

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES OF HEAD TEACHERS: PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT, SUPERVISING AND EVALUATING INSTRUCTION (GHANA)

Authors

Ansong Joycelyn⁽¹⁾ ; Kusi Hinneh⁽²⁾ ; Adofoduor Martin⁽³⁾ ; Sarfo Frederick Kwaku⁽⁴⁾ 

Main Author's Email: ansongob@yahoo.com

(1.3) Ghana Education Service, Ghana; (2) University of Education Winneba, Ghana; (4) Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skill Training and Entrepreneurial Development, Ghana

Cite this article in APA

Ansong, J., Kusi, H., Adofoduor, M., Sarfo, F. K. (2024). An exploratory study of instructional leadership challenges of head teachers: Promoting and supporting instructional improvement, supervising and evaluating instruction (Ghana). *Journal of education management and leadership*, 3(1), 48-62. <https://doi.org/10.51317/jeml.v3i1.648>



A publication of Editon Consortium Publishing (online)

Article history

Received: 30.10.2024

Accepted: 28.11.2024

Published: 30.12.2024

Scan this QR to read the paper online



Copyright: ©2024 by the author(s). This article is an Open Access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).



Abstract

The study aimed to determine head teachers' challenges in instructional leadership: promoting and supporting instructional improvement, supervising and evaluating instruction in Ghana. Effective instructional leadership is considered critical in head teachers' performance outcomes. Ghana, a Lower Middle-Income Country, is faced with the challenge of improving the educational system of basic and Junior High Schools. The expectation on head teachers is high in achieving high educational standards in basic and Junior High Schools in Ghana. The study adopted a sequential qualitative research approach. Data was collected from head teachers, School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs), and Lead Teachers using a purposive maximum variation sampling approach. Participants responded to semi-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The result of the analysis revealed that there were similarities in the challenges faced by instructional leadership in both urban and rural schools. The challenges identified were inadequate academic resources, overburdened head teacher responsibilities, teacher-pupil behaviour and attitude, and an adverse physical environment. Head teachers faced multi-dimensional challenges in promoting and supporting instructional improvement and supervising and evaluating instruction in Ghana. All the challenges identified should be addressed holistically to allow the head teachers to deliver on the instructional leadership roles required to improve education at the basic and junior school levels.

Key terms: Evaluation of Instruction, instructional challenges, instructional leadership, supervision of instruction

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Professionals in the education service have the mandate to deliver high-quality service to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the citizenry. Musungu and Nasongo (2020) believe that quality education and effective schools emerge from the thoughts and active actions of professionals, mainly teachers. Given the need to address poor pupil performance and consider global educational reforms, particularly at the basic school level, strengthening the instructional leadership roles of head teachers is essential (Kabonu, 2013). Several models and reforms to the models of school leadership have been proposed. One of the key elements in most of these reforms is the instructional leadership (IL) of head teachers (Murphy et al., 1986). Research studies in the educational system focusing on challenges facing instructional leadership are instrumental to developing remedies to address the challenges facing instructional leadership. Existing studies predominantly focus on instructional leadership functions, processes, and activities. There is, however, little information on the challenges hindering the execution of instructional leadership systems and activities at the basic levels of education in Ghana. Research by Donkor (2016) on assessing school leadership challenges in Ghana focused on the performance of different schools concerning the actual performance of school leaders. The study concluded that there is a need to concentrate on efficiency and result-oriented school leaders in rural and urban schools (Donkor, 2016). The study also emphasised the need for leadership in schools to undergo training and reformation.

In Ghana, the Ministry of Education sector performance report 2015 pointed out funding allocation for school improvement. Remarkably, funding was not specifically allocated to improve instructional leadership activities and support systems at the basic levels of education. There is an obvious loss of sight of training head teachers to acquire more skills to make progress and achieve better student performance (Educational Sector Performance Report 2015 Ghana, 2015). The report clearly stated that over the years, a lot of attention had been placed on the provision of permanent physical structures to replace dilapidated school buildings and eliminate the operation of schools under trees, especially in the deprived areas, neglecting the training of head teachers. All these efforts have not contributed remarkably to the student's performance at all levels. Instructional leadership training is still considered to be a major factor that needs to be addressed as a key element driving improved performance (Educational Sector Performance Report 2015 Ghana, 2015). Ghana, as a developing country, continues to explore all avenues to improve its educational system. According to Ankomah et al. (2005), successive governments in Ghana have made numerous efforts to enhance performance in quality delivery of basic education through the implementation of policies such as capitation grants and huge expenditures on building more classrooms, provision of qualified teachers, free school uniforms and school feeding. All these are formulated to remove the majority of factors that prevent the achievement of high-quality basic school education (Ankomah et al., 2005).

Despite these efforts, Ghana's Education sector medium-term development plan, 2018-2021 Global Partnership for Education (2019), highlighted key issues that need further attention. In this report, the basic school education performance from 2004-2017 situational analysis revealed weak accountability mechanisms at the district and school levels by the education management. These are critical issues that have to be analysed, focusing on the basic school level since the policies have not achieved their aim of improving educational performance at the basic school level.

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

The elements of instructional leadership have a pivotal role to play in shaping the educational reforms in Ghana. Exploring the challenges faced by leadership while focusing on instructional leadership is of paramount importance in promoting and strengthening the concepts in the educational system of Ghana. Ghana Education Service would only embrace the concept if the challenges inherent in instructional leadership are addressed using findings from empirical research.

Three core components of instructional leadership (Functions, Processes, and Activities) proposed by Hallinger and Murphy (1983) should be the core operational elements of education leadership in the educational system of Ghana. The lack of empirical research is an obstacle to advancing the call for the implementation of the instructional leadership core component in the Ghanaian educational system. Understanding the challenges facing educational leadership in the educational system is paramount.

Little attention has been paid to exploring the challenges head teachers face in promoting instructional leadership responsibilities in rural and urban schools in Ghana. The study served as an empirical study to explore the challenges head teachers face in executing leadership tenets in their schools. We, therefore, present the findings of instructional leadership challenges head teachers face in promoting and supporting instructional improvement, supervising and evaluating instructions in rural and urban schools in Asante Akim North Municipality of the Ashanti Region.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is widely considered a cornerstone for enhancing teaching and learning in schools, with head teachers playing a pivotal role in achieving these outcomes (Bush, 2022; Donkor, 2015). However, the multifaceted nature of their responsibilities often impedes their ability to fully engage in this critical role (Wanjiku, 2012).

Head teachers have numerous challenges; according to Tahira et al. (2021), a significant challenge for head teachers is the need to balance their administrative obligations with their instructional leadership responsibilities. They illustrate that tasks such as managing school budgets, ensuring compliance with governmental policies, and overseeing staff recruitment frequently take precedence over instructional priorities, thus limiting their ability to focus on fostering effective teaching practices (Tahira et al., 2021).

The challenges were magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated the transition to online learning environments and required new leadership strategies (DeCoito & Estaiteyeh, 2022). Head teachers were compelled to adopt more direct approaches to navigate these transitions, which, while necessary, often reduced teachers' sense of autonomy and competence. These factors were strongly associated with increased levels of psychological stress and diminished resilience among teaching staff (Reed, 2024). Furthermore, the return to in-person learning brought additional difficulties, such as bridging learning gaps and addressing the broader impacts of the pandemic on student and staff well-being (Reed, 2024).

Professional development emerges as another critical area needing attention. Despite the availability of leadership programs, many do not adequately prepare head teachers for the complexities of instructional leadership (King & Stevenson, 2017). Sims et al. (2023) advocate for targeted professional development initiatives that enhance skills such as teacher mentoring, data-informed decision-making, and curriculum management. Without such tailored training, head teachers may find it challenging to lead instructional

improvements effectively. Additionally, resistance to feedback from teachers, coupled with insufficient training in delivering constructive feedback, further hampers instructional leadership efforts (Macapobre et al., 2024).

The issue of resource scarcity further compounds these challenges, particularly in under-resourced schools, as discussed by Barker and Rees (2020). They posited that limited access to teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms, and ageing infrastructure are prevalent issues that hinder both teaching effectiveness and leadership efficiency. Although some improvements in school funding have been reported, they remain insufficient to meet the evolving needs of modern education. As a result, head teachers often face difficult decisions that compromise the quality of instruction (Barker & Rees, 2020)

Finally, Tahira et al. (2021) identified that cultural and systemic constraints often undermine the ability of head teachers to implement effective instructional leadership. In many cases, hierarchical governance structures limit their autonomy, constraining their capacity to introduce innovative practices tailored to their schools' specific needs. Additionally, cultural norms that discourage collaborative decision-making further restrict the ability of head teachers to foster inclusive and dynamic leadership environments (Tahira et al., 2021).

In summary, the challenges facing head teachers in delivering instructional leadership are multifaceted, involving both internal and external factors. These barriers underscore the need for systemic reforms, targeted professional development, and robust resource allocation to enable head teachers to prioritise and enhance instructional practices effectively. In Ghana, there are limited domestic studies that focus on the challenges head teachers face in promoting and supporting instructional improvement, as well as supervising and evaluating instruction. The study will fill the gap in knowledge about instructional leadership. Focusing on other dimensions and the scope of challenges head teachers face.

Conceptual framework

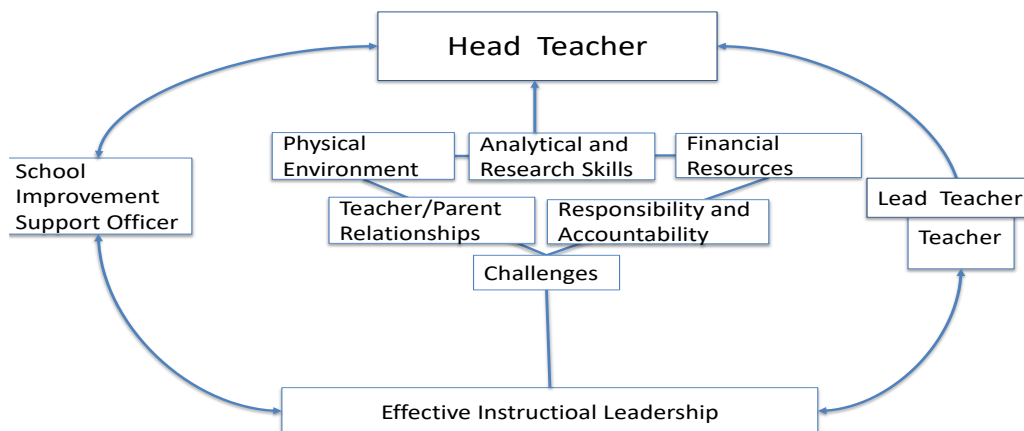


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

Globally, Instructional Leadership in the educational system is an important concept. Instructional leadership's key role is in driving the school's curriculum outcomes and it is embraced holistically (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

Improvements in the supervision of instructions under leadership are of utmost importance to educational authorities and governing bodies in education. Instructional leadership is therefore identified as a means to enhance head teachers' performance and student achievement (Bush, 2015). A combination of instructional leadership, supervisory policies, and practices has a place and should be used by head teachers to produce better results to promote school teaching and learning (Bush, 2022).

The conceptual framework for this study considered factors that impact the effective delivery of teaching and learning in schools. The study focused on six pillars of instructional leadership proposed by Hallinger and Murphy. (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986) Promoting and supporting instructional improvement and supervising and evaluating instruction are among the cornerstones of successful school leadership. Factors that impact instructional improvement, supervision, and evaluation depend on human resources, availability of funds, availability of teaching and learning material, conducive school environment, and teacher and pupil relationship.

The conceptual framework was designed to depict the pictorial interaction that these factors have on instructional leadership. The choice of framework was based on the interdependency of the factors that impact instructional leadership. Each factor directly or indirectly affects the overall effective running of teaching and learning activities in schools. In Ghana, the head teacher is the functional head and is complimented by the Lead teacher and SISO in ensuring effective instructional leadership. The conceptual framework (figure 1) depicts the role of the head teacher and the challenges each factor has on the head teacher in delivering instructional supervision with the lead teacher and SISOs. Applying the IL comes with challenges that hinder the efforts of the head teacher.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research approach in data collection using semi-structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study was conducted in the Asante Akim North Municipal in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. Participants were selected from a total of 129 teachers, of which 69 were head teachers (H), 8 were SISOs (S), and 52 were Lead Teachers (LT) from urban (U) and rural (R) areas of the municipality. A purposive sampling technique was used for the study. A maximum variation sampling procedure was applied in selecting the participants, paying attention to junior high school (JHS), primary, and kindergarten (KG) levels. A multistage sampling technique was also used to select the participants. The participants chosen for the study comprised 23 head teachers (18%), five School Improvement Support Officers (4%), and 22 lead teachers (17%). A total of 50 participants were chosen because of their direct involvement in teaching and learning and administrative activities, as well as the supervision of students. These participants represented 33 per cent of head teachers, 42 per cent of lead teachers, and 63 per cent of SISO.

Data Management and Analysis

A sequential approach was used to collect the data. The open-ended questionnaire was given to the teachers, and this was followed by an in-depth interview using a structured interview guide. Recorded data

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

gathered was transcribed with the aid of the Otter App, and this was jointly analysed with responses to the semi-structured questionnaires. Chat Gpt 4.0 was used digitally to generate codes from the interviews and questionnaires. The study team members who were independent of the Chat Gpt output manually verified by comparing the Chat Gpt output with randomly selected quotes that were manually coded. This was to ensure that the output was consistent and accurate. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the codes from the quotes. Pseudonyms were used for the participants to ensure confidentiality and anonymity were strictly complied with.

Data Collection Procedures

Approval was obtained from Akenten-Appiah Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development. (AAMUSTED) and the Asante Akim North Municipal Education Directorate. The research team explained the purpose of the study to the respondent, and informed consent was signed. By engaging as soon as participants agreed, the questionnaires were administered immediately.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Availability of Academic Resources

The study found that the head teachers lack educational resources and academic instructional materials like textbooks, syllabi and other logistics for running the school activities. Teachers were, therefore, noted to be reluctant to do their academic work. Note the comments below.

RHSL1 explained that:

For effective teaching and learning to take place, teachers' handbooks, pupils' textbooks, and appropriate TLMs/ TLAs should be readily available.

RSCE2 pointed out that:

Lack of textbooks and supplementary readers.

RHSV11 stated that:

Inadequate science and BDT equipment.

UHSB2 expressed that:

Insufficient use of teaching and learning resources.

UHSA1 mentions that:

Inadequate instructional materials like textbooks and syllabi

I have challenges in terms of logistics or materials. Heads are supposed to give teachers teaching and learning materials to aid effective instruction, but the materials are not available, and it is very difficult.

(UHSJ10)

Sometimes, teachers have to buy materials for teaching from their coffers, and not all teachers cooperate. The availability of funds has been one of the major challenges that are affecting us.

(RHSP5)

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

I discharge so many administrative responsibilities, and as a result, I sometimes do not have enough time to review all lessons noted [notes] and supervise instruction.

(RHSM2)

Our main challenge is finance. There is no money for us to buy textbooks. We have not provided a single textbook for the new curriculum; only the resource packs are available. Looking at the school with a class of about 30-40, there are no textbooks for the teacher to teach from. Ideally, each student had to get a textbook. Teachers' guide[s] are all not available.

(RHSQ6)

Head teachers Responsibility challenges

The study found that the head teachers have several responsibilities on their schedule, making them struggle to balance academic work with other competing responsibilities.

UHSA1 mentions that:

*Too many tasks make it difficult to do effective supervision and evaluation
Some pupils also feel intimidated in the presence of the head teacher*

UHSG7 mentioned that:

Enormous responsibilities associated with the position, like attending to dilapidated school facilities and school-community relationships.

UHSG7 mentioned that:

Limited time and inadequate resources for supervision (check-list), i.e. combining teaching with the supervisory role

RLSN1 echoed that:

Excessive workload.

UHSH8 reiterated that:

Too many responsibilities for head teachers.

UHSH8 reiterated that:

Heads are overburdened with work to the extent that they cannot supervise all instructions. They cannot supervise all instructions.

Head teachers discharge other administrative responsibilities. As a result, they may not have enough time to review teachers' lessons noted and to engage in effective lesson observation that could result in successful instructional supervision and evaluation.

(UHSD4)

I discharge so many administrative responsibilities, and as a result, I sometimes do not have enough time to review all lessons noted [notes] and supervise instruction.

(RHSM2)

RHSV11 stated that:

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

Due to the large size of the classes, supervision in the classrooms becomes problematic, and evaluating pupils individually becomes difficult

Teacher Pupil's Behaviour and Attitude

The study found that the challenges head teachers faced were multi-dimensional; the most important among them was punctuality and lateness to school by both the teachers and students. In-school lackadaisical behaviour by teachers due to the lack of academic materials was also identified. Further, the study revealed absenteeism on the part of teachers and students, impairing effective supervision and promotion of instructions.

RHSL1 explained that:

Most of the pupils are domestic assistants to their guardians, so punctuality and regularity at school become a problem

UHSB2 expressed that:

Sometimes, absenteeism becomes a challenge for the learners.

Students' lateness to school is a challenge that head teachers face in promoting and supporting instructional improvement.

(USCB2)

UHSK11 mentioned that:

Students' indiscipline.

RHSU10 asserted that:

Ban on caning in schools has led to indiscipline among the students.

UHS8 reiterated that:

Lack of cooperation on the part of some teachers

UHS8 reiterated that:

Some teachers do not complete their lesson plans on time

Teachers' punctuality is a problem head teachers face in promoting and supporting instructional improvement.

UHSK11 mentioned that:

Deficiency in content knowledge

Some teachers resist supervision because they lack awareness

ULSD4 further asserted that:

Resistance to supervision by teachers.

RHSU10 asserted that:

Ban on caning in schools (discipline). Time constraints are due to office work and meetings, and inadequate TLMs are due to a lack of funds.

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

Financial challenges

Head teachers mentioned insufficient funds as the most important factor impeding their efforts. Critical among them were funds to get instructional materials and basic school needs. The government capitation grant, which serves as the major source of funding, has not always been available or is received late. The ban on levy on Parents, Teachers Association (PTA) was cited as a drawback that has worsened the availability of funds. Also, the lack of financial aid to acquire textbooks for some needy students and the non-availability of a teacher's guide were identified from the study.

UHSA1 mentions that:

Inadequate instructional materials like textbooks and syllabi

RHSV11 stated that:

Inadequate science and BDT equipment.

The availability of funds has been one of the major challenges that are affecting us.

(RHSP5)

RHSU10 asserted that:

Non-availability and lateness of capitation grant to schools, government policy on no levy by PTA

Physical Environment challenges

The study found factors that negatively impact the head teacher's function in promoting and supporting instructional improvement and supervising and evaluating school instructions. These factors included inadequate school furniture, uncomfortable classroom environments, and dilapidated school structures. In addition, the study revealed that the school blocks were structurally located a distance apart, such that head teachers had to move around to have a complete command of the school activities. Also, the physical location of some of the schools in the residential area negatively impacts punctuality and regularity. Other locations around highways and market settings lead to noise generation. Again, some pupils were noted to be residing in remote areas of the community and had to commute long distances to schools.

RHSV11 stated that:

Inadequate furniture, leaking roofs, inadequate classrooms.

UHSB2 expressed that:

The location of the school adversely affects promotion and supporting instructions; thus, the noisy environment. Practical understanding of supervising and evaluating

RHSL1 explained that:

Classroom environment becoming friendly.

The schools are scattered, I am the only head teacher, and supervision becomes a problem.

(UHSD4)

The primary is on top there, the JHS is down there, and we saw the KG before the river and the stream, which is even far away from the JHS and the primary. Sometimes, he has to wake up early, go to the KG

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

school, and supervise all of the activities over there. By the time he reaches primary school and, for that matter, the JHS, he is left with, let me say, almost 10 there, about 10 am to 11 am before he gets to school. (ULSQ4)

Discussion

The findings in the study revealed that the head teacher faces challenges in promoting and supporting instructional improvement. The factors identified were inadequate academic resources, overburdened head teacher responsibilities, teacher-pupil behaviour and attitude, and adverse physical environment.

Educational resources, workload, and administrative responsibilities, impediments in accessing and utilising teaching materials, struggles with multifaceted responsibilities on instructional supervision, obstacles to effective education delivery and learning environment, distance and accommodation problems, teacher shortage and balancing supervision and teaching, lack of supervision and evaluation benchmark for head teachers are key factors for running effective school instructional supervision.

The findings suggest that head teachers face several challenges in promoting and supporting instructional improvement. It is worth noting that one challenge that the schools face is the non-availability of academic resources like textbooks, syllabi and other logistics for running the school activities.

The findings of this study confirm that of Imoro and Iddrisu (2018), who found that head teachers faced some challenges, such as a lack of resources and teachers, inadequate physical infrastructure, and teaching and learning materials (TLMs) (Imoro & Iddrisu, 2018). Likewise, the findings of the study are in tandem with several studies (Oduro & Macbeath, 2003; Louis, 2007).

In a different study done by (Albrecht et al., 2009), they found a lack of current appropriate textbooks and materials and no access to resource services (Albrecht et al., 2009). Ngithi (2013) researched the administrative challenges faced by primary school head teachers. From the findings, the study concluded that the majority of the head teachers faced administrative challenges in the management of the schools (Ngithi, 2013). These challenges included inadequate textbooks and other learning resources and a lack of adequate classrooms and furniture. The current study findings confirm Ngithi's research. Also, Wanzare and Da Costa (2000) in their study state that insufficient incentives for instructional leadership are a challenge for school principals.

Further, the study found that head teachers have several responsibilities in terms of workload. Katitia (2010) observed that head teachers do a lot of paperwork. The result is in keeping with that of India (2018), who found that a heavy workload is one of the challenges that head teachers encounter in primary schools. The findings concerning the overload of responsibilities suggest that some head teachers would be compelled to perform the minimum necessary duties regardless of the challenges that they would face (Indiazi, 2018). Again, Wanzare and Da Costa (2000) delved into principals' roles and their diversity. They further argued that the principal's tasks, especially those associated with instructional leadership, in meeting the needs and concerns of ever-changing schools are numerous, complex, and challenging (Wanzare & Da Costa, 2000).

Some studies in Ghana by Kusi et al. (2014) and Oduro and Macbeath (2003) have shown that head teachers, for instance, had to teach in addition to carrying out their leadership roles. Additionally, the

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

results of the current study are consistent with those obtained by Mutua (2011), who found that head teachers face numerous challenges in their instructional supervision work. For example, he found that teacher absenteeism and inadequate teaching and learning materials are some of the challenges that head teachers face. The study found that the challenges head teachers faced were multi-dimensional; the most important among them was punctuality and lateness to school by both the teachers and students. In-school lackadaisical behaviour by teachers due to the lack of academic materials was also identified. Additionally, the results of the current study are consistent with those obtained by Mutua (2011), who found that head teachers face numerous challenges in their instructional supervision work. For example, he found that both pupil and teacher absenteeism is a factor that affects the effective instructional leadership role of the head teacher (Mutua, 2011).

Financial stability revealed a negative impact on the head teacher's responsibilities. Again, the result of the study validates that of Esia-Donkoh (2014), who states that head teachers face certain challenges in performing their duties. Esia-Donkoh (2014) discovered that financial constraints are one of the challenges that they face. This suggests that financial constraint is a serious issue that hinders head teachers from performing their duties (Esia-Donkoh, 2014).

Also, the study showed that the challenges head teachers face in supervising and evaluating instruction are the size of the school, the scattered arrangements of schools, other competing responsibilities/overburden with tasks, lack of supervision manuals in schools, resistance to supervision by teachers, lack of good communication skills from head teachers, time allocations, insufficient materials required in the curriculum, incomplete lesson notes, teachers absenteeism, and unavailable teaching and learning resources.

The current study's findings are consistent with those of Okoroma and Robert-Okah (2007), who found that inadequate funding, inadequate school facilities, work overload, and poor conditions of service generated administrative challenges for head teachers (Okoroma & Robert-Okah, 2007).

Punctuality, regularity, and attitude emerged as important factors in this study. It is known that punctuality is directly related to school academic performance and effective instructional improvement (Hassan & Jami, 2016).

Baloyi and Worku (2022) showed that more than two-thirds of teachers indicated a significant association between punctuality and improved academic performance among public school learners. In this study, pupils' punctuality, absenteeism, and regularity were problems (Hassan & Jami, 2016). Student behaviour is a key problem, as reported by Sultana and Rashid (2013), who found that most students have time management problems. Student behaviour was the largest contributor to time management and punctuality in their study (Sultana & Rashid, 2013). Also, the study by Nyatuka (2012) linked absenteeism and unpunctuality among students to be due to participation in domestic chores and low academic achievement (Nyatuka, 2012). The study concluded that the students' low academic achievement could be attributed to involvement in domestic chores, recommending that the domestic chores assigned to the students be reduced, allowing students to attend school regularly. Further, the study by Bush et al. (2022) revealed that absenteeism of teachers and harsh punishments contribute significantly to absenteeism among Early Childhood and Primary Education (ECPE) learners (Bush et al., 2022). These factors impact the academic performance of absentees, leading to subpar educational outcomes. Additionally, positive

Journal of Education Management and Leadership

attitudes towards ECPE classes were found to correlate with better academic performance, emphasising the importance of a conducive learning environment (Bush et al., 2022).

Again, Assefa Ekyaw (2014) found that the major challenges that primary school instructional supervisors come across while implementing instructional supervision were multiple, noting that they were overburdened with other tasks and had similar instructional time with other teachers.

The physical environment of the school is critical to conducive administration and effective application of teaching and learning, according to Smith David (2024) and Suleman et al. (2014). These studies found that some of the school's internal and external climates were undesirable for effective teaching and learning.

Baafi and Baafi (2020), in their study on school physical environment and academic performance, confirmed that the students in senior high schools with a pleasant physical environment perform better than those in an unpleasant learning environment that is not conducive to learning. Even though this present study did not correlate physical environment and academic performance, it can be deduced that the challenges identified are sufficient to impact the pupils' academic performance, as reported by the authors (Baafi & Baafi, 2020).

Overall, this study identified critical challenges head teachers face in promoting and supporting instructional improvement. Most of our findings have not been reported in Ghana, and further exploratory studies in other regions of the country are recommended

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: In conclusion, Lunenburg (1995) stated that "the principal's job is to help the school achieve a high level of performance through the utilisation of its human and material resources. More simply, the principal's job is to get things done by working with and through other people" (p. 3). This statement is relevant to understanding the mirage of challenges head teachers face in promoting and supporting instructional improvement in schools. More introspection and reflective understanding of the roles of teachers are required to address the challenges identified in this study. To address this situation, a comprehensive policy guideline and school administrative structure should be streamlined, and all resources required for effective school work should be provided.

Recommendations: To improve the availability of educational resources, it is recommended that school leadership work closely with stakeholders and plan the requisition and timely delivery of educational resources. A holistic approach to the resource needs and efficient procurement system will significantly address this problem. The overburdened head teacher's responsibility can be addressed by assigning responsibilities appropriately to the other teachers of the school. Guidelines and school administrative policy documents should be developed by the school's leaders. Failure to address the teacher-pupil behaviour and attitude toward instruction is a crucial disruptive factor for effective teaching and learning. It is, therefore, recommended that the head teacher apply the GES code of conduct. Regarding the student, it is recommended that reformatory punishment should be applied consistently to students who report late after discussion with their parents.

6.0 REFERENCES

1. Albrecht, S. F., Johns, B. H., Mounstevan, J., & Olorunda, O. (2009). Working conditions as risk or resiliency factors for teachers of students with emotional and behavioural disabilities. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(10), 1006–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1002/PITS.20440>
2. Ankomah, Y., Koomson, J., Bosu, R., & Oduro, G. K. T. (2005). Implementing quality education in low-income countries. Retrieved from <http://ir.ucc.edu.gh/jspui/handle/123456789/9206>
3. Ankomah, Y., Koomson, J., Bosu, R., & Oduro, G. K. T. (2005). Implementing Quality Education in Low-Income Countries (Edqual) Literature Review-GhanaI.
4. Assefa, E., B. (2014). *The practices and challenges of instructional supervision in Asossa zone primary schools*. Retrieved from /articles/thesis/The_practices_and_challenges_of_instructional_supervision_in_Asossa_zone_primary_schools/26453185/1
5. Assefa, E., B. (2014). The practices and challenges of instructional supervision in Asossa zone primary schools. Retrieved from /articles/thesis/The_practices_and_challenges_of_instructional_supervision_in_Asossa_zone_primary_schools/26453185/1
6. Ayabei, J. C. (2024). *Exploring Factors Influencing Absenteeism and Academic Performance: A Study on Early Childhood and Primary Education (ECPE) Classes*. Retrieved from https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Chirchir+Joseph+Ayabei+&btnG=
7. Baafi, R. K. A., & Baafi, R. K. A. (2020). School Physical Environment and Student Academic Performance. *Advances in Physical Education*, 10(2), 121–137. <https://doi.org/10.4236/APE.2020.102012>
8. Baloyi, S., & Worku, Z. (2022). The relationship between punctuality and improved academic performance in public schools. *International Journal of Applied Science and Research*, 05(04), 99–104. <https://doi.org/10.56293/IJASR.2022.5412>
9. Barker, J. & Rees, T. (2020). *The Persistent Problems of School Leadership*. Ambition Institute. <https://www.ambition.org.uk/blog/persistent-problems-school-leadership/>
10. Bush, T. (2015). Understanding instructional leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 43(4), 487–489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215577035>
11. Bush, T. (2022). Challenges facing school principals: Problems and solutions. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 50(4), 533–535. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432221096238>
12. Bush, T., Fadare, M., Chirimambowa, T., Eukorah, E., Musa, D., Nur, H., Nyawo, T., & Shipota, M. (2022). Instructional leadership in sub-Saharan Africa: policy and practice. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 36(1), 14–31. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-01-2021-0027/FULL/XML>
13. DeCoito, I., & Estaiteyeh, M. (2022). Online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic: exploring science/STEM teachers' curriculum and assessment practices in Canada. *Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Science Education Research*, 4(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/S43031-022-00048-Z/FIGURES/6>
14. Donkor, A. K. (2013). Basic school leaders in Ghana: how equipped are they? *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 18(2), 225–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2013.817610>
15. Donkor, A. K. (2016). Leadership of Basic Schools in Ghana : The Case Study of Schools in Kwaebib Instructional irem District. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 6(4), 65–75.
16. Educational Sector Performance Report 2015 Ghana. (2015). Education Sector Medium-Term Development Plan 2018 – 2021. Retrieved from

https://www.globalpartnership.org/node/document/download?file=sites/default/files/2019-05-education-sector-medium-term-development-plan_2018-2021.pdf

17. Esia-Donkoh, K. (2014). Effects of educational supervision on professional development: perception of public basic school teachers at Winneba, Ghana. *British Journal of Education*, 2(6), 63–82.
18. Ghana's Education sector medium-term development plan. 2018-2021; Global Partnership for Education. (2019). Ghana's Education sector medium-term development plan. 2018-2021; Partnership for Education. Retrieved from <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/ghanas-education-sector-medium-term-development-plan-2018-2021>
19. Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1983). Instructional Leadership and School Socio-Economic Status: A Preliminary Investigation. *ERIC*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ316739>
20. Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1986). *Instructional leadership in effective schools*.
21. Hassan, A., & Jami, H. (2016). Academic self-concept, self-esteem, and academic achievement among truant and punctual students. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological*. <https://www.academia.edu/download/50061655/362-388-1-PB.pdf>
22. Imoro, & Iddrisu. (2018). Assessing the performance of heads of junior high schools in tamale metropolis. <http://udsspace.uds.edu.gh:80/handle/123456789/1921>
23. Indiazzi, P. L. (2018). Challenges influencing head teachers training in public primary schools in Lugari Sub County, Kenya. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1182831>
24. Kabonu A. (2013). Focus on Improving Quality of Education, not Interventions - NAGRAT to Gov't. Retrieved from <https://www.modernghana.com/news/503137/focus-on-improving-quality-of-education-not-interventions-.html>
25. Katitia, D. M. (2010a). *Stakeholders' perceptions of the head teacher's role in teaching and learning: A case of a public primary school in Kenya*. The Agan Khauiversity Tanzania Institute for Higher Education Institute for Educational Development, Eastern Africa.
26. Katitia, D. M. (2010b). Stakeholders' perceptions of the head teacher's role in teaching and learning: a case of a public primary school in Kenya. The Aga Khauiversity Tanzania Institute for Higher Education Institute for Educational Development, Eastern Africa.
27. King, F., & Stevenson, H. (2017). Generating change from below: What role does leadership have from above? *Journal of Educational Administration*, 55(6), 657–670. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-07-2016-0074/FULL/PDF>
28. Kusi, H., Kwaku, D., Mensah, D., & Gyaki, M. E. (2014). Work-related stress among the academic staff of the University of Education, Winneba Campus, Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(13), 15–23. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/view/12708>
29. Louis, K. S. (2007). Trust and improvement in schools. *Journal of Educational Change*, 8(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10833-006-9015-5>
30. Lunenburg, F. C. (1995). The principal ship: Concepts and applications. 333.
31. Macapobre, K., Kilag, O. K., Sasan, J. M., Uy, F., Villegas, M. A., Solatorio, R., & Suba-an, J. (2024). Educational leadership in the Philippines: The challenges. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, 1(6), 1021–1026. <https://risejournals.org/index.php/imjrise/article/view/547>
32. Murphy, J., Peterson, K. D., & Hallinger, P. (1986). The administrative control of principals in effective school districts: The supervision and evaluation functions. *The Urban Review*, 18(3), 149–175. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01112191>

33. Musungu L. L. & Nasongo J. W. (2020). The headteacher instructional role in academic achievement in secondary schools in Vihiga district, Kenya. <https://internationalscholarsjournals.org/articles/9420658824012020>
34. Mutua, B. (2011). *Constraints faced by head teachers in instructional supervision: A case of secondary schools in Matungulu, Machakos County, Kenya*. A Research Project Submitted to The School of Education, Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies.
35. Ngithi, N. G. (2013). *Administrative challenges faced by primary school head teachers in management of pupils in Embakasi District, Kenya*. Master's thesis submitted to the Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies, Kenyatta University.
36. Nyatuka B. O. (2012). Influence of domestic chores on absenteeism and punctuality among students in mixed day secondary schools in Kisii Central District, Kenya. *Academia. Journal of Education and Social Sciences*. Retrieved from <https://www.academia.edu/download/34358945/handbags.pdf#page=148>
37. Oduro, G. K. T., & Macbeath, J. (2003). Traditions and tensions in leadership: The Ghanaian experience. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(3), 441–455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764032000122050>
38. Okoroma, N. S., & Robert-Okah, I. (2007). Implications for secondary school principals. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 30(3), 4–22.
39. Reed. (2024). Looking to 2024: The challenges facing the education sector in the year ahead. Reed. Retrieved from <https://www.reed.com/articles/looking-to-2024-the-challenges-facing-the-education-sector-in-the-year-ahead>
40. Sims, S., Fletcher-Wood, H., O'Mara-Eves, A., Cottingham, S., Stansfield, C., Goodrich, J., Van Herwegen, J., & Anders, J. (2023). Effective teacher professional development: new theory and a meta-analytic test. *Review of Educational Research*.
41. Smith David. (2024). The role of an instructional leader in the modern school - education walkthrough. Retrieved from <https://educationwalkthrough.com/the-role-of-an-instructional-leader-in-the-modern-school/>
42. Suleman, Q., I. H. & -I. J. (2014). Effects of classroom physical environment on the academic achievement scores of secondary school students in Kohat Division, Pakistan. *Suleman, I Hussain International Journal of Learning & Development*.
43. Sultana, A., & Rashid, S. (2013). A study on time management and punctuality issues among students at secondary school, Kedah. *American Journal of Economics*.
44. Tahira, M., Yousuf, M. I., & Saboor, A. (2021). Role of Head teachers as an Instructional Leader. *Global Educational Studies Review*, VI(II), 114–123. [https://doi.org/10.31703/GESR.2021\(VI-II\).11](https://doi.org/10.31703/GESR.2021(VI-II).11)
45. Wanjiku, G. G. (2012). The role of head teachers in curriculum and instructional management: A case of secondary schools, in Gatundu District, Kiambu County. Retrieved from <https://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/server/api/core/bitstreams/48a93b19-3d57-4197-982c-1b3b4ed34f0e/content>
46. Wanzare, Z., & Da Costa, J. L. (2000). Supervision and staff development: Overview of the literature. *NASSP Bulletin I*, 84 (618).