff meetings (see appendix 2, page 177). The analysis of these documents aimed to form a deeper understanding of the specific practices in schools that contribute to a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. The data from the documentations were presented as summary charts or photographs (see appendix 2).

#### **4.6 Data Analysis**

The data analysis involves the use of interview responses, focus-group discussions, field notes, and observations made from the events and also evidence from the documentary reviews. This was guided by three broad methods of presenting findings from qualitative research: 1) developing a narrative to describe a situation, event, episode or instance; 2) identifying the main themes that emerge from the field notes or transcription of the in-depth interviews and writing about them, quoting extensively in verbatim format; and, 3) in addition to (2), also quantifying the main themes in order to provide their prevalence and thus significance (Kumar, 2011).

The data analysis for this research followed the guidance of the Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) process (fig. 4.2, page 72) developed by Seidel (1998). Seidel points out that data analysis is a process involving, noting important things relevant to the study, collecting data through interviews, observation and documentary reviews, and thinking about emerging interesting things relevant to the study (Seidel, 1998). As figure 4.2 (page 71) suggests, the qualitative data analysis process is not linear rather it is an iterative and progressive process. Seidel (1998) is of the view that data analysis is an intimate spiral and recursive process because to him one stage of the analysis can draw you back to an earlier stage and is in a sense holographic, meaning that in each step of the process it may connect the other stages.



**Fig. 4.2: The Qualitative Data Analysis Process**

*Source: Seidel (1998)*

Again, data analysis can be frustrating if the data is accumulated which Cohen et al (2007) refer to as ‘overload’ of data. To avoid any such overload, after each day of interviewing the responses were transcribed into written form to ease the process of data analysis and to ensure any overload of data was avoided. This was in line with the suggestion from Cohen et al (2007) that qualitative research rapidly amasses huge amounts of data and therefore early analysis is advisable. Also as suggested by Patton (2002) there is no point at which data collection ends and analysis begin and so the data collection and analysis was considered as an on-going process throughout the study. At the end of the data collection all the transcribed recorded interviews and discussions were collated and the emerging issues were classified under the different themes in line with the research questions as follows:

1. Prevailing conditions in the schools, for example, attendance of teachers
2. Conditions promoting effective teaching and learning, for example, classroom infrastructure
3. Role of community in the improvement processes, for example, contribution of levies
4. Role of headteacher leadership in the improvement processes, for example, building consensus

5. Policies directing the improvement process, for example, extended instructional hours

Following the methods of Kumar (2011) the interview responses were then triangulated with the observations noted from the lesson observations, staff meetings, PTA meetings and INSET sessions; along with the review of documents (school performance improvement plans, teacher and pupil attendance, teachers' lesson notes, and students' class exercise books/homework). They were then integrated into the text of the thesis including verbatim responses of participants to keep the 'feel' of the interviews. In some cases, photographs of some of the observed events and actions were presented to illustrate the actions.

#### **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

Good research is research that is carried out in an ethical manner, and this relates both practical and moral issues around the research (Christians, 2005; and Oliver, 2003). Qualitative research, especially, when using case study approaches demands ethical consideration. The research often involves interactions with participants generating strong feelings or emotions that need to be considered. This was specifically the case to my position as Director of Basic Education engaging with my subordinates as an insider researcher. Ethical issues considered in this study include: researcher and participants' identity; negotiating for access, informed consent, and confidentiality of participants (Christians, 2005). I obtained a Certificate of Approval from the Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) of the University of Sussex, reference 1112/01/09 signed 13/03/2012. This implies that I satisfied all the conditions that were required by the University and was therefore given approval to commence the collection of the data.

##### **4.7.1 Researcher's and Participants' Identity**

In this research there existed ethical issues regarding the identity of the interviewer and the participants. The biggest challenge was how to overcome the power relations as an insider

researcher in the collection of data. However, being guided by Dunne, Pryor, & Yates (2005) regarding power relations associated with identity challenges at interviews, the power gap between the researcher (myself) and especially, headteachers and teachers who happen to be subordinates in the Ghana Education Service structure of authority had to be taken into consideration. In view of this, cautious remarks to remind participants were often made to remind participants of my role as a researcher but not as Director of Education who was there to ensure the compliance of policies of the Ghana Education Service. For example, in Kojokrom JHS techniques were used such as declining the headteacher's chair that was offered as it would not have usually been offered to a researcher. Instead I responded, "Oh Sir, do you want me to take your post, that chair is for the position, please be proud and enjoy your position, you are currently the only headteacher of Kojokrom JHS". He smiled and gently said, "Oh Sir! ...that is how we do it here whenever 'big men' (people in authority) like you come to the school". This statement was a clear indication of how the identity and status of the interviewer made a difference to the interview. Instead the situation was helped by subtle reminders of the role as a researcher as opposed to the Director of education. This was also supported by showing respect for their positions as participants. In some cases interviews were conducted outside of the offices where there was less interference regarding societal protocols.

#### **4.7.2 Negotiating for Access**

While planning the collection of data for the thesis, the Ga Municipal Directorate of Education was visited on the 14 February 2012 and the practicalities of the research in the Municipality were discussed. Although official permission was not necessary for such a project, respect was still shown to the director's position. The director in turn was very helpful as she appeared to be conversant with research. All the necessary assistance was given by asking the Circuit Supervisor to introduce the researcher project to the schools to announce the objectives of the research in the selected schools. Identity then became an issue as it would be unlikely be that the Director and headteachers would object my entry into the schools, but it was still important to ensure the easy access and my position did not mean participants could not speak freely in their responses. In view of this the participants

were encouraged to focus on the academic element of the exercise which demanded that they should be critical in their responses. The participants' official positions were also respected throughout the process. One method used was to enter the headteachers' offices by saying: "you are the Land Lord and you have every right to deny me access". The participants showed evidence that my position as a researcher was noted as all discussions were focused on the research. For example, in response to a remark made in the initial discussions by the District Director of Education, regarding the need for personnel of GES to speak about the positives seen in the district, the Director remarked:

"Ei sir, you are right oh! We have always been bothered with the challenges of the schools – the inadequate teaching and learning materials like even chalk, but as you said under these conditions some schools are doing well but we never talk about them, you are right" (14 Feb. 2012).

#### **4.7.3 Informed Consent of Participants**

According to Christians (2005), informed consent relates to the researcher being open to his/her participants about the nature and purpose of the research and to ensure that the participants consent voluntarily to take part in the study. In view of this, it was ensured that permission of participants was sought through letter. In addition detailed consent forms indicating the aim and purpose of the study and what they were required to do in agreeing to participate in the study were submitted to participants for their consent (see appendix 3 for a copy of the consent form). The two headteachers assisted in the identification of the other participants (teachers and parents). Two of the teachers and parents from each school who seemed most interested in the study were selected from a pool of community members and teachers. In all instances, it was assured to all participants that they were free to discontinue with the study if they wished. These assurances were written in the information sheet for the participants (see appendix 4, page 179). As Leary (2001) points out, every researcher is obliged by the ethical principles in research to protect participants' rights and welfare (p. 330, Leary, 2001). Sikes (2004) also asserts that since research is an activity that affects people's lives, it should be ethical. Leary holds the view that obtaining informed consent indicates that the researcher respects the participants' privacy and

provides them with the required information which could help them to decide whether to accept or decline to participate in the research (Leary, 2001, p. 335).

The need for participants to be critical in their responses was taken into consideration. Time was taken to explain the intentions of a researcher and the research as a whole. The research proposals were discussed thoroughly with the participants highlighting the objectives of the study, the expectations of participants and of the research, the time frame and the mode of the research. All ethical issues were strongly considered throughout the research process.

Furthermore, all the necessary information regarding the research was shared with participants to enable them to make their own decisions to participate in the research or not. Time was taken specifically in negotiating with the parents to adequately discuss the objective of the study. The fact that the research focused more on the positive characteristics of the school helped in the negotiations. The responses were encouraging. For example, with the participant Yaro (PTA member of Kojokrom JHS), at first he did not feel comfortable because he was very much concerned about his work as he said, ‘masser’ (meaning master), I leave for fishing early and come back late and so it will be difficult for us to meet”. Knowing very well he was a fisherman and on Tuesdays they don’t go fishing, the issue was resolved by suggesting a new meeting time on Tuesday. After the participants indicated their willingness to participate in the research, a meeting with each of them was arranged to discuss the detailed proposals and their specific roles in the research. When the conditions regarding the research proposals and the collection of data was agreed, the participants were kindly requested to sign the consent forms (see appendix 5, page 181, for a copy of the consent forms) which all willingly agreed to. Throughout the research period none of the participants indicated a wish to withdraw from the research. They all collaborated very well and gave the assurance of their readiness to respond to any follow up meetings or conversations when necessary.

#### **4.7.4 Confidentiality**

Privacy and confidentiality refer to the unwanted disclosure of information about the participants which may potentially affect them. In this regard the issue of confidentiality was thoroughly discussed before the start of data collection. Participants were therefore assured of their anonymity and confidentiality in terms of how the findings would be revealed. They were assured that only fictitious names would be used and specific reference would not be made to schools or individuals to allow anyone to discern the real person or schools which were being referred to in the study. For example, headteacher of Kojokrom JHS is named Kojo while that of Yawkrom JHS is Yaw.

#### **4.7 Summary**

The methods and methodology in research are very critical as it is the evidence of the systematic approach taken to collect data that form the basis for arriving at findings and conclusions. The methodology is vital regarding any further use of the data and application of the findings. In this case, the methodology has been strongly considered throughout the research, using selected ontological and epistemological assumptions. The method for data collection including, interviews, observations and documentary analysis were adequately discussed drawing upon relevant literature. Due to the case study approach involving human interactions ethical consideration was a key part of the research. It was also indicated how the data collected would be analysed in line with the themes that emerged from the study and in relation to the research questions. The next chapters show the analysis of the data collected using this methodology.

## **CHAPTER 5: PREVAILING CONDITIONS IN THE HIGH ACHIEVING PUBLIC BASIC SCHOOLS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This Chapter analyses the data collected from the in-depth interviews and observations regarding the conditions prevailing in the two high achieving public schools. This chapter analyses three key school conditions that emerged from the study that appeared to have contributed significantly in promoting an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning in the selected schools: 1) improved school infrastructure; 2) sustainable school finances, 3) high teacher commitment to curriculum change, 4) high parents/community participation, and 5) strong headteacher leadership (item 4 and 5 are discussed in subsequent chapters).

### **5.1 Improved School Infrastructure and Other Facilities**

Physical infrastructure is a key component of the school climate that allows for a school environment conducive in promoting effective teaching and learning (Freiberg and Stein, 1999). The school appearance represented by the organization of the school buildings is a vital factor as it provides the first impression that is registered by anyone who visits any school for the first time. Factors to consider are: the type of classroom buildings, the nature of the compound, the decorations on the walls, the location of the buildings, the size of classrooms in relation to class size, the type of furniture, facilities such as toilet facilities, water and electricity, and access road to the school.

Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS though face some challenges as far as school infrastructure and facilities are concerned, they have made progress over the years in addressing the challenges. For example, Kojokrom JHS has no toilet or access to portable water of their own but the school shares in a nearby public toilet and has also provided plastic containers in which students fetch water from nearby public pipe-borne water. Yawkrom however, has a toilet but like Kojokrom JHS does not have portable water and

like Kojokrom JHS the school has also provided plastic containers in which students fetch in water from nearby public pipe-borne water. These two schools however, have adequate textbooks for mathematics and English where every pupil has access to each of the core textbooks. Generally, the availability of infrastructure including other essential facilities such as classrooms, toilets, portable water, furniture, and textbooks in the two schools appear better than average normal public basic schools. Table 5.1 shows at a glance the infrastructure and other facilities in the two selected schools.

**Table 5.1: Availability of basic infrastructure and other facilities in Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS**

	Toilet		Portable Water		Classroom		Furniture		Textbooks	
	Yes /No	Remarks	Yes /No	Remarks	Yes /No	Remarks	Yes /No	Per/pupil ratio	Maths per/pupil ratio	English per/pupil ratio
Kojokrom JHS	No	Access public toilet	No	Substitute d with water containers	Yes	Good	Yes	1:1	1.1	1.1
Yawkrom JHS	Yes	Availabl e but not adequate	No	Substitute d with water containers	Yes	Good but yet to be completed	Yes	1:1	1.1	1.1

Participants appear to be excited in their submissions during the interviews, about the infrastructure situations in the two schools looking at the improvement they have chalked over the years, especially regarding where they started from looking at where they have come from.

The following were the expressions from participants from Kojokrom JHS regarding the facilities in the school.

“...with these structures (pointing to the school building), we have no cause not to perform. We have the school building which is the fundamental need of every school” (Kodua)



“...this is what we have all yearned for over the years (making reference to the school building) and we are all happy for where we are now” (Kuntu).

“...we feel proud about our school now and I wish you had an idea about how the structures looked like some years ago” (Kwarteng)

From Yawkrom JHS: Yaw (headteacher of Yawkrom JHS) in his usual smile said:

“The school is now the eye of many people in the church and the community. Even the church, that initially sacked us from using the small church as a classroom, accusing my students for having stolen some church items, now hold their meetings in our classrooms. It is now the best place for their meetings. Also, the community which initially were against the Chief of the village for giving us this large plot of land because they thought they were being denied their livelihood from the stone cracking business at the site now even want the Chief to add more. Most of their children are now in the school and they boast about the school”.

Yilo, the PTA Chairman in similar excitement also said,

“We are all amazed by the developments going on in this school. We never expected that such developments could go on here. Look! ...we are even constructing a football field on the rocky land. It is indeed exciting to see the developments going on, I can't believe it”!

Kojo, pointing to the flower beds in front of the school said: “I want to plant more trees and flowers to beautify the compound but the stray animals are disturbing us”. Yaw in similar sentiments was eager to show their achievements pointing to the young trees they have planted. Yawkrom JHS has its own premises unlike Kojokrom JHS which shares a compound with other schools. Yaw was therefore very optimistic that the school's plans are to develop the compound to the admiration of all who visit the school.

Participants appeared very excited and wanted to share their positive feelings about the schools. The two schools again have demonstrated their collaborative commitment to improve the school and as indicated by Yaw, the tree seedlings were provided by a parent showing community support.

According to the two headteachers the infrastructure developments have contributed immensely to increased enrolment and raised the confidence levels of teachers, parents and students. Kojo, started the JHS 1 with 25 students in 2003 but now has a class size of over 60, an increase of 140% in nine years. He stated that in previous years, he had to go from school to school to poach for students during admission season. The headteacher of Yawkrom confirmed that the high enrolment of the school now was also due to the improved infrastructure. He made reference to parents in the community who had previously sent their children to private schools, however were now bringing back some of those children to their school. He said, "...now that we are no more holding classes under trees and our students are doing well in the BECE they are coming back". The headteacher indicated that he started with 18 students at JHS 1 in 2003 but could boast of two classes of over 60 students in one class, an increase of over 230% in nine years.

Furthermore, the two schools appear optimistic in their quest to complete all the ongoing infrastructure projects. While Kojokrom is planning to fence their school and construct toilet facilities with the support of the district assembly and parents; Yawkrom is also planning to complete the computer laboratory and staff common room, fence the school, plaster and paint the classroom blocks, and also construct a football field also through the support of parents and through individual and corporate sponsors. In response to a question as to how they were to accomplish the projects, Kojo though admitted it was not going to be easy indicated that he would continue to lobby the district assembly and the members of parliament for the necessary support. He said, "Oh! ...the assembly has included the construction of the wall and toilet in their 2014 plan of work and I have to keep reminding them while I still implore parents to support the school with the little they can". Yaw on the other hand, emphasized their support from a foreign philanthropist who he said has helped the school reach its current stage. According to the headteacher, the foreigner came to assist

them not only because she had funds available but because the community, especially, the church showed interest in the construction. Yaw indicated that due to the commitment from the church and the community, the philanthropist has involved other foreign friends who according to the headteacher visit the school every year to assist in the construction. The vast support from the stakeholders appears to have motivated the headteacher intensifying his search for further support from other stakeholders. He cited that ‘MTN’ a telecommunication company has mounted their mask on the compound of the school and has in turn promised to support the school in future infrastructure developments.

The classroom infrastructure appears to have boosted the confidence and expectation levels of parents, the community, students, teachers and school authorities which this thesis argues has brought about the high students’ performance. Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS appear to have shown the way as to how resources could be mobilized in support of school improvement.

## **5.2 School Finances**

The introduction of the capitation grant to all public basic schools in led to the abolishing of all forms of levies that were being paid by parents at that time such as levies for sports and culture, minor maintenance, basic teaching and learning materials. The grant as per the guidelines is given to the individual schools based on the enrolment of the school. This arrangement appears to favour some schools with higher enrolment. Schools in the rural areas where enrolment is lower compared with those in the urban areas often lose out in gross terms. For example, while Kojokrom with 185 students in 2012/13 academic year receives GH¢711.00 (GH¢4.50 per pupil per year), Yawkrom JHS with 384 students in the same period received GH¢1,728.00 (see table 14). Although every school receives the same rate per pupil, GH¢4.50, schools with smaller enrolment often need just as much money as the schools with higher enrolment for maintenance and this will have implications for school development.

With the growing interest in 21<sup>st</sup> century technology to improve teaching and learning in schools, schools appear to be challenged to meet such technological demands. For example, it was not surprising to find the two schools gradually replacing all chalkboards with white boards to allow the teachers to use water-based markers which they found to be safer and more convenient than the dusty white chalk. Teachers appear to be happy with this project as remarked by Kuntu, “we are now okay with the white board because we have said goodbye to the dust from the white chalk”. In addition both schools have created computer rooms and are yearning to have computers and their accessories. In response to a question regarding the adequacy of the grant Kojo said, “...we don’t think of the capitation grant very much because it is just not enough and also not regularly released and you cannot plan any meaningful activity with it”. Along the same regards Yaw said, “... there is no way we can use the meager and unreliable capitation grant from the government to undertake any improvement programmes in the school”.

The two headteachers do not only talk about the inadequacy of the grant but also the irregular release of the grant that appear to make it difficult for the schools to implement their school performance improvement plans (SPIP). The challenges with the regular releases of the capitation grant are clearly indicated in table 5.2 (page 84). For example, in the 2010/11 academic year only one tranche of the capitation grant was released, and in 2011/12 and 2012/13 two tranches were released. The schools have to function without the capitation grant and rely on the PTA to realize their school performance improvement plan.

**Table 5.2: Frequency in the releases of capitation grant to schools**

District/Year		Total Enrolment	Total for the Year (GH¢)	Releases (GH¢)			Balance Outstanding (GH¢)
				Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	
2010/11	Kojokrom JHS	162	729.00	243.00	Nil	Nil	486.00
	Yawkrom JHS	332	1,494.00	498.00	Nil	Nil	996.00
2011/12	Kojokrom JHS	156	702.00	234.00	Nil	234.00	234.00
	Yawkrom JHS	344	1,548.00	516.00	Nil	516.00	516.00
2012/13	Kojokrom JHS	158	711.00	237.00	237.00	Nil	237.00
	Yawkrom JHS	384	1,728.00	576.00	576.00	Nil	576.00

**Source: GES Capitation Grant Report, 2012**

The challenge of unreliable government funding supports the claim by the headteachers that they face challenges in running the schools without the support from the PTAs. Kojo with sentiments of frustration commented, “... we don’t think of the capitation grant so much, if it comes fine, if it doesn’t what can we do because if you plan with it you will not be able to get the supporting finances”. The inadequacy of the grant as expressed by the headteachers, is also evidenced in the school performance improvement plans (SPIPs) of the two schools.

However, despite all the challenges with inadequacies and irregular release of the capitation grant, the two schools are able to prepare and execute their school performance improvement plans. For example, as indicated in table 5.3 (page 85), though Kojokrom JHS was expecting GH¢237.00 from capitation grant for the first term of the 2012/13 academic year but planned for activities costing GH¢634.00 (table 5.3, page 85). This phenomenon as explained by the headteacher (Kojo), he was expecting that with the

support of the community and the PTA the school would be able to take care of the deficit. The situation in Yawkrom JHS was not different from that of Kojokrom JHS.

**Table 5.3: Kojokrom JHS Approved School Performance Improvement Plan (Term one, 2012/13)**

Objectives/Activities	Input Description of Consumable Items	Quantity	Frequency	Unit Cost (GHC)	Total Cost (GHC)	Grand Total (GHC)
INSET- Mathematics: Preparation of TLMs for teaching mathematics	- Manila cards, markers, etc.	1	1	37.00	37.00	37.00
INSET- Pre-technical skills: Preparation of TLMs for teaching Pre-technical Skills	- Manila cards, markers, etc.	1	1	37.00	37.00	82.00
	- Hammer	5	1	4.00	20.00	
	- Hacksaw	5	1	4.00	20.00	
	- T&T	1	1	5.00	5.00	
INSET English language: Preparation of TLMs for teaching English language	- Stationery (manila cards, markers, etc.)	1	1		37.00	37.00
Sports: Undertaking of sports events	- Sports levy	1	1	30.00	30.00	94.00
	- food,	16	1	3.00	48.00	
	- T&T	16	1	1.00	16.00	
Examinations: Printing of the term's examination questions for all subjects	- Question papers and answer sheets	384	1	1.00	384.00	384.00
<b>Grand total</b>						<b>634.00</b>

One major concern was however the source of funding for the major construction works in the schools which appeared to put too much pressure on the school and for that matter the community and the PTA. The participants appeared not too worried about the projects which to the PTA chairman of Yawkrom JHS (Yilo) was also the support from the community and parents to support the government's effort at providing education for their children. He said, "...the Constitution provides for the participation of the community and parents in education delivery and should therefore be encouraged". The headteachers were also of the view that the parents and the community should be encouraged to support the schools because to them their children would also benefit from the support. Kojo said, "...our children should not suffer like we suffered and so we should try to make them more comfortable instead of always relying on the government for everything". Yaw on the other hand in appreciation of the contribution from parents said, "...the PTA is our redeemer and they are ready to support us, they provide whatever we need to promote quality teaching and learning in the school and all we need to do is to encourage them and commend them for their effort". It is clear from both their comments that community support is a vital support mechanism for the schools in their school improvement strategies.

It was significant from the data that both schools investigated were carrying out some renovations, maintenance and to some extent new infrastructure projects. These headteachers have also made available all the essential supplies the schools required for teaching and learning. Most of the classrooms in the schools were fitted with white boards, gradually phasing out the use of chalk. With the challenges the government faces in providing the necessary essential requirements and releasing the capitation grant regularly, Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS are relying on the community and parents for the running of their schools. This raises issues of interest regarding the complementary roles of the community and parents as against the government policy on 'fee free' education. The implications of this issue for future policy review are discussed in chapter 8.

### **5.3 High Teacher Commitment to Curriculum Change**

Bush (2007) argues that teaching and learning approaches are significant factors that affect students' learning. This research identified several aspects of the teaching and learning approaches that appear to account for the high performance of the two schools. These were: the schools' timetable that provides additional time for learning, the presence of trained teachers, the adequate preparation of lessons by teachers, the effective pedagogical skills exhibited in the classrooms, the regular students' assessment and feedback, and the effective supervision of learning by the headteachers.

#### **5.3.1 Extended and Effective Use of School Instructional Hours**

Effective use of instructional time remains critical to improving the achievement levels of students as it provides opportunity for engaging both teachers and students meaningfully (Lockheed and Levin, 1993). The two schools investigated follow the national curriculum except that they operate an extended time-table that appears to be formalized as part of the normal time table of the two schools. In this regard, the two schools spend over two hours a day more than in most public basic schools. A number of extra-curricular activities have also been introduced into the schools' time-table as also part of the formal time table for instructions. Both schools start formal classes earlier and close late at variance to what is prescribed by the national curriculum. The instructional hours, including the extra hours are meaningfully utilized where students and teachers are engaged. Teachers use part of this time also to mark their students' class exercises and homework, write their lesson notes, provide feedback to students on their work output, and sometimes meet with the headteachers to discuss professional issues. Headteachers on the other hand take advantage of the extended time to carry out their usual one-on-one coaching and interaction with teachers on issues of professional development. Students on the other hand are actively engaged with their teachers, headteachers or on their own and with friends.



### ***5.3.1.1 School Hours at Kojokrom JHS***

Kojokrom JHS starts school activities as early as 6:30 a.m. The first thirty minutes are used by students to clean the compound, those that are not assigned any cleaning duty learn on their own or with others in the classrooms. The next 30 minutes is spent at the morning assembly where students parade to listen to few announcements from the headteacher, teachers and sometimes the students' leadership. Formal school hours start at 7:30 a.m. until 4:00pm when it ends for the JHS 1 & 2 while the JHS 3 classes continue until 5:00 p.m. or in some cases, later. This is an indication that JHS 1 - 2 spend over 8 hours a day in school while the JHS 3 class spends over 9 hours which are far beyond the normal approved instructional hours of roughly 6 hours a day (8.00am – 2.10pm). In some cases students stay even longer in school, for example in Kojokrom JHS where the headteacher and the assistant headteacher have accommodation on the school campus they are able to stay longer to offer extra assistance for those in need.

### ***5.3.1.2 School Hours at Yawkrom JHS***

Yawkrom JHS also starts school at 6:30 a.m. and closes at 4.00pm for JHS 1& 2 levels and 5:00 p.m. for the JHS 3 students. Unlike Kojokrom JHS, the headteacher of Yawkrom JHS like many public basic schools has no access to a bungalow on campus; Yaw has to commute to work. Students usually clean the school compound in the early hours of the day, and after that spend about one hour (7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m.) which they refer to as 'silent hour' when students learn on their own with little or no supervision from teachers. Teachers also take advantage of this 'silent hour' to mark their students' assignments or meet some students who may need their assistance in their academic work. Classroom instructions start at 8.00 a.m. and end at 2:20 p.m. and spend additional one and half hours (2.30pm to 4.00pm) to do extra activities such as debate, 'spelling bee', sports and games, culture, club activities (for example, HIV Aids Club, Environmental Science Club, Mathematics Club). According to the headteacher all students are supposed to participate in any of the activities of their interest but they are sometimes organized by their teachers in particular activities. Appendix 7 (page 184) shows the timetable for Kojokrom JHS.

Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS spend more instructional hours than other government schools and consciously devote essential time for extra-curricular activities, self-learning and cleaning the school grounds. There are no labourers working on the school compound and so students have to do the cleaning themselves like in many public basic schools. The opportunity for extra-curricular activities appears to provide additional learning opportunities for the students. In response to the question, how useful are the long hours in school in benefitting the students, Yaw said, "...the early morning activities provide opportunity for the students to be on their own and take responsibility for their actions, learn without or with little supervision from their teachers and also learn with others and also provide opportunity for sharing experiences". To Yaw, such extra-curricular practices make the students more responsible as they learn to spend solitary time wisely. Kojo also emphasized the usefulness of morning activities which to him is a good time to learn more about the students and how they spend time on their own. He remarked:

"I really enjoy the morning activities because this is the time I get to know the students better, and also informally interact with them. I critically observe how they behave when they are on their own, especially, when they are cleaning the compound which I see as a duty they have to perform".

The study also shows that the leadership of the students (prefects) supervise the cleaning and morning assembly. Kuntu says, "...it helps the students to also practice leadership". However the perspective of the parents must be considered regarding their children spending more time in school. Three parent participants out of the four were in favour of the extra time. For example, Yoofi of Yawkrom JHS was particularly in support of the long hours because to her as a market woman, she is able to spend more time in the market and in turn earn more money. She said, "this is the time most workers after they close from work come to the market to buy few items for home and if the children get home early and there is nobody there they can misbehave" (translated from Twi). Koranteng from Kojokrom JHS though was not in favour of the additional time appeared to have accepted it as all other children are doing same. He said, "...you know I usually come home late but

my wife needs assistance at home but the girl also comes home late and not able to help with the home chores as we expect, but what can we do, all the children are participating in the long hours and I don't want my children to miss all what will be learnt during such time".

The teacher participants on the other hand also find the long hours in school very helpful and to them they are able to do much more with their work, such as preparing their lesson notes and marking students' exercises along with making time with their headteachers to discuss some professional issues. As Yaro, the mathematics teacher at Yawkrom JHS said, "mathematics needs more time and with the extended time we are able to get enough periods (320 minutes per week) enabling me to complete the JHS mathematics syllabus on time before the end of the year and make enough time for revision". Kojo confirming the need for more hours also said, "...the early morning period is good for me because at such a cool time of the day I am able to meet my teachers for my usual coaching and mentoring when necessary. I am also able to make time to meet students or even parents who might need my assistance on a one-on-one basis". The headteacher was very emphatic on the individual coaching and mentoring as he preferred that to the usual in-service training for all teachers. He said,

"...in-service training for all teachers is not the best, especially, when teachers are not many and also for the cost of servicing such meetings. We have to look for money to service the training but for the coaching and mentoring it is my time and it has no cost implications for the school. The teachers trust me for my patience and experience and to me the coaching and mentoring works better for me and I am also able to share my experiences with them and comment on their individual weaknesses"

School-based in-service training has not been very regular in Kojokrom JHS (mostly once a term) to confirm the headteacher's preference to individual coaching and mentoring. However, in addition, there is record of in-service trainings organized by the circuit

supervisor for teachers in the circuit. According to Kojo, since the school has no shady trees teachers are always found in the staff common room which to him is good because he can at a glance see which teachers are absent.

As regards to the positives of the early attendance of teachers, not only does it allow them time to do other things in school but to some coming earlier is a way of decreasing the commuting time to work. As Kuntu said, "...coming early, apart from making time to prepare for the day's work you avoid the usual morning traffic jam". One teacher uses public transport and lives a distance away from the school, he supported the fact that coming earlier allows for better use of the time rather than waiting in traffic for extended periods of time.

These findings show that for the two schools, the organization of the first few hours before the beginning of formal instructions makes a significant difference to the success of the school. Students and teachers undertake different activities which appear to prepare them for the day. Students are involved in activities which help them inculcate certain habits such as cleanliness, self-learning, and socializing. The engagements in extra-curricular activities appear to strengthen their personal development skills such as self-discipline, people skills and learning to compete with others in later life.

The extended instructional hours in the two schools are not without cost as parents in the two schools have to pay for the extra hours both in kind and in cash. The detail cost will be discussed in chapter six. All participants – headteachers, teachers and parents appear to support the extended instructional. Kojo stated that the decision to extend the instructional hours was with the approval of the PTA. As he said, "I only initiated the idea because I felt it will help to get more time for teaching and learning and it was supported by the PTA Executives and approved by the PTA general meeting". As also confirmed by Yilo (PTA Chairman of Yawkrom JHS) when asked how levies were initiated he said, "...we the Executives work closely with the headteacher and our major role is to encourage and

mobilize resources from parents to support the school's developments". Parents are therefore in most cases influenced by their PTA leaders as the data has demonstrated. This again raises concerns about the cost of education and who bears the cost in relation to the government 'fee free' education and the role of the community and parents. It can be argued that the parents are unsatisfied with the quality education provided by the 'fee free' basic education hence their preparedness to pay the extra levies to secure quality education for their children. The awareness of quality basic education is receiving increasing attention as advocated by the civil society such as, the Ghana National Coalition Campaign for Education (GNCCE). Despite the controversial element of the extended hours Kwarteng, the PTA chairman of Kojokrom JHS and a public servant said,

... "it is like choosing between failing to pay the levies for extra classes<sup>14</sup> for your ward to fail the BECE and in the end having to pay additional cost for remedial classes to enable your ward to pass and go to the senior high school; or, paying for the extra classes to help your ward to pass the BECE once and for all to enable your ward enter the senior high school without any break after JHS".

The statement from Kwarteng was found interesting as it raises issues about the parents' interest in their children's education and their expectation for high achievements. The high expectation was also echoed by the headteacher of Kojokrom JHS in response to a question about his views on the extended hours and the cost implications. He said, "...though teachers are incentivized by the little levies paid by the parents it is not the motive for the extended hours, but it is more about the high achievements by the students in the competitive BECE". He emphasized that the school started extra classes without parents paying money for some time until parents realized its benefit to their children and so agreed at a PTA meeting to pay a little to motivate the teachers for the extra hours spent". Kojo cited an example in which one of his students won the National Presidential Award. With excitement reporting on the award he said, "we were all happy - teachers, parents, students

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<sup>14</sup> Extra classes refer to the additional hours where teachers and pupils are engaged as part of the normal class hours. Pupils therefore stay longer than the normal government approved hours for schools and in most cases parents pay for the cost of the extension as incentives to teachers.

and of course myself, when one of our students was selected among the recipients of the Presidential Award, for being among the 20 selected well-behaved and academically brilliant students across the country for the 2011 award”. He continued with a smile and said, “... as you know the award has brought fame to the school, everybody talks about it, parents, teachers and students and all of us are proud about the achievements”. Kojo was very proud of the achievement of the school and to him the achievement is attributed to the long extended hours in school where students and teachers are meaningfully engaged.

The extended hours in the two schools raise issues about the two school of thought, whether the formal time allocations for school instructional hours and for each subject are adequate or inadequate; or whether there are too many subjects to be taught given the time constraints. In either way, there is policy implication for the curriculum regarding instructional hours, subjects taught or learnt at the basic school level, and the teachers’ time on task.

This study shows that many benefits can be sought from additional school hours. These include: adequate completion of the syllabus, engaging students in extra-curricular activities to improve their personal development, along with allowing working parents additional time to earn income to support their families and children in school as indicated by the participants (Kodua, Kojo, Yaro and Yilo).

### **5.3.2 Teacher Quality**

Teachers play an important role in shaping the teaching and learning experiences of any school (Bush, 2007). Bush explains that teachers have direct relationship with students and to a large extent account for students’ learning. The quality of the teacher in terms of qualification and commitment to students’ learning is therefore critical in creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. UNESCO indicates that a good teacher in simple terms should be qualified (based on standards) and trained for the teaching profession (UNESCO, 2012). This is under the assumption that a trained teacher

has the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude to enable him/her perform his/her role as competent and diligent teacher. The teacher quality in Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS in terms of qualification, experience and commitment appear to be outstanding relative to other public schools. Table 5.4 shows the percentage of trained teachers in the two selected schools compared with the national average of trained teachers at the JHS.

**Table 5.4: % of Trained Teachers in selected schools compared with the national data**

	# Teachers (JHS)	% Trained (JHS)
<b>National</b>	<b>72,277</b>	<b>83.3</b>
<b>Kojokrom JHS</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Yawkrom JHS</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Compiled from EMIS Data, 2012/13*

All the teachers in the two schools have at least the minimum qualification, that is, Diploma in Basic Education (DBE) as required by the Ghana Education Service. Kojokrom JHS has eight teachers including the headteacher (5 males and three females) who are all professionally trained holding Bachelor of Education Degrees (B.Ed.) in basic education with the exception of the headteacher who holds Diploma in Basic Education. Yawkrom JHS on the other hand has 11 trained professional teachers (nine males and two females). All the teachers hold Bachelor of Education Degree in basic education, all above the minimum qualification required for teachers in basic schools with one teacher holding Master's in Education Degree (M.Ed).

One interesting trend that emerged from the data is varying length of teaching experiences exhibited by the teachers. The least experienced teacher has two years and the most

experienced has 30 years. Many of the teachers have remained in the schools since they started. For example, in Kojokrom JHS, out of the eight teachers, five of them have remained in school since the school's opening in 2003. Yawkrom JHS also has eight out of eleven teachers who started with the school's opening in 2003. This is an indication that the teachers in both schools prefer to remain in the schools than moving elsewhere. The two schools in all cases have demonstrated strong leadership over the years and committed bringing the teachers together to build the schools. It appears the blend of years of experience and varied qualifications in the two schools have been well managed to the improvement of the two schools. For example, Kojo said, "...the blend of the varied qualifications and years of experience of teachers has been very helpful. You will not realize the differences because we take advantage of the strengths of each teacher to support one another".

Kojo, the most experienced teacher in the school has served over 30 years as a teacher. Excited by his long years of experience he comments, "...they call me father and so I make sure I support them like a father, especially, the less experienced, with my long classroom experience". He explains how he mentors his teachers: "Whenever new teachers come to the school, I take time to allow them to freely familiarize themselves with the school climate and also to allow them to bring up what new things they might have brought to the school. I study them and I then take time to brief them about the school and our expectations. From time to time I meet them as individuals to share my experiences with them". He cited an instance when one of the newly trained teachers posted to the school had experience in ICT and hence encouraged the other teachers to take interest in ICT. According to the headteacher, if not for the new teacher's presence in the school most of them would have little ICT skills. He was illustrating how important it was to welcome ideas from new teachers in the school. Overall, the quality of teachers in both schools in terms of qualifications appears encouraging with 100% trained teachers when compared with the national standard where over 12% of teachers at the JHS nationwide are untrained (EMIS, 2012).



### 5.3.3 Teacher and Student Attendance

Attendance of teachers and students in school is critical as it provides opportunity for learning. The regularity and punctuality of teachers and students in school are great assets to schools as it assures good time and interaction with students in the teaching and learning process. Absenteeism is low in the two schools as compared to other studies in Ghana reporting high levels of teacher absenteeism (CDD, 2008; Abadzi, 2009; NIB, 2014).

Teacher Attendance: The attendance of teachers in both schools investigated is generally high, and not only do they come to school regularly but also punctually and stay longer than usual in school. In spite of the numerous concerns about the high incidence of teacher absenteeism in public basic schools (NIB, 2014, Abadzi, 2009; CDD, 2008), the situation in the two selected schools is different. The data on teachers' attendance in the two schools reveals that teachers are punctual and regular to school. The data also shows that headteachers of both schools consistently monitor the attendance records marking the name of any teacher who arrives after 8.00 a.m. when official school hours begins.

An example of the attendance of teachers' of Yawkrom<sup>15</sup> for the period beginning from 04 Sep. 2012 to 13 Dec. 2012 (term 1 of the 2012/13 academic year) is shown in table 5.8 (page 97). For the term under review there was 14 weeks when school was open. There was three public holidays during that period (Founder's Day – 23 Sep. 2013; Eid-ul-Adha – 16 Oct. 2013; and, Farmers' day – 03 Dec. 2013) and this brought the total number of days expected for schools to open to 65. The analysis shows that for that period, the average attendance for the 11 teachers of Yawkrom JHS computed weekly stood at 96.1% and more than 75% of the teachers were in school by 7.30 a.m.

The attendance record of teachers as indicated in table 5.5 (page 97) also shows that, the average percentage of teachers who were absent in the 14 weeks of the first term of the

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<sup>15</sup> The selection of Yawkrom JHS was not for any comparable preference but just to show an example from one of the schools which have similar high attendance rate

2013/14 at Yawkrom JHS was 3.4% lower than the national average: 19% in 2013 and 14% in 2014 as recorded by the National Inspectorate Board (NIB, 2013, 2014). 3.4% as the data shows also includes those who as reported by the headteacher for having sought for permission to attend to other approved events or programmes such as interviews for promotion and district in-service training programmes.

Yaro mentioned three things that to him were the motivating factors of teachers regularity, punctuality and longer hours in school. He said, "...we are motivated by the hardworking headteacher who is always expecting us to also work hard; the students show readiness to learn and parents are very supportive of their children's education and are ready to provide their needs even if it is with difficulty". To him, all teachers who live far away from the school were among the first to report to school. It appears all teachers in the two schools are highly motivated and have accepted punctuality and regularity as a status quo. Apart from Kojokrom JHS where the headteacher and assistant headteacher live on school premises, all other teachers and headteacher of Yawkrom JHS live outside the school but all arrive at school before 8.00 a.m.

**Table 5.5: Attendance of Teachers at Yawkrom JHS (Term 1 of 2012/13)**

<b>Week</b>	<b>No. of Days Present</b>	<b>No. of days Expected</b>	<b>% of Attendance</b>
Week 1	39	40	97.5
Week 2	47	50	94.0
Week 3	42	44	95.5
Week 4	55	55	100.0
Week 5	44	44	100.0
Week 6	42	44	95.5
Week 7	51	55	92.7
Week 8	51	55	92.7

Week 9	53	55	96.4
Week 10	44	44	100
Week 11	52	55	94.5
Week 12	54	55	98.2
Week 13	41	44	93.2
Week 14	42	44	95.5
			<b>96.1</b>

Students' Attendance: As the study shows students' attendance, like that of the teachers, has also been encouraging over the years. Students are in school as early as 6.30 a.m. until 7.30 a.m. or 8.00 a.m. when classes start at Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS respectively. They engage in cleaning of the compound, silent reading, and meaningful discussions. They also use the time to do their assignments. Table 5.6 (page 99) shows for example the attendance of JHS 3B<sup>16</sup> of Yawkrom JHS for the first term (Sep. – Dec.) of the 2012/13 academic year schools were open for 65 days. 26 out of the total enrolment of 54 in JHS 3B (representing 48%) were present for all the 65 days that the school was open (100% attendance rate); 49 out of 54 (representing 90.7% of enrolment) were in school for between 60-65 days; while the pupil who achieved the least attendance had 57 out of the total attendance of 65 (87.7% attendance rate). Students' average attendance in percentages is therefore 96.8% in Yawkrom JHS and this figure compares favourably with the average teacher attendance rate of 96.6%..

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<sup>16</sup> The selection of JHS 3B of Yawkrom JHS was not for any special preference but to show an example of one of the classes. The example is also from Yawkrom so that the attendance could be compared with that of the teachers' attendance at Yawkrom as shown in table 5.8.

**Table 5.6: Attendance of students at Yawkrom JHS (Term 1, 2012/13)**

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>No. Present (Total no. of students X no. of days school open)</b>						
	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Week 7</b>
No. of times for students' attendance	216	270	270	270	270	216	270
Attendance Recorded (Wk. 1-7)	216	260	253	266	267	212	267
% Present	100	96.3	93.7	98.5	98.9	98.2	98.9

	<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Week 14</b>
No. of times for students' attendance	270	270	270	270	270	216	216
Attendance Recorded (Wk. 8-14)	254	261	270	244	251	216	216
% Present	94.1	96.7	100	90.4	92.9	100	100

### **5.3.3 Classroom Teaching and Learning Practices**

This study undertook two lesson observations focusing on preparation by teachers, teacher's presence in the classroom, the pedagogical skills exhibited, and classroom management, especially, in providing opportunity for students to be actively engaged in the lessons. One lesson was observed in each of the selected schools with the intention of gaining a better understanding of the characteristics and activities that promote the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The lessons observed were delivered by Kodua of Kojokrom JHS (12/11/2012) and Yonso of Yawkrom JHS (14/11/2012). These teacher-participants gave permission for any of their lessons to be observed at the beginning of the

study. Having studied their termly forecast and lesson notes prepared two lessons were selected - a JHS 1 science lesson from Kodua and a JHS 1 ICT lesson from Yonso<sup>17</sup>. Each of the lessons covered a double period with the duration of 80minutes. Kodua handled the lesson entitled: ‘Rectilinear propagation of light’ in the broader topic of ‘light energy’ while Yonso handled the lesson entitled: ‘Information processing cycle’. A simple observation tool adapted from Teacher Education Division of the Ghana Education Service was used (see appendix 6, page 182). The themes for the lesson observation were:

i) Preparation

- a. Lesson notes
- b. Teaching and learning materials (TLMs)
- c. Feedback questions

ii) Lesson delivery

- a. Introduction (linking lesson to previous knowledge)
- b. Classroom arrangement (seating arrangement)
- c. Classroom management and control
- d. Distribution of questions and students’ responses to questions
- e. Engagement of students in the activities
- f. Use of teaching and learning materials

iii) Conclusion

- a. Feedback (summary from teacher)
- b. Class assignment or homework

Observations

i. Lesson Notes

The two lessons were prepared based on the approved lesson note format by the Ghana Education Service highlighting: objectives of the lesson, teacher-learner activities, teaching and learning materials to be used for the lesson, the core points indicating the knowledge

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<sup>17</sup> The selection of science and ICT lesson was based on the assumption that they were practical lessons which promote more engagement with students. JHS 1 lessons were selected because JHS 1 is a foundation class of the junior high school level which is assumed to receive serious attention by teachers.

and skills to be acquired by the students, and the evaluation exercise. Both lesson notes have been signed by the headteachers, in an indication that the prepared lessons have been approved by the headteachers. The lesson notes were generally good. Objectives were simple, measurable, accurate, relevance and time-bound (SMART), core points were appropriate and related to the objectives; and teachers provided activities which were relevant to core points/objectives and provided opportunity for students to understand new concepts

ii. Use of Teaching and Learning Materials

Both lessons were supported with appropriate and adequate teaching and learning materials, especially, with the science lesson where the teacher provided cardboards with holes at the centers, candles and lighter (Teacher ensured the safety of the students and guided them in the experiment). Diagrams were mostly used to explain the five stages of information processing cycle in the ICT lesson. The teacher of the ICT lesson however, did not use computers to explain the information processing cycle but rather improvised with diagrams. Although the diagrams were not the most appropriate apparatus, it was a good attempt since there were no computers in the school but by the dictate of the syllabus he was supposed to teach ICT.

Generally, the materials for the science lesson were excellent as the teacher provided the needed resources for all the groups. However, in addition to the group experiments, the individual students could have been given the opportunity to do the experiment themselves to ensure that all students understood the lesson.

iii. Class management (class control and students' participation)

The two lessons were engaging and interesting. Students were kept busy throughout the 80 minutes' lessons participating and actively involved in the lessons. The science lesson mostly involved group-work with students actively engaged however equal opportunities

were not given to each individual as some students took charge of the group-work. For the ICT lesson students were kept busy through the use of questions that appeared to be fairly distributed. It was however, difficult to conclude that the ICT lesson was adequately understood by all the students since some seem not to have appreciated the practical aspect of the lesson. Figure 5.1 shows the science lesson, as students were seen busily experimenting with the rectilinear propagation of light.

**Figure 5.1: Science lesson (Rectilinear: Propagation of Light)**



*Source: Author (12/11/2012)*

Figure 5.2 (page 103) shows the ICT lesson in which the teacher attempts an ICT lesson using diagrams to explain the information processing cycle. Students have been engaged, listening attentively and reflecting on what the teacher was saying. The teacher made the effort to engage the students under the situation without the use of computers despite the lack of computers.

**Figure 5.2: ICT Lesson (Information Processing Cycle)**



*Source: Author (14/11/2012)*

#### iv. Students' Assessment and Feedback

At the end of the two lessons teachers engaged students in some exercises trying to find out if students had understood the lessons. For example in the science lesson students presented their findings which generated interesting discussions. The ICT teacher also asked the students to draw the information processing cycle in their exercise books. In both cases teachers took time to offer assistance to the groups or to the individuals as they were carrying out their assignments. The teacher provided excellent supervision of the students' assessment and gave fruitful feedback to the students which appear to have enhanced the students' understanding.

After the lesson headteachers and respective teachers who taught the lessons were interviewed to find out their impressions of the lessons regarding the above four key lesson themes (i-iv). The headteachers and teachers agreed with the remarks made by the study. The feedback given from this session was greatly appreciated by the teachers. Yaw was so



impressed and said, “I wish you will visit us sometime again to have such a joint discussion”.

The ICT lesson brings to the forefront the need for schools to have computers and other infrastructure in order to make ICT lessons more interesting and practical as was indicated by the ICT teacher. Again, the quality of education is being questioned here as to how ICT could be handled without the requisite supporting facilities. In this regard, who bears the extra cost? The situation exposes the challenges schools face in the promotion of ICT in schools, an implication for policy consideration. This confirms the strong expectations of the two schools in collaboration of the PTAs to levy parents to procure computers for the schools.

Although teachers and students appeared at their ‘best behaviour’ with the presence of an external observer, it did not take away the objective of the observation which was not necessarily to look at their weaknesses but rather the best the schools could offer to promote effective teaching and learning.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This Chapter analysed the key conditions that prevail in the selected schools and which appear to have contributed to the creation of environments conducive to effective teaching and learning in the two schools. The study shows the transformation of the two schools – improved classroom infrastructure minimizing interruptions and providing safety for teachers and students; improved quality time for learning with increased time on task; varied opportunities for learning through both formal and informal approaches; and, high commitment of teachers through high attendance, regular assessment of pupils and quality teaching engaging students in the teaching and learning process. As the study shows, these improved conditions were as a result of the strong leadership and its relation with teachers, parents and the community in providing the synergy for the school improvement process.

Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS have adequately demonstrated the need for a stronger collaboration among all the key stakeholders and most importantly the headteacher leadership to drive the synergy. The study however brings to the fore policy implications regarding the cost of quality basic education and who bears the cost. These implications are discussed in chapter 8.

## **CHAPTER 6: PARENTS AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

### **6.0 Introduction**

Chapter 6 analyses the data collected from the in-depth interviews, observations, field notes and the documentary analysis regarding the participating role of parents and the communities in the improvement of the two selected schools. This chapter aims to identify the role the community plays in the creation of an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning in selected high achieving public basic schools.

### **6.1 Community Structure**

The important roles played by parents and the communities in the improvement of Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS have been adequately demonstrated in this study. The school community represented by individuals and group of persons including: Chiefs and Elders, the Church, the District/Municipal Assembly, Opinion Leaders (eg. Members of Parliament), parents, the Parent Teacher Association, and the School Management Committee have in diverse ways participated actively in the improvement of the schools. These individuals and group of persons see themselves as united members of the individual communities of the two schools identified by their geographical location and bonded by the goals of educational concerns to change conditions to improve the schools.

#### **6.1.1 Chiefs and Elders**

The contributions of the chiefs and elders to the development of the two schools have been significant especially in the provision of land for schools which is becoming increasingly difficult in recent years as land becomes scarcer, especially around the cities and towns. When Kojokrom was to move to its new site, the chiefs and elders agreed to provide land for the initial construction. Similarly, when Yawkrom JHS had to move out of the church premises to look for a new site to place the school, the chief and elders managed to give land for the construction of the school. Though, initially the women at Yawkrom resisted the chief's decision to give the land out for the school because it was the source of their

livelihood, cracking stones for sale to building constructors for income, they later agreed and even supported in the development of the school.

The chiefs and elders of the two communities continue to mobilize people and resources to support the school's improvement plans. Yawkrom JHS is now a flagship school in the community and hence it has attracted the support of the people in the community as demonstrated by their participation in school developmental activities. When asked how the community situation has changed for Yawkrom JHS, Yoofi states:

“...everybody now talks about Yawkrom JHS in the community and many of the people who sent their children to the private schools for the fact that they did not find any good public school in the community are now withdrawing their children and sending them to the school. It is a good sign that we are all happy about the school now and the past is forgotten” (translated from the Ghanaian language, Twi).

It now appears the community is thankful for their decision to award the land to the school. The PTA chairman (Yilo) comments on the decision:

“It was a hard decision oo! The women, especially, kicked against it but we were able to convince them. Some of us who know the importance of education had to come in to convince the people to accept the proposals. I agreed with them because there is no job here and that is what they live on to take care of their families. I can say that the community has not regretted and we are happy that we accepted for the school to be built here”.

The response from Yilo confirms the crucial role of the community in school improvement. The chiefs, the custodians of the land of the schools are critical in any school improvement

intervention. The SMC which is the community representatives in decision-making to improve schools should not be underrated and adequately supported to function effectively.

### **6.1.2 The Church**

Yawkrom JHS, a mission school of a faith-based origin, appears to have benefitted from the church despite the initial challenges. The headteacher of Yawkrom was identified as a hard working teacher elsewhere by the General Manager of schools and being a member of the church, was invited to start the new JHS when the primary was to be extended to include a JHS. As earlier explained, the school started with no buildings, under trees in the premises of the church until it was relocated to its new site offered by the chiefs and elders. The major developments in the school were actively supported by a foreign philanthropist, also a member of the church overseas. In addition to helping to build the classrooms, the church continues to support the school on regular basis through the monitoring and supervision by the local, regional and general manager of schools. This headteacher works closely with both the district education directorate and from the regional manager's office without any friction as experienced between district education directors and regional managers in some faith-based schools. Yaw in appreciating the collaborative roles of the circuit supervisor and the regional manager said, "...the local and regional managers complement the efforts by the circuit supervisors to bring sanity in the school. They are always here with us and we are always put on our toes by their regular supervision. They sometimes team up to provide in-service training for us". The PTA chairman (Yilo) who is also an elder of the church confirmed that the presence of the local manager and the church with further support from the regional and general manager of the school, playing oversight responsibility, has helped to shape the school. He said,

“...the church through the various members, church president and elders, the congregation, both local and foreign (mentioning the foreign philanthropist and her team) and the managers have supported in many different ways. There is discipline in the school, during ‘church’s week’ we invite some of the church elders to talk to the children. The headteacher and most of the teachers are also members of the church and they uphold the principles of the church, that is,

dedication, hard work, discipline, tolerance and love for children”.

The statements from the headteacher and the PTA chairman of Yawkrom JHS, appear to consolidate the sense of ownership by the community, including the church, in fulfillment of the Education Act of 2008 (Act 778). This Act provides for a decentralized system in empowering the local people to participate in the decision-making to improve schools. Eight out of the eleven teachers in Yawkrom JHS are all members of the church. They are usually present at the morning assembly and Wednesday worship to deliver inspiring messages to the students. This practice is what the headteacher believes has instilled discipline and the fear of God in the students. The headteacher quoting from the Bible said, “...the fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom”. To the headteacher (Yaw) therefore the high achievement of the students is bedded in discipline which to him is strengthened by the presence of God in the school. As noted, Yawkrom JHS is a mission school established by a Church which strongly believes in God. In this regard, the culture of the Church regarding her believe in God permeates into the school culture which appear to be driving Yawkrom JHS like most other mission schools.

### **6.1.3 Municipal Assembly**

The study shows that the contributions of the district assembly of Ga South Municipality and the support of the Members of Parliament (MP) in the two constituencies through the MPs common fund have been a significant avenue of support in developing the two schools. This trend regarding the support from the MPs and district assembly appears to fulfill the Local Government Service Act of 2003, (Act 656) in a decentralized system of governance. The District Assembly took over the construction of Kojokrom JHS from the PTA and finally completed the construction along with the plastering and painting. Kojokrom JHS continue to receive support from the assembly and as indicated by the headteacher the assembly has planned to provide toilet for the school. Yawkrom JHS on the other hand has received a lot of support especially from the MPs. According to Yaw, the two MPs, the present and the past, for the area Yawkrom JHS is located, provided roofing

sheets and furniture for the school. This as he said, enabled the school to roof the six-unit classroom block and also to get furniture for the students and teachers.

Kojo, however, indicated his frustration with the district assembly when the school started. He said, "...we have long expected the intervention of the district assembly having struggled through many years of hardship trying to raise money from the poor parents to build a modern infrastructure for the school. Thank God, they came in at the later stages to support us. I hope they will continue as they have promised to build for us a toilet and a wall for the school to stop passers-by from using the school as a thoroughfare". The Education Act of 2008 (Act 778) places the responsibility for the construction of new classroom buildings with the assembly but it appears most assemblies are finding difficulties in providing adequate and modern infrastructure for their schools as the data shows and the trend poses a challenge in the provision of quality education for Ghanaian children.

#### **6.1.4 School Management Committee**

Generally, though the name 'School Management Committee' (SMC) exists in the two schools not much was said about their presence in the schools. However, the PTA chairman of Kojokrom JHS who is also chairman of the school's SMC was visible in the school. Yilo (PTA chairman of Yawkrom JHS and Kwarteng (SMC/PTA Chairman of Kojokrom JHS) in attempt to explain the distinctive roles of the SMC and PTA said:

"...if capitation grant is not released, then the SMC have very little to do and has to rely on the PTA for the development of the school. The SMCs cannot meet regularly but the PTAs meet regularly that is why the PTA appears stronger" (Yilo).

"...we have no funds to service our SMC meetings. Members compare themselves with the PTA who collect dues and are able to service their meetings with some snacks. The capitation grant is also not often released and so we don't also meet to discuss the SPIP. I see myself as the only SMC member working because I am also the PTA chairman" (Kwarteng)

In the case of Yawkrom JHS, the headteacher explained that though the SMC as a committee was not functioning very well, the chairman was very active. He said, "...for the chairman, he is always here with me discussing issues about the development of the school and even if there is no capitation grant he visits the school". The statements from Yilo, Kwarteng and Yaw appear to support the claim by Esuman (2009) that the SMCs are not able to perform their watchdog role on behalf of the community.

However, the distinctive role of SMCs in approving for the implementation of the school performance improvement plan (SPIP) has been fulfilled in both schools. All the SPIPs in both schools implemented have been dully signed by the SMC chairmen of the two schools. Kojo, however, explained that it is a requirement for the SMC chairman to sign and approve of the SPIP before any funds are released to the schools to implement the plan. The capitation guidelines (2014) provide that all SPIPs must be approved by the SMC chairman as an indication that the community represented by the SMC agrees to the proposed plan and that when implemented would bring about change to improve the school. In this regard the guidelines provide that the SMC should participate in discussing activities that will bring about improvement in the school. In this regard, the assumption is that the school and the community take responsibility in the development and implementation of plans to improve school. In this regard, for what reasons, if the SMCs are not functioning then it suggests the community is not participating actively in the development of the schools. The distinctive roles of the PTA and SMC are critical to the development of schools. While the PTA serves the interest of their children in school the SMC on the other hand serves the interest of the entire community and the collaborative role of the two structures is critical in strengthening the policy on school ownership as part of decentralization. The SMC and the PTA are the two pillars of the entire school community and as part of the decentralized education system these two bodies should be strengthened in terms of their capacity to function effectively.

#### **6.1.5 Parent Teacher Association (PTA)**

The PTAs contributions to school improvement in the two schools have been significant. The interest of the PTA in the two schools appears very high as they would defy all



challenges to support the schools in their developmental agenda. For example, Yilo the PTA chairman of Yawkrom JHS says:

“...we have interest in the school because our children are here and we have to support the school for the children to succeed. When the school is improved our children will benefit the most. The school is also doing well and there is discipline. That is our expectation and our toils have not been in vein. Parents understand this, though difficult when it comes to payment of levies, we try to convince them with the good results”.

It was not surprising the great interest shown by the PTA chairmen of both schools due to their background as public servants. Yilo of Yawkrom JHS is a retired senior public servant and an elder of Yawkrom, while Kwartan of Kojokrom JHS is a retired teacher. One critical characteristic of the two chairmen is the fact they all have a common interest in the education of the children in their communities and they show commitment. They use their education background to convince the PTA members to sacrifice the little they have to support their children's education no matter their own educational level. For example, Yoofi ended her education at primary 6 because her parents could not support her education into the middle school but as she said she has been influenced by the leadership of the PTA and other people as well. In response to why she could not complete basic education but was very particular about her children's education she said; “everybody is sending their children to the senior high school, the church is advising us, our PTA executives are talking to us, and even in the market you could hear everybody talking about working hard to earn and save enough money to be able to send their children to school”.

Koranteng a fisherman and a parent participant from Kojokrom JHS did not hide his appreciation to the leadership of the PTA. When talking about what has led to the high participation of parents in school activities he said,

“...now education is good, ‘no education no job!’ Fishing is not lucrative now; we don't catch fishes like we use to catch and so we also want our children to go to school. Our PTA chairman has always been telling us to send our children to

school during PTA meetings so that we can also get ‘big men’ (meaning important people) in our families and the community”.

Yoofi, a petty-trader in the market in the community again said,

“...education is now number one, we have been educated enough by our PTA chairman, headteacher and even our leaders in the market. Now business is not stable, ‘today is good, tomorrow bad’, but education of our children as we have been told should be considered first in all our plans for spending the little money we have”.

It is important to note the important role the PTA leadership is playing to sensitize other members of the PTA to realize the importance of education as echoed in the statements of Koranteng and Yoofi. The implications are that if the parents and community are adequately informed about their children’s education and the importance of education in general, supported with evidence of good results, their presence in school improvement would be significant in addressing the poor learning outcomes in especially public basic schools. This study has again demonstrated the strong connections from teachers in providing effective teaching for better results, the understanding by parents in support for better education for their children, and the exemplary leadership from the headteachers and PTA Executives in providing the necessary information to psyche parents for the betterment of their children’s education.

#### i. PTA Meetings:

PTA meetings in the two schools appear generally encouraging with high attendance. For example, at the PTA meeting on 19 Nov. 2012 at Yawkrom JHS, there were in all 154 parents present, including, eight out of the eleven teachers. According to the headteacher it was one of the highly attended PTA meetings. As explained he explained, attendance at such regular meetings of late had been between 115 and 160 which he found to be very encouraging. At a similar PTA meeting at Kojokrom JHS held on 26 Nov. 2012, 75 members attended, including, all the eight teachers. PTA meetings in the two schools have been regular. For example, for the 2012/13 academic year (September 2012 – August

2013) the PTA of Kojokrom JHS had four general meetings (at least one every term), two special meetings for the JHS 3 parents, and six PTA executive meetings. At Yawkrom JHS, in the same academic year 2012/13 they held three general PTA meetings, five executive meetings and three special meetings for parents of the JHS 3 students. Figure 19 shows one of the PTA Executive meetings when they met the final year (JHS) students. The meeting was to motivate the students in their studies.

**Figure 6.1: PTA Executive meeting with JHS 3 students**



*Source: Author (17/11/2012)*

The PTA/SMC chairman for Kojokrom JHS (Kwarteng), in a response to why the high attendance at PTA meetings said,

“... at meetings the headteacher and teachers tell us about the performance of our children and what we have to do to support the school to achieve more successes. We are interested in our children’s education because they are our future and so we the leadership of the PTA have been creating awareness for them to send their children to school and support them to complete”

In response to a similar question Yilo said,

“...we are happy because those of us who saw the previous school structures now see a modern building. We are now reaping what we sowed and unless we support the school to maintain what we have achieved now we may find ourselves as it is happening in some public basic schools”.

This parent lives in the community and he could vividly remember when the school started and comparing it to what the school is now, he appears very appreciative of where the school has reached now. Yoofi, with so much appreciation to the headteacher said,

“...we are very grateful to Yaw (the headteacher) for his initiative and encouragement which has brought us this far, and we owe him a lot of gratitude for his effort. It was through one of such meetings that we were informed of the support from the foreign philanthropist and true to her word she came to assist us” (translated from Twi).

There is clear evidence from the study that all the participants in various ways appreciate the developments in the school: the infrastructure and facility developments, the encouragement from the school and PTA leadership, the unity of the parents and the community championing a common goal of improving school performance.

One of the PTA meetings was observed at Yawkrom JHS on the 24/11/13 which was a Sunday with focused discussions on how the PTAs could support the school to adequately prepare the JHS 3 students. The issues that came up were the motivation allowance to the teachers and also the cost for the external examiners which parents were expected to pay. The headteacher in explaining the cost implications indicated that the reason for hiring an external assessor was to test the students in ‘mock examinations’. The headteacher explained that the mock examinations were in the same manner as the final BECE. He

proposed GH¢10.00 to be paid by every parent for each student in the final year class to cover three sets of examination questions. The PTA chairman in support of the headteacher's proposals also implored parents to sacrifice a little for their children's education. He said,

“...I know it is hard, especially, getting to Christmas, you will need to buy many things for the children but I beg, please let us sacrifice a little for our children's education, it is more important for their future than now that we are alive, tomorrow we may not be there to see them through”.

After long discussions and many disagreements, the PTA finally reached consensus by acclamation to pay GH¢5.00. The major reasons for not accepting the initial GH¢10.00 appeared to be more of ability to pay as the discussions flowed. In the end the headteacher urged the parents to cooperate with the school by releasing their children to enable them participate in the extra classes. He said,

“My fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, the BECE is with us once again and as usual, as you have been doing over the years, this is the time to relieve your children especially the girls in JHS 3 from the numerous house chores so that they can attend the early morning classes, evening classes and the Saturday classes in order for the teachers to prepare them adequately for the impending BECE.

I was impressed by the frank discussions at the meeting and discussed the outcome in a follow up discussions with the two parent-participants (Yoofi and Yilo). From their opinions the following were given as reasons why many of the parents did not agree to the initial proposals of GH¢10.00: Yoofi said, “Christmas is near and many parents would need money to buy new things for their children. The economy is also bad, market is not good that is why they did not agree on the initial proposal”. Yilo also said, “...schools will reopen for the second term soon and parents will have to pay their dues as well”. Though

the headteacher (Yaw) did not think the amount approved was enough, but as he said, “that is the decision of the people and that is what they can conveniently pay, we have to accept and work with it”. These statements show the interesting manner in which meetings are discussed at both schools.

The meeting at Kojokrom on the 02/12/2012 (Sunday) was similar but in their case they focused discussions on sanitation in the school where parents were tasked to support the school to keep the compound clean. At this meeting the PTA chairman leading the discussion explained to parents the need for them to help keep clean surroundings of the school, especially as the school shares compound with two other schools. He therefore appealed to parents to assist the school to procure some few waste bins. No charge was tendered for consideration but passed a bowl round to collect voluntary contributions from members. It yielded GH¢55.50 which appeared to be appreciated by the headteacher and the PTA Chairman. The chairman thanked members for their kind donations and implored them not to relent on their effort to support the school to improve.

The PTA of the two schools from different perspectives demonstrated commitment in their support for the schools, though difficult for some of them in terms of payment of levies. The commitment shown can be attributed to the encouragement from the leadership, adopting a more open and participatory management style (Akyeampong, 2004) along with the spirit of voluntarism to change problematic conditions (Weil, 1996). The two schools recognize parent and community engagements as key factors for school improvement. As claimed by Uemura despite the various degrees of responsibilities no one agent can claim to take 100% responsibility for educating children (Uemura, 1999). The study has shown the strong parental concerns for their children’s education heightened through their regular interactions with the schools with encouragement from the headteacher and PTA leadership. The strong connections at PTA meetings in the presence of parents, PTA Executives, teachers, and headteachers, and extending to students explain the interplays among stakeholders in school improvement strategies.

## 6.2 PTA Levies

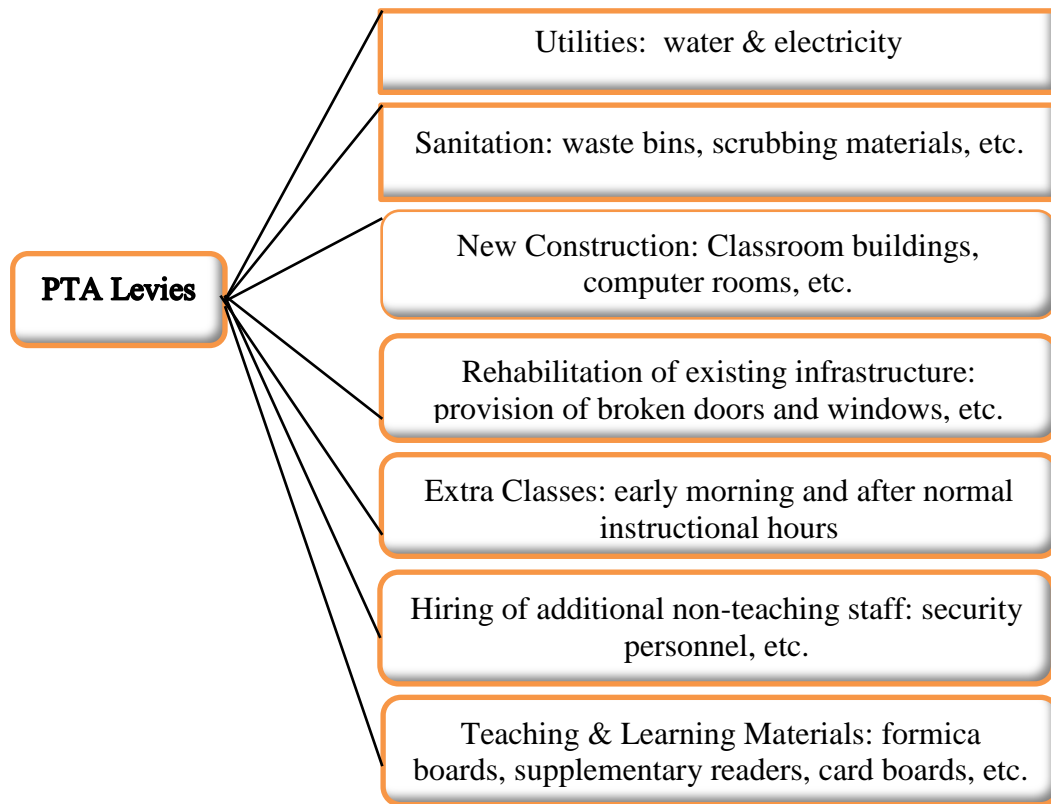
At Kojokrom JHS, parents pay GH¢0.50p whenever they hold PTA meetings and there are two in a term. In addition, the headteacher indicates that whenever there is new development project the parents at PTA meeting levy themselves for the project. For example, in 2011 according to the headteacher, the parents agreed at a meeting to purchase desktop computers for the school, each parent was levied GH¢25.00 for each ward in the school spread over a one year period (2012/13 academic year). This enabled the school to procure fifteen used computers for the school. Parents were also levied with specific amounts over the years especially when the school was undertaking the classroom construction until it was taken over by the district assembly.

In addition to the GH¢0.50p (PTA meeting dues), for each day that school is in session parents pay for each ward GH¢0.50p for the two hours of extra classes. The headteacher explained that part of the amount realized from such levies are paid as incentives for teachers at the end of each term while the remaining are used to support other school's needs, such as, teaching and learning materials to supplement the supplies from government. The situation at Yawkrom JHS was similar to that of Kojokrom JHS. In Yawkrom JHS, each parent pays GH¢0.50p per day for each pupil who takes the extra classes and in addition, also pays GH¢5.00 per term per each pupil for the development projects in the school. He also gave similar response as was said by Kojo in the use of the money accrued from the extra classes. However, in Yawkrom JHS at the end of each week a percentage of the levies collected is given to two teachers and the arrangement goes on until all teachers have received a share in subsequent weeks till the end of the term. By the close of a term (11 weeks) all the eleven teachers, including, the headteacher, would have had their share of the extra-classes fees paid by parents. For the use of the development levies of GH¢5.00, he indicated that they are used for the construction of the six unit classrooms. He added that the school also receives donations from the church, Members of Parliament and other individual persons and philanthropist in support of the school's development.

The two headteachers appear very appreciative of the support from the parents and the community and as Kojo said, "...the PTA has indeed contributed a lot to the development of this school". Yaw in similar sentiments said, "...though the capitation grant has been very helpful, the cost of developing and maintaining a new school like Yawkrom JHS is huge and demanding, and without the PTA and community support, there is very little we can do. We would have remained under the trees for a long time without the intervention of the PTA and the community". In addition, the two schools also organize classes for the students on Saturdays which according to Kojo the PTA has accepted and approved that it should be organized for all students. He said, "...all the students and parents have accepted it and so all students attend". The extra classes on Saturdays in the two schools start at 8.00am and end at 12.00 noon. Each pupil pays GH¢1.00 for attending such classes. The total levies paid by each parent for each pupil for the week is therefore GH¢3.50.

Assuming in Yawkrom JHS, if each term runs for 11 effective weeks then for each year of 33 weeks, apart from the special levies and dues, each parent in Yawkrom JHS would pay GH¢115.50. This amount is roughly 20 times the government's capitation grant. Adding to the GH¢15.00 paid as development levy per year (GH¢ 5.00 per term) then in total every parent pays about GH¢130.50 per year. This total amount does not include other cost such as uniforms, food and stationery. Again, contradicting the government's policy of a universal free basic education. Figure 6.2 (page 120) shows the activities for which the PTA levies are used.



**Figure 6.2 Uses of PTA Levies**

Although, parents have agreed to pay there are some who find difficulty in paying as the data shows. Yilo states, "...it is not easy for some of us and we have to sacrifice a lot to maintain our children in school, though public schools are expected to be free". The data confirms the assertion from Yilo. In some cases as the record of the payments show, some parents are not able to pay their dues. For example, as Yaw said, "...we know those who cannot pay and we don't worry them, we don't send their children home for non-payment, we encourage them and give them time to settle their levies if they have difficulties". Kodua also reiterated what others have said regarding the parents' effort at paying the levies even though some of them might have difficulties, he said, "...not for the developments and high performance of the school, the parents wouldn't have responded positively in the payment of the levies for the developments". To Kodua, parents want results and they want to see good things. On the same issue of the difficulties of some

parents in the payment of the levies, Yoofi, a market woman considered among the low income earners said,

“It has not been easy but we manage to pay. Our executives have been very patient with us, encouraging us and giving us some time to pay. The headteacher takes anything you give him until you finish paying and those who for any reason are not able to pay, they are sometimes exempted. The school is doing well just like the private schools and we pay less than what the parents pay in those private schools” (translated from Twi).

Though, Yoofi did not appear to be burdened too much by the payment of the levies because of the flexible payment system adopted by the school and for the fact that they appear to be getting value for what they pay, she confessed in a follow up question that she has to spend a lot of money on her two children, one at the JHS and the other in the primary school. Yaw cited one parent (a ‘koko seller’<sup>18</sup>) who said for the three years that her boy was in the school she did not pay any of the levies but Yaw said, “the boy was brilliant and so we did not bother too much about the non-payment by the parents. Now he is in the university and during the holidays he visits the school to assist the students in their studies”. Parents appear to be overstretched by the payment of dues and levies they manage to support the school improvement processes. As the study shows, it is not about how much parents especially have to pay towards their children’s education but the efforts by the school in ensuring that the school environment is conducive to effective teaching and learning and students achieve high performance.

### 6.3 Summary

The study shows that parents and the communities have demonstrated their strong participation in the school improvement initiatives of the two schools (Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS). The parents and the community have demonstrated that their commitment

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<sup>18</sup> One who sells porridge

to support the two schools through their regular assistance provided for the schools in kind and in cash. The community includes chiefs and elders, churches, the municipal/district assembly, the members of parliament, parents as individuals and in groups (PTA) and corporate bodies. As the study shows, they have ignored the government's 'fee free' education and the low socio-economic status they find themselves, to support the school improvement initiatives ranging from infrastructure development to incentives for teachers. The high commitment from parents and the communities as the study shows is as a result of strong headteacher leadership providing the inspiration and motivation that energize parents and the communities to do their best.

However, it must be considered that although some parents through the PTA's manage to pay their levies towards the development of the schools, others pay with difficulty putting pressure on their limited resources. Should parents have to pay levies for school improvement including the development and maintenance of school buildings at great cost? On the other hand should the government policy on 'fee free' education stop parents from contributing to the improvement of the schools, especially, if the 'fee free' education appears not to deliver the necessary inputs for quality education to be delivered? If government policy of 'fee free' education through capitation grant is not delivering the funds that schools need, and on time, to improve or support teaching and learning, then that policy is by default contributing to poor quality education. The school and community response through the levies demonstrates that the 'fee free' policy needs rethinking. How can schools however ensure that levies are not being abused or that poor parents are not being pressured to pay fees? These issues are discussed in chapter 8.

## **CHAPTER 7: HEADTEACHER LEADERSHIP**

### **7.0 Introduction**

This chapter analyses the data collected from the in-depth interviews, observations, field notes and documentary analysis regarding the headteacher leadership role in the improvement of the selected schools. The chapter looks into the role that headteacher leadership plays in the creation of school environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

### **7.1 Background Leadership Experiences of Headteachers**

It is useful to briefly discuss the background experiences of the two headteachers, Kojo and Yaw in relation to their career development into leadership. The background experiences are traced back to their previous schools.

According to Kojo, he formed many leadership qualities from his former schools in which he made a big impact on the performance of the students. Initially when Kojo left college he was sent to a village in one of the rural schools in the Greater Accra Region. Narrating his first experience on the job as a teacher, he said,

“I became the life wire of the school, a young teacher with all the energy to teach. I was assigned to the final year class because I was considered a very smart and energetic gentleman fresh from college with strong background in mathematics and science. I made sure that students took their learning seriously because of the perception that mathematics and science were difficult subjects. I spent most of my time in the school, ensuring that my final year students excelled in the BECE”.

In response to a question as to how he made the subjects easier and interesting for the students he said, “I spent a lot of my time in the school preparing teaching and learning materials and I worked like I did not have anything else to do at home”. This headteacher appears to have carried along this initial attitude of hard work and commitment for his students’ success. According to Kojo he never thought that one day he would leave the village to other places, especially, when he has to leave his students he cherished so much. He said, “I loved my students and I am glad I was there because I remember the many students I was able to help who are now in high positions of responsibility in the country”.

Kojo finally left the village to Accra but as he said, he has never regretted starting his career in the village. Kojo continued with his hard work in his immediate past school and after teaching for two years he was appointed the Assistant Headteacher which he held for nine years until he was asked to start Kojokrom JHS in two initial wooden structures with 25 students. The commitment, dedication, hard work and the enthusiasm of the headteacher have transformed Kojokrom JHS

Yaw, headteacher of Yawkrom JHS like Kojo also started his teaching career after college in a rural school. He, like Kojo made a great impact in his previous school. Yaw like Kojo was also assigned the final year class to begin his teaching career. Yaw indicated that in his first school he is remembered by the evening and the popular Saturday classes he introduced for final year students when he realized that students were not making enough time on their own to learn. This he said earned him the nickname “honam pe adwuma” (meaning workaholic). He was always in school ensuring that students did not waste their time in school but took their learning seriously. He was more or less the permanent teacher on duty as he described himself.

Yaw was also appointed as the assistant headteacher in his previous school after three years in the school and continued to handle the final year students. His aim had always been that the final year students excelled in the BECE. He was the Religious and Moral Education

and Social Studies teacher but as he said, he taught all other subjects during extra classes, especially, on Saturdays. He was also the Sunday school teacher in the church, which he said gave him an additional advantage to instill discipline in the students. He made sure that students in the school, whose parents were mostly members of the church, attended the Sunday school. He therefore combined the work in the church and in the school as well.

As an assistant headteacher Yaw never knew that he has been recognized for his commitment to duty by the managers of the school. On one fateful day the general manager of schools visited the school from the national headquarters and Yaw was called by the headteacher to meet the manager. Yaw was informed that he was to transfer to start a new school in Accra. Yaw was hesitant to leave the school but the promotion to headteacher led him to do so. There was no permanent classroom and so Yaw started the school in a church with 18 students. Not long, his students were accused by the church elders for messing up things in the church and so the school was later relocated under trees on the church premises. This did not frustrate Yaw but he was rather encouraged to work harder to transform the school. The efforts of the headteacher, in collaboration with the community and other individuals and group of persons, have transformed Yawkrom JHS.

Reflecting on the professional experiences of the two headteachers brings to the forefront three attributes that appear significant in the leadership of the two headteachers: vision for a transformed school with high students' achievement; sacrifice of their own time for improvement; and hard work to duty undaunted by difficult circumstances. Both headteachers appear to have earned their current positions by hard work, perseverance and a call to duty to the admiration of the people in their community.

## 7.2 Headteacher Leadership Role

The analysis of the headteachers' leadership role that appear to have impacted on both schools are based on five main themes that emerged from the study: 1) providing leadership; 2) inspiring and motivating teachers, students and parents; 3) providing effective supervision of teaching and learning; 4) mobilizing resources to improve school conditions; and 5) maintaining good inter-personal relationships.

### 7.2.1 Providing Leadership (Vision)

The vision statements of the two headteachers demonstrate the commitment of the headteachers to the achievements of the students in the two schools – skills, knowledge and good attitude. These headteachers appear to be concerned with what the students become in future based on what they acquire from the schools. The vision statement of Kojo as written boldly and pasted in his office read as follows:

“To prepare pupils with relevant skills, knowledge and attitude that will enable them to occupy sensitive positions in the society, serve as role models and help address challenges in their communities”.

The vision of Yaw reads as follows:

“To train pupils who would become responsible citizens to their parents and the country at large”.

Curious to find out how these visions are shared and accepted by all stakeholders, both headteachers responded in the affirmative. Kojo said, “I always talk about it whenever I meet my teachers, students and parents at meetings and other gatherings and they all accept it as the way to go”. Kojo indicated that his aim over the years has been focused towards

how he could create an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. This was translated in his comment: “we don’t have to wait until examination time is due before we start working hard on our students, we have to start from day one. Everybody here - teachers, students and parents know what we want - excellent results for our students”. This was confirmed by the PTA chairman (Kwarteng) who also remarked: “...everybody knows that in this school what matters most is the result of students at the BECE”. The teachers also appear to be very much aware of the vision of the headteacher. Kodua indicated that as soon as the BECE results are released they meet as a staff and also with parents at PTA meetings to discuss the results. Kodua remarked, “...no teacher wants to be ridiculed for poor results. No teacher wants to be embarrassed at staff meetings or PTA meetings and so every teacher works hard to ensure that his/her students do well in their respective subjects”. Kojokrom JHS appear to have developed this culture of high expectation for excellent results over time in the school and so everybody including parents, teachers and headteacher talks about the BECE. This culture of the school appears to be emanating from the culture of fear to avoid bashing from the parents in view of the sacrifices that they are making to the school through the levies and dues they pay; or pride to show to the public that they are among the few public basic schools that excel in the BECE despite the perennial general poor results in public basic schools.

Kuntu describes his headteacher as a man with strong commitment to his vision. He remarked, “...the headteacher has the skills that make a good leader. To me those qualities have yielded the things we see in this school now”. Both headteachers appear very strong in their expectations for high students’ performance. Kojo confirmed his commitment with the following remark,

“I am very particular about the students’ results at the BECE and I ensure that they are able to continue their education at the senior high school and that is my first priority. I also follow them up, even to their homes to be sure that all my students who pass out of the school further their education. I know where most of my students are, some are in the universities and others are working”.



The headteachers appear to be concerned with creating opportunities for their students to learn. In response to a question as to how he ensures to achieve his vision, Kojo said, “I ensure there is discipline in the schools, and teachers and students are in the classroom. I also make sure all teachers are provided the needed resources for effective teaching and learning”. Both headteachers appear confident and have high expectations for their students in the final BECE. Yaw remarked, “I am satisfied with my students’ achievements at the BECE and I can assure you that all my students always qualify for selection to enter the senior high school, except the few who qualify but their parents are unable to pay for their fees and other needs to access further education”. For the past seven years (2008 – 2012) all students of Kojokrom JHS have received their first or second choice senior high schools by the computerized school selection and placement system (CSSPS). Kojo in explaining how he envisaged the future of his students compared himself to a bus driver. He said,

“I compare myself to a bus driver carrying students to their destinations. I sacrifice my time, expertise, and energy to make sure that all of them get to where they desire to go”.

Yaw on the hand in responding to how he also envisaged the future of his students used the school as a tool for shaping the students’ future. He said, “...the school should pass through them, but not they passing through the school”. He meant that all the students should experience behavioural change by the good practices in the school so that those good practices would be part of them in their future endeavours. He indicated that with excellent results from the BECE and discipline the students would be able to play a meaningful role in contributing to building the society. The success of students, as the ultimate achievement for both headteachers, appears to confirm the report of the Ghana National Education Coalition Campaign (2012) that the future of the students is depended on the BECE results. This notion of using a single source such as the BECE to measure effectiveness has implications for policy as it tends to make the BECE a high stake examination.

## **7.2.2 Inspiring and Motivating Teachers, Students and Community**

There is evidence of the existence of ways by which the two headteachers inspire, motivate and develop their teachers and students to do their best. The major practices of the headteachers that emerged from the study include: headteachers maintaining good working relations, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives, providing models of good practices, and providing professional support to teachers.

### ***7.2.2.1 Maintaining Good Working Relations***

Relationship among headteachers, teachers, students and parents in the two schools is significant and appears to have created a web of relationship as posited by Heap (2001). These relationships have influenced the teachers, students and parents to work hard enough to achieve results (Leithwood, et al, 2004). Both headteachers appear to know their teachers and students very well to the extent that they even know most of the parents of the students and the families of the teachers. This was evident by the headteachers' regular and frequent engagements with students through both formal and informal interactions, visits to the homes of teachers and students, and often making time to listen to both teachers and students on personal and formal issues. This is how Kodua in his view is inspired by the headteacher:

“My headteacher is someone who listens and he is always resolute in solving problems in the school. There is no way you will go to this man with a problem without he making an attempt to help you solve it. He listens to you and where he has to make suggestions, he offers them. He doesn't discriminate at all”.

To further strengthen the relationship with staff, Kojo has converted his office to a staff room for the teachers and has rather converted the store room to an office despite the small space. He finds the arrangement to be meaningful because as he said, “it has brought me closer to them”. He appears to be very happy with the arrangement since he enjoys the usual exchange of greetings especially in the mornings. He said,

“...whenever I am passing through the staff room to my office I greet those who are there and when they also come and I am already in the office they come to greet me not because I am the headteacher but because of the culture in the school, greeting one another”.

Yaw also shares office space with his teachers because the staff common room is currently under construction. Teachers keep their books and other personal items in the office of the headteacher. In this regard, he sees the teachers many times and he is able to engage with them frequently. Both headteachers extend the relationship to the families of the teachers and students through their regular visits to the homes. Kojo states,

“I usually visit the homes of the very good students to encourage their parents to continue to support them because they have good future. For those who sometimes play truancy or misbehave I also visit their homes to discuss their behaviours with their parents in order to stop such bad practice”.

Kojo’s engagement with his students appears to confirm his fatherly posture in the school as testified by the other participants. Not only does he know the homes of students but of the teachers as well. He said, “...I know the homes and families of all my teachers. I have never missed any occasion celebrated by any of my teachers – funerals, weddings, birthdays and naming ceremonies”.

In Kojokrom JHS, teachers are usually found in the staff common room being the only space available to them. The situation therefore appears to compel them to remain in the staff common room when they have any free time such as break time. When they are in the staff room they do things together: watching television, eating, marking students’ exercises, and sometimes discussing both personal and professional issues. It becomes therefore easier for anyone absent to be noted. As the headteacher said, “we are not many and so I can easily find out if someone is absent or engaged somewhere. Sometimes, from their facial expressions I am also able to tell how well or bad they might be and for those I find to be not very well I take time to be with them trying to find out if I could help”.

In response to a question as to what has supported Yaw to maintain the good working relationship at Yawkrom JHS he said, "... when you remain close to your teachers, students, and parents you are likely to understand them and the visa-versa, they will also understand you and together we live. You will know them better and they will also know you better". As to how he has maintained such relationship he said, "I'm not autocratic, I see my teachers as my brothers and sisters. We share ideas together, even some personal problems and so I think that is what is keeping the good relationship". Yaw was mostly found with his teachers engaged in their usual conversation during break time. Sometimes he was seen with some of his teachers at the construction site chatting with the masons and artisans on site.

#### ***7.2.2.2 Maintaining High Visibility***

Another way that the headteachers demonstrate their leadership is their continuous presence in the school. Their high visibility in the schools appears to account for the high attendance and the effective use of time in the two schools. The headteachers appear convinced that their presence in the school is a motivation for both teachers and students to do their best. For example, Kojo remarked, "I cannot understand why I should be sitting in the office just doing administrative work and leaving my core business of ensuring that teachers are teaching and students are learning". Kojo could not just stay at one point for a long time and preferred walking about the corridors and in-front of the classrooms. During my school visits I counted on many occasions that the headteacher was parading the corridors of the classrooms observing the goings on in the school. In response to why he was always 'walking about' he said, "...as a headteacher you should let the people know that you care about them and also interested in whatever happens in the school, and unless you are visible they cannot appreciate your concern for them". The high visibility of Kojo appears to have been influenced by the situation he finds himself in as his presence allows him to check on the movement of the teachers and students. He said,

“...without ‘walking about’, you will not be able to monitor the students and teachers well. The school is open, there are also students from the other schools, they wear the same uniforms and unless you are vigilant you cannot observe their behaviours. I have to check them”.

Kojokrom JHS is open (without a wall) and as already discussed it shares its compound with two other schools. The school is a single block with the classrooms in a horizontal stretch with a long frontage which leads to the roadside and to the other schools. The school has no toilet facility which compels both teachers and students to access the facility from the public outside the school compound. In this circumstance, the headteacher has to be more vigilant in ensuring both teachers and students do not take advantage of the openness and lack of toilet facility in the school compound to unnecessarily go out of the school. In this regard, Kojo usually stays in his office to carry out some administrative work only when he was certain teachers and students are busily engaged in the classrooms. He goes to school early in the morning at about 6.00 a.m. and closes late in the evenings after 6.00 p.m. According to the headteacher he stays longer in school to continue with his administrative roles such as: vetting teachers’ lesson notes, checking students’ class exercises and homework, checking teachers’ attendance books and students’ registers. The evidence was his usual signature in red ink indicating that he has checked. He checks sample students’ class exercises, homework and registers once a week. Teachers’ lesson notes are checked every week while the teachers’ attendance is checked on a daily basis. He also spends sometime, especially, in the evenings and early mornings with the teachers coaching them how to prepare and deliver good lessons. He is very particular with his engagements with students also during break time and the early hours of the day before classes start.

Kuntu states, “...the moment he finds that a classroom is empty without a teacher, he will quickly step in to engage the students in any meaningful learning and to avoid the embarrassment teachers always would want to be present and on time unless absent with permission”. Kojo was also very particular about lateness and made sure that he was in school first. He will usually come to school early to see to it that all students and teachers

are engaged before he goes home to take his breakfast (he lives in a headteacher's bungalow on the school's compound).

Yawkrom JHS on the other hand, is a new developing school having many outlets and is also located in a rural community. The headteacher is therefore confronted with a lot of challenges such as intrusion, disturbances and unnecessary interferences from the community. Yaw was observed to be 'everywhere all the time' monitoring classroom interactions and sometimes also inspecting the on-going constructions. The headteacher like Kojo prefers to spend very little time in his office in the day to allow him time to monitor and supervise classroom instructions until the evenings when school has closed and most students and teachers have left when he does his administrative work. Yaw prefers sitting at a strategic corner of one of the school buildings where he could see the views from all the classrooms. As he said, "the classrooms are without windows now and so just a little peep I am able to see all what goes on in the six classrooms". Yaw shares his office as a common room with his teachers and so he mostly carries out his administrative work outside the office. When describing how he spends his time at work he says:

"I always want to be in school because I have to see to my teachers and students and also to supervise the on-going projects. I also like to be with the workers at the site whenever I am not attending to any teacher, pupil, or parent or observing lessons".

Yaw indicated that though he is a detached<sup>19</sup> headteacher he still enjoys teaching and therefore handles Religious and Moral Education and the Ghanaian language whenever the responsible teachers are not present.

### **7.2.2.3 Providing Incentives for Teachers**

Both headteachers of Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS have initiated the provision of incentives for teachers and sometimes high performing students as a strategy to motivate them to do their best to continue to improve performance. These incentives are in the form

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<sup>19</sup> Detached headteacher is not a classroom teacher, that is detached from teaching

of cash accrued from the extra classes' fees paid by parents and sometimes as presents from parents to individual teachers who they consider to be hard-working based on the results of the students. According to Kojo and Yaw each teacher sometimes gets between GH¢200.00 and GH¢250.00 (about US\$62.50<sup>20</sup>) per term which is about a fourth of their monthly salary. Yaw indicated that he obtains his incentive package for the teachers from the parents' contribution of GH¢0.50p per day for the extra classes organized for the students.

In addition, both schools organize between 30 and 40 minutes 'worship'<sup>21</sup> every Wednesday for both teachers and students. At such meeting these two schools were observed to be collecting monies in the form of donations from students and teachers. According to both headteachers the collection of these monies is not compulsory and students and teachers pay voluntarily. According to Yaw, the monies accrued from the donations are used to support 'first aid' in the school. Participants for the study (headteachers, teachers and parents) did not seem to find anything wrong with such practices and gave several reasons to justify the act. Kojo said, "...students learn to give to support the needy". Yaw also said, "...it is for the benefit of all when someone falls ill or has an accident that may require first aid, it is from such funds that they take money to buy the first aid". Kuntu said, "...students learn to be generous to the needy". To Kwarteng, "it is voluntary, no pupil is forced to donate and parents who can afford give monies to their children to donate at such gatherings". This practice, despite the benefits to the individuals and the school at large, and though voluntary, has implications for the extra financial burden on parents.

#### **7.2.2.4 Providing Models of Good Practices (Punctuality and Regularity)**

Punctuality and regularity are critical to success in education and therefore the practice whereby the headteachers lead by example is an encouragement to teachers and students.

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<sup>20</sup> US\$1.00 = GH¢4.00, changing rate as at August, 2015

<sup>21</sup> Worship on the time-table provides opportunity for students, teachers and headteachers to share religious beliefs and inspirations along with major announcements.

The study shows that both headteachers are very punctual to school, they are usually among the first to come to school and the last to leave. Kojo lives in a headteacher's bungalow provided for the school and so does not travel distances to the school unlike Yaw who commutes from afar. Kojo describes how he spends his time in school:

“I come to school earlier than anybody else because I live in the school and I have to protect the school especially before and after school. I love to see the students cleaning the compound and also to check on their behaviours during their free times, especially in the mornings. The school has no wall and so I want to make sure that every pupil who enters the school is safe and protected. I also use such times in the early mornings and late in the evenings to support students and teachers who may need my assistance and sometimes also meet parents, especially, the executives of the PTA”.

Kodua similarly remarked, “...for the headteacher he is different from all other headteachers I know, if you are late for some few minutes to class you will find him in your classroom and so nobody wants to be late”. Curious about how much time Kojo spends with the family, he responded, “...my family knows me already, and they have no problem because they know where they can find me”. As he explained, because he comes to school early and leaves late he is able to meet with his teachers and students regularly to assist them with their difficulties. This is how Kuntu perceives Kojo:

“...the headteacher is very committed to school time. He always tells us, ‘everything you do in this school do it as if the school is for you’. He is somebody who doesn’t do the work as a government employee but he does his work as a proprietor of a private school. He is the first to come and the last to leave”.

The headteacher at Kojokrom JHS demonstrates his strong commitment in ensuring that he sets a good example for his followers to emulate. It is however to be noted that his accommodation on the school compound could be a factor for his long stay in the school.

Yaw, the headteacher of Yawkrom JHS lives a distance away from school and therefore uses ‘trotro’ (public transport) to commute. Yaw did not hide his difficulties in using the ‘trotro’, having to take two vehicles from where he lives to the school. He said, “...it is not



easy but I manage to be here not later than 8.00am and leave home rather late after work, around 7.00 p.m., sometimes 8.00 p.m., especially when the third years are having their evening classes”. Yaw often takes his meals for the day (breakfast, lunch and supper) in school because he has to leave home early each day and get home late in the evening. This headteacher appears not to be daunted by the time he has to remain in school. He said, “I use the time meaningfully, in addition to supervising instructions, I also take part of the time writing proposals seeking for assistance from individuals and corporate bodies and also supervising the construction work in the school”. With all these tasks he appears to be encouraged and from his own words he said, “...it is a new school and unless you do more than usual you cannot accomplish the numerous tasks, there is more work to be done”.

The ‘work-ethics’ of Yaw, appear to confirm why he was nicknamed ‘workaholic’ in his previous school. As Yilo said, “he is indeed hard working and you can’t imagine where he gets the energy from”. Yoofi, the parent participant who happened to live closer to the school also indicated that because the headteacher was very punctual considering where he lives, all the teachers have also learnt to be punctual.

### **7.2.3 Supervising Classroom Instruction**

Supervision is critical for school improvement. Many reports on education in Ghana have put private schools ahead of their public school in supervision and have linked the higher performance in private schools to effective supervision (Ampiah, 2010, Oduro, et al, 2012). There have been questions raised in these reports such as how private schools have better academic performance despite having less qualified teachers than in the public basic schools (EMIS, 2014; and NEA, 2014). The main reason as argued by Ampiah is the fact that supervision in the private schools is more effective than that of the public schools (Ampiah, 2010). It could therefore be argued that if Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS are doing well in terms of students’ academic achievement the key reason might be the presence of effective supervision in those schools.

Both schools appear to have put in place strategies to ensure effective supervision in the schools. The high visibility of the headteachers; the regular check on attendance, classroom interactions, teachers' preparation for lesson delivery, students' exercises and assignments; and also the regular assessment of students' performance. These practices of both headteachers appear to have contributed in creating environments conducive to effective teaching and learning in the two schools. They appear to have taken keen interest in their supervisory roles and are critical of both the teachers' and students' output of work. For example, at Kojokrom JHS, the headteacher observes at least one lesson of every teacher on a weekly basis while in Yawkrom because of the open windows and classroom infrastructure the headteacher is able to observe teachers' lessons many times in a week.

#### *7.2.3.1 Check on attendance*

As part of their leadership roles the headteachers of the two schools exhibit strict surveillance on the attendance of both students and teachers. They do not just ensure that the attendance records are kept but they also show interest in analyzing the trend of attendance and act quickly on the outcomes. For example, Kojo is in constant check on students' registers to find out those who have been absent for a while and he also regularly passes by the corridors of the classrooms to check on the presence of the teachers and students. Yaw, his strategy has been checking for empty chairs in the classrooms which to him, is the easiest way of verifying students' daily attendance. Knowing the habit of some teachers and students overstaying the break hours, Kojo is very particular about the time classes resume after the break period. He ensures that when it is the end of break every teacher and student is in the classroom or engaged in activities approved on the timetable. Kuntu expressed one of his unfortunate times when he felt embarrassed when he found the headteacher in his class having stayed some few minutes after break. He said, "...it was very embarrassing when one day when I was returning from break and I saw the headteacher in my classroom teaching. I just saw a friend off after paying me a visit during the break period. The headteacher saw me but pretended not to have seen me. I stood at the door for some time before he ended his few minutes' interaction with the students. I was indeed embarrassed and later I had to go and apologize to him. Since then I have vowed not

to repeat such behaviour again”. This was a testimony from the teacher and it shows the extent of discipline exercised in Kojokrom JHS. Like Kuntu said, “he is a father and we respect him so much that we don’t want to hurt him”.

Yaw has also introduced the use of mobile phone in sending text messages to parents who have access to mobile phones when their children are absent from school. To those parents who do not have access to mobile phones as the headteacher said, he visits the homes of such students who absent themselves for some days. Yaro in response to a question on the effectiveness of the headteacher’s strategy to curb absenteeism said, “some of the children can be very cunning and lie to their parents that they went to school but it might not be true and so with the text messages and the frequent visits by teachers and headteacher to the homes of students who absent themselves, the practice has stopped”.

The exclusive role of the headteachers in checking attendance appears to come from the fact that they are committed to ensuring the effective use of instructional hours. The practice brings to the forefront the unclear policy on detachment of basic school headteachers from classroom teaching. Currently, many headteachers are also classroom teachers which appear to undermine their commitment to playing their supervisory roles.

#### ***7.2.3.2 Check on Lesson Notes***

In addition to the regular supervisory roles by the headteachers, they have also structured times to receive teachers’ lesson notes for checking. For example, in Kojokrom JHS as table 7.1 shows (page 138), the headteacher has instituted the use of a chart to keep records of the times teachers submit their lesson notes. There are three categories in the submission of the lesson notes for vetting: ‘on time’, ‘late’, or, ‘never’ and this chart as the data shows is posted in the office of the headteacher for easy reference.

According to Kojo because of this record, many teachers wouldn't like to be seen as non-regular teachers in the submission of their lesson notes. In Yawkrom JHS they keep the record of submission of lesson notes in a notebook where teachers who fail to submit their lesson notes on time are recorded and later queried by the headteacher.

**Table 7.1: Lesson Notes Submission Chart**

Term	First term / 2011/12 Academic Year																		
Month	September				October				November				December				Total		
Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	√	×	O
Name of Teacher																			
Teacher J	-	×	O	√	×	O	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	10	2	2
Teacher P	-	√	√	√	√	√	×	×	√	√	×	o	√	√	√	-	10	3	1
Teacher B	-	√	√	×	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	o	√	-	12	1	1

Key: √ means submitted; × means late submission; o means not submitted

*Source: Extracted from Kojokrom JHS submission chart*

#### 7.2.4 Mobilizing Resources for School Improvement

The two schools despite their initial lack of resources especially classroom infrastructure, they have managed to mobilize resources through the act of leadership. The roles of the headteachers in mobilizing resources for improvement of the schools are very evident. As already indicated, in both schools, there are ongoing development projects funded from many sources such as: parents, community, individuals and group of persons, politicians, and the district assembly. The 1992 Constitution and Education Act of 2008 (Act 778) mandate the government (both national and local) to provide the needed resources for all basic schools however, as evident in this research there are deficiencies, especially, in the

provision of school infrastructure. What appear apparent in both schools however, is the increasing developments, especially classroom infrastructure.

The unique role of the headteachers in the provision of infrastructure appears to be motivated by their vision of ensuring that conducive environments are created to enable effective teaching and learning. For example, as Kojo states, “though it is the responsibility of the government to provide resources for all basic schools, the headteachers could also play a role because we feel the shock the most. The headteacher is blamed for non-performance of the school but the conditions in the school are critical for improvement”. Similarly, Yaw also states: “...the constitution does not stop any-one from complementing the efforts of the government in improving schools that is why the same constitution accepts and recognizes partnership with the private sector”. To Kojo and Yaw, going out to seek for assistance was to complement the government’s effort in making public basic schools a better place for effective teaching and learning.

As already discussed, the headteachers spend some time seeking for assistance for their schools. The contributions from the community, the church, parents, chiefs and elders of the village, Members of Parliament and the District Assembly in the transformation of both schools confirm the strategic leadership of the schools in resource mobilization. Both headteachers appear to have exhibited high sense of leadership in this respect. As Kojo says, “I have to persistently worry my Assembly Member who always accompanied me to see the District Chief Executive and other key members of the Assembly to talk about the challenges the school faces”. He also indicated that he is able to illicit some support from alumni. He mentioned a 48-inch television which as he said was donated by one of his past students which is mounted in the staff common room and used by the teachers during break time and other leisure times. He also indicated that some alumni members in the senior high school and universities visit the school to teach the pupils, share experiences and encourage them to learn in order to reach where they have gone so far.

Yaw on the other hand indicated that he spends a lot of time writing proposals for assistance. He says: “I prefer sending the proposals myself to the people and agencies near

and far, so that they will appreciate my seriousness in seeking for the assistance”. He mentioned the support from the foreign philanthropist, the two Members of Parliament, and MTN telecommunication company which according to him, he has to approach them with the proposals. According to Yaw there is no way he could have achieved the support he is receiving now if he has waited for responses to his proposals. He said, “...you need to talk to them often, never lose hope, persevere, keep lobbying and they will one day respond to your request”. Yaw in the 2012/13 academic year wrote fourteen proposals and according to him three of them responded positively.

Yawkrom JHS, starting under trees can now boast of two blocks of six classrooms though not fully completed, through the initiative of the headteacher. The headteacher is now the main architect of the school buildings designing and supervising the construction work, a headteacher turned an architect. The school is also constructing a new football field through the strong initiative of the headteacher. In response to a question as to how he felt when he was asked to move his students from the church building he said, “Ei..! I was disturbed because I did not understand why the church leaders could do that and I was not sure where I was taking the children to”. The headteacher indicated that the action from the church rather encouraged him to be more proactive and resourceful and which he said motivated him to look elsewhere for assistance.

There is sufficient evidence of the strong leadership from both headteachers to mobilize resources to improve the schools. Both headteachers appear resilient, focused and committed to their vision of ensuring that the needed resources are provided for the schools to achieve their objectives to improve the schools.

### **7.3 Summary**

The critical role played by both headteachers of the two schools in creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning as the study shows is demonstrated by their strong leadership and relationships with the major partners in implementing the school improvement initiatives. As the study shows, the two headteachers provided visionary leadership, showing the way to success. They provided support to the teachers through the provision of the needed teaching and learning materials, provision of regular and effective supervision by their usual coaching and mentoring strategies, and implementation of curriculum changes such as practicing an extended instructional time. In addition, the headteachers provided incentives to motivate the teachers to do their best.

The headteachers as the study shows also inspired and motivated parents and the communities to participate meaningfully in the school improvement initiatives, including the provision of: land for developments, assistance in both kind (furniture, cement, roofing sheets, etc) and cash (dues and levies), sustained regular meetings and interactions as well as visits to the homes of parents and community members. The improvements in the two schools as the study shows were as a result of the strong relationships between headteacher leadership and teachers on one hand and that of parents and the community on the other hand and the reciprocal efforts from all the parties provide the synergy for the school improvement in the two schools.

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## **CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND, RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **8.0 Introduction**

This study investigated the key factors that create an environment for school improvement and specifically the role of headteacher leadership and the community participation in the improvement process. This investigation is based on the assumption that contrary to the general low performance of students in public basic schools, some schools are providing quality education through effective school improvement processes. The findings provide contextualized solutions to the perennial poor learning achievements in public basic schools in sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana in particular.

The conclusions are informed by the data collected through interviews, observations and documentary evidence; and also from my professional experiences as a teacher, headteacher and director of education. In this regard, the conclusions were therefore reshaped by the interactions between me and the research participants. This chapter discusses the summary of the findings as regards to the conditions prevailing in the high achieving public basic schools along with the critical role of headteacher leadership and community participation in school improvement. The connections between the factors contributing to the school improvement processes are also discussed. The policy implications of the findings to the delivery of quality basic education in the country are then discussed followed by the contribution of the study to knowledge. The chapter is concluded with recommendations from my professional position as a policy maker for policy consideration.

### **8.1 Summary of Key Findings**

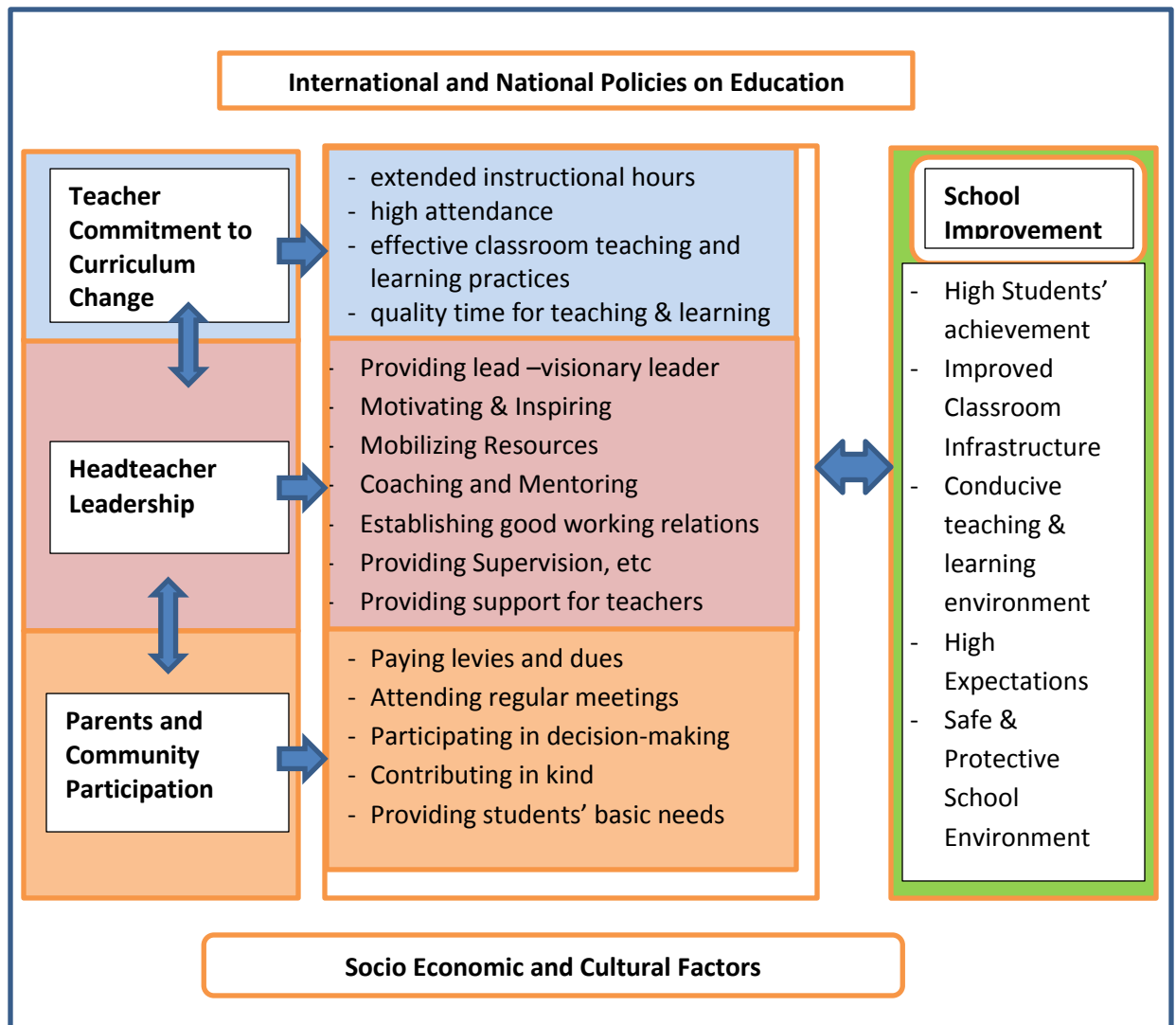
The findings from the case study schools produced as an iterative research process led to a modified framework for headteacher leadership interplay with the school and classroom conditions to affect school improvement, especially student learning achievement. As



figure 8.1 shows, there are strong connections and relations between the headteacher leadership and all other factors influencing the improvement of the school especially, student learning achievement. The headteacher leadership plays a critical orchestrating role in shaping the school and classroom conditions, motivating teachers, students and the community, including parents to ensure improvement in the school. According to figure 8.1, headteacher leadership is the driving force providing the energy for school improvement.

As the study shows and illustrated in figure 8, the headteacher leadership provides leadership, showing the way to school improvement with the visionary leadership, sense of motivation and support to energize teachers to commit themselves to the curriculum change for improvement – working more than the normal school hours, providing quality learning time for students and providing more opportunities for learning through both the formal and informal approaches. The headteacher again provides leadership by inspiring parents and the community through their usual interaction and provision of relevant information about the school regarding the school's needs as well as evidence of achievements while the parents and communities in return support the headteacher leadership by providing the needed assistance both in kind and in cash to support the school improvement process. The headteacher leadership on the other hand is energized by the commitment of teachers, students, parents and the community to the school improvement process. The overall improvements of the school, regarding students' high achievements, improved classroom infrastructure, high expectations for students achievements, the safe and protective school environment and the conducive teaching and learning environment. In effect, the headteacher leadership, as the study shows, orchestrates the school improvement processes for the high student achievements. The headteacher leadership plays its role in the context of the national and international policies, and the socio-economic cultural factors prevailing in the school.

**Figure 8.1: Headteacher Leadership Interplay with Factors for School Improvement**



*Source: Author*

### 8.1.2 Parents and Community Participation

Findings from the study show that the active participation of parents and community in school improvement is critical to the creation of an environment conducive for effective teaching and learning. These findings concur with earlier research by Borman et al (2000) and Heneveld and Craig (1996). The study suggests that when parents and community are

adequately informed about the school's needs and also progress of improvement based on evidence as demonstrated in Kojokrom and Yawkrom JHS, they contribute significantly to school improvement. The evidence shows they sacrifice the little they have, no matter their socio-economic status, to support their children's education especially when they are motivated by the school leadership and improvements in the school. For example, the community in Yawkrom had to sacrifice their land from which they were earning a living in exchange for school expansion. This was a hard decision for the community to make but they did so because of the encouragement from their leaders and that of the school as well and for their understanding that education could make their children better in life. The findings also show the contributions of parents and the community both in kind and in cash are contributory factors to the improvement of the schools. Parents defy the government 'fee free' education policy to pay levies to support improvements in the schools.

### **8.1.3 Teacher Commitment to Curriculum Change**

Findings from the study show that curriculum change for improvement if meaningfully strategized and supported is critical for school improvement. Through the initiatives of both headteachers and with the support of teachers, students, parents and the community, the two schools are able to implement effective teaching and learning approaches which appear differently as prevail in other public schools. These changes include: the extended instructional hours providing quality time for teaching and learning and also creating opportunities for students to learn experiences from both the formal classroom instructions and from the extra-curricular activities such as games, quizzes, debates and subject clubs. These extra-curricular activities as the study shows also provide opportunities for students to develop the intangible skills such as tolerance; perseverance, team spirit, working with people, learning to learn, and learning with others. Teachers in the two schools, as the study shows, have demonstrated commitment to the changes through their high attendance rate and time on task and diligence to work. The study shows that these curriculum changes have contributed a great deal in the school improvement process.

#### **8.1.4 Evidence of Headteacher Leadership**

Findings from the study show that both headteachers (Kojo and Yaw) demonstrated effective leadership styles that have helped to transform the schools to their current achievements. The findings are evidenced in the way the headteachers carry out their roles to motivate and encourage all stakeholders to do their best and to bring about change in the improvement of the schools. The findings show that the two headteachers are visionary leaders who are committed to the success of their students. Not only in academic achievements but also all other skills, knowledge and attitude that are relevant to the physical, sociological, and psychological development of the students. As the study shows, these headteachers ensure that all the stakeholders in the school and community buy into their visions through their usual collaborative strategies which bring all stakeholders to work together to improve the schools. The high visibility of both headteachers providing leadership; the effective supervisory roles to ensure effective teaching and learning, the provision of the needed resources through the mobilization efforts, the encouragement of parents and communities in the development of the schools, the unmeasurable relationships established in the schools, and the ultimate high learning outcomes, attest to the strong headteacher leadership in the two schools.

The findings concur with earlier researchers' claims that headteacher leadership can make a difference in students' learning outcomes by creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning (Leithwood, et al, 2004).

It is however, important to note the strong relationships and connections that exist between the headteacher leadership and all the other factors that contribute to school improvement. The headteacher leadership drives all efforts in the school improvement process. Despite the initial challenges of the two schools the headteachers are able to turn round all the challenges into opportunities that have brought Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS this far.

## **8.2 Professional Insights and Policy Implications**

Basic Education delivery in Ghana has been challenged over the years evidenced from the numerous education reforms, all in an effort to improve delivery. These reforms include: the expansion of the number of schools to cope with the increasing number of learners and the correspondence increase in the teacher training colleges; the change in names (from JSS to JHS), the change in curriculum regarding the number of years pupils spend in school, the number of subjects taught and learnt in school, the kind of textbooks prescribed by school authorities, the quality of teachers, training and re-training of teachers and headteachers, and the duration of instructional hours; and the various policy initiatives such as: free compulsory universal basic education, free basic education, school feeding programme, free school uniform, complementary basic education, whole school development, leadership for change and, leadership for learning. All these interventions and others have been introduced to address one problem or the other in the quality delivery of basic education. This is an indication that the government and people of Ghana are seeking for solution to the perennial challenges facing basic education delivery in Ghana. This study provides another opportunity for improving basic education delivery in the country.

The study has revealed some policy implications that require a reflection and based on my professional position as a policy maker I have the following recommendations for policy consideration. Four key areas of consideration emerging from the study are: the need for the recognition of the importance of headteacher leadership hence the need to maintain high quality headteachers in schools, the need to promote effective school supervision and inspection; facilitate education decentralization and consciously encouraging community participation in the school improvement process; need to review the government's 'fee free' basic education policy, capitation grant and provision of school infrastructure.

### **8.2.1 Appointment, Recruitment and Re-training of Basic School Headteachers**

The study has shown the critical role of headteacher leadership in shaping the school conditions for school improvement. In this regard the following recommendations on recruitment and training of basic school headteachers are made.

Currently, the recruitment and appointment of headteachers for public basic schools is based on the grade of teachers in the Ghana Education Service and length of years on the said grade. As the study shows the headteacher is not just there to ensure that teachers are teaching and children are learning (Headteacher Handbook, 2010) but more on how the headteacher leadership inspire and motivate teachers and students, parents and communities in the improvement of the teaching and learning processes. The study shows that the role of the headteacher goes beyond just managing the status quo and demand that the headteacher should have a vision for improvement, ability to motivate and inspire teachers, parents and community to do their best and to support whatever improvement process that are initiated in schools and above all seek for opportunities available to improve schools. It is recommended that appraisal of headteachers for promotion in the Ghana Education Service should be based on evidence of how headteachers play their leadership roles to create environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. For this reason, headteacher leadership training programmes should be continuous and structured around what works in the school system and in what ways, taking the school context into consideration. This will require competencies that the headteacher would employ to interplay the school conditions to improve schools. Emphasis should therefore be on how headteachers can make a difference in improving the conditions to impact students' learning than on what they should know as factors for school improvement.

### **8.2.2 School Supervision and Inspection**

Supervision and inspection of schools are very critical to school improvement as they provide guides to school leadership in focusing attention to what works in the improvement of schools. As the study shows, school improvement is the synergy between headteacher

leadership, teachers, students, parents and communities. It is therefore recommended that school supervision and inspection should be guided and focused on school improvement. The supervision and inspection by circuit supervisors of the Ghana Education Service and the National Inspectorate Board should focus on how headteacher leadership interplays with the critical school conditions and factors in creating school environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. For example, how headteachers motivate and inspire teachers, students and communities to do their best to improve the school conditions for effective teaching and learning. Currently the emphasis of school supervision and inspection appear to be concentrated on inputs availability and learning outcomes achieved ignoring how these inputs including both human and material, though limited, could be manipulated to influence the improvement of the school. The role of headteacher leadership in this regard is very critical and important in the improvement of the school conditions to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Supervision and inspection should therefore be focused towards school improvement with emphasis on supporting headteacher leadership in basic schools.

### **8.2.3 Education Decentralization**

Decentralization has become synonymous with governance and accountability (Litcack et al, 1998). It is seen as a driving force in strengthening efficiency and accountability of resources and results (Dunne, Akyeampong, & Humphreys (2006). This has led to the pressure on schools in the demand for transparency, probity and accountability (Chapman, and Snyder, 2000). Ghana introduced the education decentralization policy in 1995, as part of government's effort at improving education delivery, especially, at the basic level. This resulted in the establishment of bodies such as the school management committees (SMCs), the parent teacher association (PTA) and the district education oversight committees (DEOCs) in the spirit of decentralization to allow for the active involvement of the local people in decision-making to improve schools. The findings as emerged from the study appear to support the claim that the home (parents and community), and headteacher leadership are critical factors for school improvement (Hattie, 2009; Shaeffer, 1992;

Heneveld and Craig, 1996; Uemura, 1999; and Epstein and Levy, 1995). Discussions at PTA meetings, the community level school performance appraisal meetings, and school management committee meetings allow teachers, parents and the community to help in the decision-making to improve schools. The study has shown that with strong headteacher leadership and community participation, the key ingredients for promoting local decision-making under the decentralized education system, schools can make a difference in the performance of the schools.

However, as the study shows, most of such local decision-making bodies appear not to be effectively functioning, especially, as in the case of the SMCs representing the community in the management of the schools. The most vibrant local body in both schools (Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS) is the PTA. The SMC that is mandated by the education decentralization policy to support schools to make good decisions to improve schools appears relatively non-functional due to its level of non-commitment. Many reasons have been assigned to the challenges faced by the SMCs of which lack of capacity, both human and material, appear prominent among the challenges. The SMCs as the study shows also appear to be discouraged by the irregular or non-release of the government's capitation grant that provides the needed financial resources to enable schools to implement their school performance improvement plans (SPIPs). Alternatively the PTA has often been used to assist the schools to finance their activities as a result of the inadequacies and inconsistent releases of the capitation grant. In this regard, it appears the PTA has remained the most reliable source of funding to support school improvement programmes and hence the most functional body in the schools.

This study supports the fact that the SMCs are not effective and therefore affecting the mobilization of community participation in school improvement. It is therefore necessary for policy makers to re-think of restructuring the SMC and strengthening their capacity to enable them function more effectively.



#### **8.2.4 ‘Fee Free’ Universal Basic Education**

The study shows that the ‘fee free’ universal basic education as part of the ‘education for all’ strategy ensuring that government provides almost all the needs of public basic schools appear to be challenged. All fees and levies that were being paid by parents at the time of the introduction of the FCUBE were abolished by the ‘fee free’ policy in Ghana. Specifically levies such as maintenance, sanitation, teaching and learning materials, sports and culture, were abolished and instead government introduced the capitation grant. Government, in addition is also to provide all public basic schools with the needed resources such as teachers, classroom infrastructure, textbooks, potable and safe water, toilet facilities etc. the study shows that there are deficiencies which are invariably affecting the quality of education delivered at the basic level (EMIS, 2014). The findings also show that the government spends over 50% of its education sector budget (6% of GDP) on public basic education (figure 2.3, page 20). Teachers’ and other staffs’ salaries and allowances take about 90% of the basic education budget leaving very little for investments and developments (figure 2.4, page 21).

The study shows that with strong headteacher leadership and with support from the community and parents schools in poor conditions could be improved to promote effective teaching and learning. The participation of parents and community in school improvement do not in any way interfere with the government fee free policy except that their participation must not be aligned with the policy framework to ensure that parents are not over burdened with high cost that will interfere with government policy on ‘education for all’. In this regard as the study shows, the burden should not be on parents but expanded to include the whole community – including opinion leaders, churches, mosques, civil society, corporate bodies and other members of the community. The increasing number of private schools is a signal that if care is not taken to improve public schools parents will be compelled to send their children to high cost private schools which could be a more serious challenge to the government commitment to providing quality basic education for all Ghanaian children irrespective of their socio-economic status.

### **8.2.5 Capitation Grant Policy**

The capitation grant policy was introduced in 1995 as part of the government's policy of 'education for all' to abolish all fees or levies that were paid by parents towards their children's education. The initial amount was GH¢3.00 per pupil per year until it was increased to GH¢4.50 as it stands currently. The study shows that in view of the challenges government faces in the delays and sometimes non-release of the grant as indicated in the study, schools appear to have lost confidence in the reliability of the grant and have re-introduced the special levies as the findings show. As indicated by 2014 survey report of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) on capitation grant, the grant constitute only 38% of the total expenditure of a school. This implies that even if the grant was to be released regularly, the schools will still need about 62% of their budget requirement from other sources (NDPC, 2014).

In this regard, it can be argued that if the capitation grant is to continue then it should be reviewed to be commensurate with the current economic conditions, especially, regarding the devaluation of the cedi from the exchange rates. The grant needs to take into account the current real cost of quality basic education and needs to work alongside strategies involving the participation of parents and the community taking into consideration the potential need to exclude or lessen the contribution of those with low socio-economic status. In this regard, there should be greater efficiency in the disbursement of the grant through a more efficient targeting mechanism. The grant should go to schools that need the grant most while efforts are made to encourage parents and communities who can to support in the development of the schools.

### **8.2.6 Infrastructure Development**

The findings show that school infrastructure is critical for creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning (Oplatka, 2004). However, many of the public basic schools lack basic infrastructure such as classrooms, furniture, toilet facilities, security walls, electricity, water and land for development. The education Acts (1961 and

2008) establishing basic education put these infrastructure needs on the government agenda (both local and national), but the deficits show the challenges the government faces in this respect. A vital question is whether this lack or inadequacy of basic infrastructure is leading to low students' learning achievement. Though the infrastructure might not directly improve high achievement, it provides security and raises the confidence and expectation levels of students, teachers and parents as the study shows.

The absence of safe and protective school infrastructure is affecting quality basic education and policy makers need to give it serious consideration. Again, the review of the government policy on school infrastructure to include parents and the community comprising the civil society, corporate bodies, individuals and group of persons in the provision of school infrastructure will be helpful in addressing the infrastructure deficit of basic schools.

### **8.3 Limitations of the Study**

There are a number of limitations that are acknowledged in the study. Firstly, there exists the limitation of the relatively small sample size of two schools and ten participants. It would have been useful to include more basic schools especially the many different school contexts across the country. This means, while the sample size of schools is increased the the participants will also increase to allow more participants to enrich the study. With this limitation the findings cannot be generalized. .

Furthermore, a study looking specifically at improvement in typical rural schools would have been a good idea to use findings from such study to also boost the effort by some schools that are seriously making the effort to improve their schools..

Another limitation to the study was the scarcity of recent literature on school improvement especially, in the sub-Saharan Africa and Ghana in particular.

The generalization of these findings is difficult to determine and contextual factors need to be considered. Nevertheless, the two schools are both focused examples on school improvement through effective leadership and active community participation in an urban-rural setting. Findings in this study warrant further exploration, particularly as the conditions for school improvement may be found to pertain to a larger more homogeneous sample. It would be a useful exercise to compare this study with successful cases in other regions in Ghana.

#### **8.4 Contribution to Knowledge**

It can be argued that this study has contributed substantially, theoretically, and methodologically to knowledge regarding school improvement processes in the context of Ghana.

##### **8.4.1 Substantive issues**

As indicated, most of the research in Ghana, regarding basic schools, has concentrated on the challenges public basic schools face, ranging from limited resources to lack of adequate supervision and poor leadership. Much other research has also dealt extensively with the factors that contribute to school improvement regardless of the school contexts. In this regard, it appears the one size-fits-all solutions that are proffered and adopted by many countries, for example, ‘fee free universal basic education’, especially in sub-Saharan Africa appear not to be addressing the specific contexts leading to the myriad poor learning outcomes. Although this study concurs the critical role of headteacher leadership and community participation in education delivery, it provides a more in-depth understanding of the Ghanaian context. This study therefore sets the foundations for looking at the local contextual conditions that appear to support the creation of environments conducive to effective teaching and learning to promote high students’ learning achievements.

#### **8.4.2 Theoretical issues**

The study adopted the framework of school improvement (Borman et al, 2000; Akyeampong, 2004; Hopkins, 2001; Harris, 2002, Chapman, 2005), school leadership (Southworth, 2002; Gronn, 2002; Leithwood, et al, 2004; and Marks and Printy, 2003) , and, community participation (Weil and Gamble, 1995; Colletta and Perkins, 1995; Shaeffer, 1992; and, Heneveld and Craig, 1996) concepts developed over the years, especially, in Europe and USA and a few from the Asian countries and Africa. The findings of most of these researchers rarely address the connections between the various factors that are considered effective for school improvement and how these factors relate to affect improvement in the schools. The ones that come closer especially in the relations and in the Ghanaian context is that of Akyeampong (2004) but that also does not look at how the different factors interplay one another to impact school improvement.

This study has established the strong connections of the key factors of school improvement highlighting the headteacher leadership role in orchestrating the efforts from teachers, students, and from the parents and the community as well; and also the reciprocal efforts from these collaborators to influence the school conditions to impact improvement of the school. These internal processes of relationships trigger the school improvement process. This is in contrast to the many research findings on school improvement that place emphasis on the individual factors for school improvement.

#### **8.4.3 Methodological issues**

Most research on school improvement in the Ghanaian context prefers to use quantitative methods for its relative ease and speed, its clarity, precision and standardization. However, considering the strong connections and relations of the characteristics, this study used an interpretive qualitative research approach which afforded the opportunity to investigate the context under which schools are able to create an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. The research design used an analytic method for constructing theories from inductive qualitative data.

## 8.5 Conclusion

It has been a long journey in undertaking the study, taking into consideration my position as a senior education leader and a researcher (see timelines for my journey – appendix 8). The journey began when I was a senior education leader (Director of Basic Education) trying to find answers to the perennial problem of low achievement of pupils in the public basic school. From that position I saw that many of the investments to improve schools were not delivering the expected outcomes, and that more of the same was not the answer. Then came the opportunity to undertake further studies as part of capacity building of senior managers of the GES. I saw the opportunity to study for a professional doctor of education very timely and appropriate opening an opportunity to undertake an empirical study into the public school system, especially regarding school improvement. In July, 2009 I began the journey as a developing researcher of the University of Sussex, United Kingdom.

Initially, I was confronted with the challenge of putting away my senior leadership position as a policy decision maker to a researcher interested in an empirical study. After going through all the theories of how one can become a researcher, my greatest challenge came when I had to begin my mini research in a school to investigate how headteacher leadership interplays with the school system to impact students' learning. I have been very familiar with instances of talking to people in my position in finding out how things work or do not work in the schools. This time I was to do a systematic study based on approved ethical guidelines with strong theoretical assumptions. However, I always reminded myself of my position as a developing researcher and the importance of ensuring that during data collection, respondents do not see me as a senior official visiting the school for supervision and inspection. The professional doctorate degree (Ed.D) offered me the opportunity to stand back and take a reflective look at practice on the ground. So as a researcher I was learning to appreciate the value of evidence in making claims about knowledge and which also had implications for policy. By the time I was coming to the end of my professional doctorate studies, I was appointed to a higher position in the Ghana Education Service as a deputy-director general and this being a higher responsibility put me in a more difficult

situation than before. As a researcher and a senior policy maker in the GES I had to manage the situation to ensure that my official position did not interfere unduly with my research position, and this I did excellently. The journey has not been easy but has been worth it as it has strengthened my ability to critique education policy and look for evidence to inform policy decisions. This research has taught me that as senior education official, it is important to be guided by evidence of how things work in public schools in order to make good decisions to improve school performance.

The study sought to investigate the conditions prevailing in high performing public basic schools and what role school headteacher leadership and community participation play in creating the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The study has revealed the need for stronger collaboration between schools and the community for mutual benefit of all. While the school provides opportunity for teachers to teach and students to learn, the community should also support the schools to enable them to create the needed environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

The most important factors that have led to the creation of environment conducive to effective teaching and learning environment as the study shows are: 1) safe and protective classroom infrastructure, 2) effective teaching and learning approaches, 3) high commitment from parents and community to participate in the school improvement process, and, 4) effective headteacher leadership with a vision for school improvement. As the study shows, the role of headteacher leadership in driving the efforts of especially teachers and communities including parents in the creation of school environment conducive to effective teaching and learning is highly acknowledged and has been demonstrated in Kojokrom JHS and Yawkrom JHS improvement processes, hence the high student achievement levels in the two schools.

## **8.6 Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings from this study have shown that there are still some areas in school improvement that need to be investigated. These areas may include:

- The school and home factors that make the greatest impact to improve school outcomes. This may demand a larger scale, long-period study.
- Typical rural areas which have a very different school context that may need some special improvement intervention in the midst of the numerous social challenges.
- The effects of the capitation grant and how they influence school improvement in the different school and community context.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1a: Interview Guide for Headteachers

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADTEACHERS		
<i>Estimated time: 60 minutes</i>		
Item	Question	Probe/Prompts
Introduction to establish rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greetings and self-introduction</li> <li>Introducing participant to purpose of meeting and other discussion to set the interview in motion</li> </ul>	
Participant's background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you tell me your previous background experience in any leadership position</li> <li>Can you also tell me in brief how you have come this far as a headteacher of this school?</li> </ul>	What have been your motivations?
Concept of school improvement and school leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you understand the two concepts: school improvement and school effectiveness? Do you find any relation between the two concepts?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If yes in what ways are they related</li> </ul>
School Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you tell me in brief how the school has come this far in terms of developments?</li> <li>Would you say the school has seen improvement over the period that you have been in this school?</li> <li>How have you contributed as a leader in the changes you have achieved in this school?</li> <li>How have the parents and community also contributed to the changes in the school?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If yes, in what ways has the school improved?</li> <li>In what areas have you seen a lot of improvements?</li> <li>What has been your motivation?</li> <li>What have been the motivations of parents and the community?</li> </ul>
School Performance in BECE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will you rate your students' performance in the BECE over the years</li> <li>Do you consider the performance as high achievement?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If yes, what generally accounts for the high achievement? And what have been the</li> </ul>

		key factors for the improvement?
School and home factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What school improvement strategies are in place to have contributed to the improvements?</li> <li>• In what ways have the school and the home factors contributed to the improvements in the school?</li> <li>• In what ways specifically have these factors contributed in helping to create the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning and impact students' learning outcomes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mention the key strategies?</li> <li>• Mention the roles of the teachers, parents and the community?</li> <li>• Mention the individual contribution to the improvement?</li> </ul>
Headteacher Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have a vision for the school?</li> <li>• How has your leadership contributed in providing leadership to create the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning?</li> <li>• What do you consider very strategic in the way you have conducted your leadership?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes what is your vision statement?</li> <li>• Mention the key strategies adopted to reach your vision?</li> <li>• What has been your style of leadership?</li> </ul>
School policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the school policies that are in place to have supported you in your school improvement strategies?</li> <li>• Are these policies different from the national policies on basic education?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mention them?</li> <li>• If yes, how are these school policies different from the national policies?</li> </ul>

### Appendix 1b: Interview Guide for Teachers

<b>INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS</b>  <i>Estimated time: 45 minutes</i>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Probe/Prompts</b>
Introduction to establish rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greetings and self-introduction</li> <li>• Introducing participant to purpose of the meeting and other discussions to set the interview in motion</li> </ul>	
Participant's background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me in brief about how you have come this far as a teacher of this school?</li> </ul>	What have kept you here all this while?
Concept of school improvement and school leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you understand the two concepts: school improvement and school effectiveness? Do you find any relation between the two concepts?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes in what ways are they related</li> </ul>
School Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me in brief how the school has come this far in terms of improvements?</li> <li>• Would you say the school has seen improvement over the period that you have been in this school?</li> <li>• Who in your opinion have contributed to the improvements in the school?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, in what ways has the school improved?</li> <li>• In what areas have you seen a lot of improvements?</li> </ul>
School Performance in BECE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you rate your students' performance in the BECE over the years</li> <li>• Do you consider the performance as high achievement?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, what generally accounts for the high achievement?</li> </ul>
School and home factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What school improvement strategies are in place to have contributed to the improvements?</li> <li>• In what ways have the school and the home factors contributed to the improvements in the school?</li> <li>• In what ways specifically have these</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mention the key strategies?</li> <li>• Mention the roles of the teachers, parents and the community in the school improvement</li> </ul>

	factors contributed in helping to create the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning and impact students' learning outcomes?	<p>strategies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mention the individual contribution to the improvement?</li> </ul>
Contribution of Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What specific contributions have teachers in this school made in helping to create the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning?</li> <li>• How have you specifically improved your classroom pedagogy to influence students' learning?</li> <li>• Have you received any support from the headteacher, parents and students you teach?</li> </ul>	If yes, what sort of support do you receive specifically from the headteacher, parents and students? Mention them.
Headteacher Leadership and parents and community participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you perceive the headteacher leadership and community participation in the creation of environment conducive to effective teaching and learning in the school?</li> <li>• How does the headteacher provide leadership?</li> <li>• Do your headteacher have a vision for school improvement?</li> </ul>	<p>If yes, what is the vision of the headteacher and how does he share the vision with you the teachers?</p> <p>How do you work towards the vision?</p>
School policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the school policies that are in place to have supported the school to improve performance? Mention them?</li> <li>• Are these policies different from the national policies on basic education if you are familiar of the policies?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, how are these school policies different from the national policies?</li> </ul>



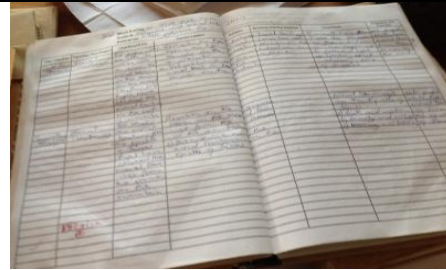
### Appendix 1c: Interview Guide for Parents

<b>INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS</b>  <i>Estimated time: 30 minutes</i>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Probe/Prompts</b>
Introduction to establish rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greetings and self-introduction</li> <li>• Introducing participant to purpose of meeting and other discussion to set the interview in motion</li> </ul>	
Participant's background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me in brief how you have come to know this school?</li> <li>• How will you describe the school from your own perspectives?</li> </ul>	<p>Is your child here?</p> <p>For how long has he/she been here?</p>
School Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For how long have you associated yourself with this school?</li> <li>• How do you perceive the conditions in this school?</li> <li>• Can you tell me in brief how the school has come this far in terms of developments?</li> <li>• Would you say the school has seen improvement over the period that you have come to associate yourself with the school?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, in what ways has the school improved?</li> <li>• In what areas have you seen a lot of improvement?</li> </ul>
School Performance in BECE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will you rate the students in this school, that is their performance in the BECE over the years</li> <li>• Do you consider the performance as high achievement?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, what generally accounts for the high achievement?</li> </ul>
Factors influencing the conditions in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What school factors in your view have influenced the environment making it conducive to effective teaching and learning?</li> <li>• What home factors in your view have influenced the environment and made it conducive to effective teaching and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes, what specific support do parents and the community provide to the school and to whom?</li> <li>• What has been your personal or PTA</li> </ul>

	<p>learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do parents and the community specifically contribute anything, in the form of cash, labour, kind or decision-making to have helped the school to create an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning?</li> </ul>	<p>contribution to the school improvement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How has the PTA leadership helped to make the PTA more functional?</li> </ul>
Headteacher Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you perceive the leadership of the headteacher and that of the community including parents in creating an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning in the school?</li> <li>Does the headteacher have a vision that he is pursuing to improve the school?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If yes what is his vision?</li> <li>Do you share in his vision?</li> <li>How does he provide leadership?</li> <li>What has been his style of leadership?</li> </ul>
School policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you know of any policies the school is implementing to improve performance in the school?</li> <li>How are these policies different from what pertain in other schools?</li> <li>Do you know of any of these guidelines that appear to conflict with the national policies or guidelines?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If yes, what of these policies do you know?</li> <li>What of the policies do you find good or bad? Capitation grant, fee free education, extra classes, etc</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2: Photographs of some documents and attractions

Output of work (unit coverage)



Vetted teacher's lesson plan



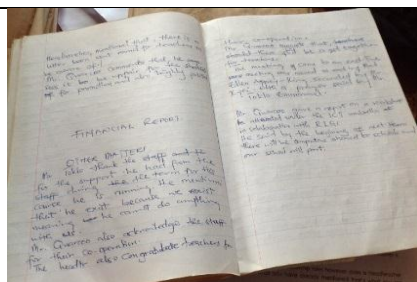
Students busily doing class assignment



Jubilating students after a football match

Students' attendance register

Teachers' time book



PTA Minutes' Book



Beautification in one of the schools

### Appendix 3: Permission Letter



University of Sussex

**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**  
**School of Education and Social Work**

The Director of Education  
 Ga South Municipal  
 Weija

#### Permission Letter

I wish to ask for permission to undertake a research study in some selected schools in your district, as part of my doctoral studies with the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. The University has given me the approval to undertake the research. I am being sponsored by the Ghana Education Service. My thesis is titled: The role of headteacher leadership and community participation in public school improvement in Ghana

The study seeks to investigate the conditions prevailing in public schools considered as high performing and what school headteachers leadership and community engagement played in creating the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

I will be grateful if you could assist me identify four high achieving public basic schools in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) in your district and also grant me the permission to have access to these schools that will be selected for my study. The study will be undertaken in the first term of the 2012/13 academic year.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely,

Stephen Adu

## Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Participants



University of Sussex

**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**  
**School of Education and Social Work**

**TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY:** The role of headteacher leadership and community participation in public school improvement in Ghana

You are being invited to take part in a research study on the above topic. However, 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 you. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

**Purpose of Study:** The study seeks to investigate the conditions prevailing in public schools considered as high performing and what school headteachers leadership and community participation played in creating the environment conducive to effective teaching and learning.

**Study period:** The study will go through one term of the 2012/13 academic year. Data will be collected effective three weeks in each school.

**Research design:** The study will be mainly qualitative through a case study approach and data will be collected through one-on-one interviews, documentary analysis, and observation of events leading to school improvement. It will also include informal interactions.

**Reasons for choosing you to participate in the study:** You have been selected to participate in the study for being a (headteacher, teacher, parent) of a high achieving public basic schools contrary to the generally low performing public basic schools. It is believed that you have contributed immensely as an individual or as a group; in the high achievements of the students and you therefore have experience in the school improvement strategies which will help enrich the study. Participants of the study will include: headteachers, teachers and parents (SMC/PTA members). Taking part in the research study is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm your acceptance, willingness, readiness and commitment to

participate in the study. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdrawal at any time and without giving any reason for your withdrawal.

**What you are to do if you take part in the study:** You will be interviewed at your own convenience and time within the study period. During the interview you will be expected to respond to some open questions that I will be asking you. There is no one specific answer to the questions I may ask and you will have to answer in your own words, expressing your opinions freely and in your own way. You may ask for further clarifications if you do not understand very well any of the questions I may ask. I may also ask for further clarifications in case I do not get your responses very well. I will also engage you in some informal interactions during the period of the study.

**Disadvantages and risks for taking part in the study:** The research does not intend to intimidate you, harass you, ridicule you, cost you or put you in any form of risk except that you will have to make time at your own convenience to participate in the study.

**Possible benefits for taking part in the study:** My intentions with you through the formal interviews and informal interactions will provide you opportunity to learn more to enhance your understanding of school improvement which will provide the impetus for improving students' learning outcomes. Your participation in the study will also help you to realize your importance in contributing to knowledge. It gives you an opportunity to assess the school improvement strategies and how you could also contribute to improve the strategies.

**Confidentiality:** You are assured that all the information you provide for the study will be kept strictly confidential and will not be disclosed to any third person beyond my research team (Supervisors). The data collected will be anonymised and identifiable by pseudonyms which will be strictly confidential and stored securely.

**Using the findings of the study:** The findings will be used purposely in my thesis to contribute to 'knowledge'. In case I decide to publish the research, I will acknowledge your contribution in an anonymised form. In case it is published and you want copy you could request from the researcher.

**Approval for the research:** I am conducting the research as a student of the University of Sussex at the School of Education and Social Work. The Ghana Education Service is sponsoring my research study and bears the cost of the study through its capacity building funding component of basic education. The research has been approved by the School of Education and Social Work Ethics Committee (C-REC).

**Contact for further information:** For further information, you may please contact the researcher, Stephen Adu of the Ghana Education Service. You may also contact my main Supervisor, Professor Albert Kwame Akyeampong, University of Sussex, UK, if you have any concerns about the way in which the study was conducted.

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.

**Date:** .....

## Appendix 5: Consent Form for Project Participants



University of Sussex

**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**  
**School of Education and Social Work**

**Project Title:** The role of headteacher leadership and community participation in public school improvement in Ghana

### **Project Approval: Reference**

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

- Be interviewed by the researcher
- Allow the interview to be audio-taped if necessary
- Make myself available for a further interview should that be required
- Allow the researcher to observe my record books if any
- Allow the researcher to observe my interactions for example at meetings, classrooms and other events where applicable

I understand that any information I provide is confidential and that no information that I disclose will lead to my identification in the research study, either by the researcher or by any other party.

I understand that my participation is voluntary that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the research study, and that I can withdrawal at any stage of the study without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.

I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purpose of this research study.

I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the data Protection Act 1998.

I understand that the information I provide for the research study can be used in further research projects which have research governance approval as long as my name and contact information is removed before it is passed on.

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## **Appendix 6: Lesson Observation Tool**

### **1. Basic Data**

Name of School: .....

Date of Observation: ..... Period: .....

Class: ..... Enrolment: ..... Boys: ..... Girls: .....

No. Present: ..... Boys: ..... Girls: .....

Name of Teacher: ..... Gender: .....

Teacher's Qualification: ..... Years of Experience: .....

### **2. Lesson Plan Assessment**

Subject: ..... Topic: .....

.....

- Lesson Objectives Stated: (Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound)
- Core Points Stated: (Relevant, Adequate).
- Teaching and Learning Materials – TLMs: (Adequacy, Relevance, Variety, and Appropriateness).
- Teacher/Learner Activities - TLA: Variety of TLAs, Coverage of TLAs , Relevance of TLAs).

### **3. Classroom Interactions Assessment**

- Class Management (class control, arrangement of tables/chairs)
- Introduction (relevant, appropriate, attractive, lively, etc.)
- Type of questions (appropriateness, relevance, adequacy)



- Questioning skills (fairness in distribution, reaction to answers provided by students)
- Organization of activities (whole class, small groups, in pairs, as individuals)
- Effectiveness of students activities (promote students' interactions, engagement and participation)
- Feedback through oral questions, summary of key points, discussions, class assignment or homework, etc. (how relevant and effective)

**Note:** *Comment on each assessment tool as appropriate*

### Appendix 7: Official Time-Table for Kojokrom JHS

TIME TABLE											
TIME/ DAY	6.30 - 8.00	8.00 - 9.20	9.20 - 10.40		10.40 - 11.10	11.10 - 12.30	12.30 - 1.10	1.10 - 1.40	1.40 - 2.20	2.30 - 4.00	
MON	Cleaning, silent hour/ self-learning, Assembly	Integrated Science	Social Studies		BREAK	BDT	Gh. Lang	BREAK	Ghanaian Language	RME	
TUE		ICT	Mathematics			Ghanaian Language	BDT		BDT	English	
WED		Worship	French	Library		P.E.	Maths		Maths	Co-curricular	
THU		ICT	English			BDT			Social Stud.	Int. Science	
FRI		French	Maths			English	Int. Sci.		Int. Science	Co-curricular	

### Appendix 8: Timelines for My Journey

Date	Activity
Aug. 2009	Started the Ed.D programme when I was the Director for Basic Education Division responsible in ensuring quality basic education delivery in the country. I was in senior management position
Aug. 02, 2011	Visited selected sample district to discuss the study in the district and to seek for permission not on one of my usual visit to schools to monitor performance but now as a developing researcher
Aug. 30, 2011	Submitted first draft of my completed ethics form to my Supervisor
Oct. 2011	Continued with visit to selected sample schools as a developing researcher to discuss the study and to seek for permission to undertake the study in the schools
Nov. 11, 2011	Submitted first draft research proposals to my supervisor
Nov. 2011	Continued with visits to sample schools as a developing researcher to familiarize myself with the culture of the sample schools
Apr. 02, 2012	Submitted my final research proposals to my Supervisor for approval
May, 2012	Received Ethical Certificate of approval to start my data collecting as a researcher
Sep. 2012	Undertook my pilot study
Oct. 29 – Dec. 08, 2012	Undertook my field work study collecting and analyzing initial data
Mar. 2013	Submitted first draft analysis chapters
Mar. 2013 – Dec. 2014	Continued with my data analysis alongside writing of the thesis, editing, and proof-reading
Jan. 2015	Appointed Deputy Director General, a very senior position in the GES

	responsible for management services in the GES, in addition to my position as Director for Basic Education Division
Jan. – Jul. 2015	Continued with the final editing of the manuscript in addition to exercising the responsibility as Director for Basic Education Division and Deputy Director General
25 Sep. 2015	Submitted copies of my bound thesis
Dec. 04, 2015	Successfully defended my thesis