UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

INVESTIGATING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN GOMOA WEST AND CENTRAL DISTRICTS

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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Mark Quansah, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: ……

DATE: …….

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

…… (Principal Supervisor)

Signature: ……. Date: ……

…… (Co-Supervisor)

Signature: …… Date: ……

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Catherine Adwoa Atta Quansah and Justin Joojo Quansah, my lovely children.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
BSSIP	Bojanala Systemic School Improvement Project
BWSIP	Boston's Whole School Improvement Programme
CEP	Comprehensive Education Plan
CMAD	Curriculum, Materials and Assessment Division
COEP	Centres of Excellence Project
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DPF	District Performance Framework
DSTs	District Support Teams
DTST	District Teacher Support Teams
ESMTDP	Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan
fCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GES	Ghana Education Service
GETFUND	Ghana Education Trust Fund
HIV	Human Immuno Virus
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JHS	Junior High School
KG	Kindergarten
MoE	Ministry of Education
NEI	National Education Inspectorate
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations

NIRN	National Implementation Research Network
NYC	New York City
PA	Parents Association
PASS	Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide
PDSA-C	Plan-Do- Study-Act Cycles
PTA	Parent- Teacher Association
REMS	Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools
SEDL	Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
SGBs	School Governing Boards
SIPs	School Improvement Plans
SISO	School Improvement Support Officer
SMC	School Management Committee
SMTs	School Management Teams
SPAM	School Performance Appraisal Meeting
SPF	School Performance Frameworks
SPIP	School Performance Improvement Plan
SRO	School Review Officer
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
WASSCE	West African Senior Secondary Certificate Exam
WSD	Whole School Development
WSI	Whole- School Improvement

ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the phenomenon of school ineffectiveness resulting from ineffective school improvement planning and implementation and how this affects academic achievement in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts. The Embedded mixed method design was employed for the study. The population of the study were Education stakeholders (E.g., School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) and Planning officers from the Education Directorates; PA Chairpersons from Parent Associations; SMC Chairpersons from School Management Committees, Headteachers and teachers) of Gomoa West and Central districts. A sample size of 286 was selected for the entire study. Sampling techniques employed included purposive sampling, quota sampling, census sampling, and simple random sampling. Questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides were the tools used in gathering quantitative and qualitative data respectively. Quantitative data was analysed through Pearson correlation coefficient. Thematic analysis was employed in analysing qualitative data. The study revealed that there is a relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement but this relationship could be positive or negative depending on the context of the school. The study showed further that schools in the two districts accessed have become ineffective because school improvement planning and implementation are feeble. The needed collaboration to spice up the planning process has not been encouraging because commitment level of some of the stakeholders was low. This has negatively impacted on the kind of school improvement programmes run in the schools within the accessed districts. The study concluded that stakeholder collaboration in planning could be part of the factors causing poor academic achievement in schools but not the only causative factor. It was recommended, among others, that the government should revise its policy on public school management to give more powers to education directorates and headteachers to initiate programmes to improve schools. Furthermore, it was recommended that schools and district education directorates engage in more dialogue and consultations to get stakeholders to show more commitment to the activities of the schools. The study generally implied that educational leaders need to explore the specific causes of non-performance in JHSs and work on them, in order to experience a positive correlation between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter is focused on introductory issues relating to the study. It addressed the background to the study, the statement of the problem, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitation of the study and definition of terms.

1.1 Background to the study

Discussions on school improvement usually have school ineffectiveness as their general context. Moreover, ineffective schools are usually identified in terms of their poor academic performance. This is the reason why, globally, all school improvement efforts have their focus on performance of students. Furthermore, a number of studies on school improvement have focused on underperforming schools (LaTurner & Lewis, 2013; Gichohi, 2015; Ahiabor, 2017; Bapono, 2016 & Davis, 2010). Perhaps this pattern has been adopted just to salvage the situations in those schools.

Generally, all school improvement efforts have two fundamental goals: to help underperforming schools improve their performance, and to prevent performing schools from declining in their performance. There is a sharp contrast between Africa and the West with regard to the pursuit of these two fundamental school improvement goals. Whilst much efforts in Africa and Ghana in particular are geared toward helping underperforming schools improve performance, efforts in the West are mostly geared toward preventing performing

schools from declining in performance (DiBari, 2016; Cannata, Redding, & Rubin, 2016). In the western world, there appears to be a well-structured school improvement system which districts adopt to ensure school improvement in their schools. For example, in Colorado, specific measures were put in place to ensure school improvement to enable them meet their educational goal which was to prepare all students for success in the workforce and college. Each year, every school and district received a performance rating to let parents and communities know how well they were doing in meeting this goal. Also, districts received yearly District Performance Framework (DPF) report and School Performance Frameworks (SPF), which determined their accreditation rating and school plan types. The ratings helped the Colorado Department of Education, State Board of Education and legislators to make decisions about how to help underperforming schools (Colorado Department of Education, 2017).

It must further be emphasized in order not to create the impression that the western world has attained optimum level of performance in their schools as there is evidence to indicate otherwise (LaTurner & Lewis, 2013). In their article published in SEDL Insights on Managing the Implementation of School Improvement Efforts, LaTurner and Lewis held that the calls for improvement in the performance of their lowest-performing schools has resulted in the creation of new programmes and practices aimed at improving student achievement. This indicated that the West also faced performance challenges in some of their schools.

Furthermore, Adelman and Taylor (2005) posited that school improvement planning processes had not been conceived in ways likely to produce desired learning outcomes for many students. For them, this might have resulted from the fact that the focus of school improvement planning was determined by the interests, agenda, and beliefs of those who

developed frameworks or protocols used to structure planning. This represented a kind of a top-down approach to school improvement planning in schools as the whole planning exercise was initiated at the top and sent down to the school level for implementation. The position of Adelman and Taylor seemed to suggest that top-down approach to school improvement planning and implementation does not in most cases yield the best results in schools. This may be the basis of Africa's predicament in terms of efforts to improve students' performance.

Additionally, school ineffectiveness which is the basis of all school improvement efforts is not a recent phenomenon in Africa. A study by the World Bank stated that Africa was facing a severe learning crisis that undermined economic growth and the well-being of its citizens. It was estimated that about 50 million children remained out of school, and moreover even most of those attending school were not acquiring the basic skills necessary for success later in life (World Bank, 2018). The World Bank observed further that among second grade students assessed on numeracy tests in several Sub-Saharan African countries, three-quarters could not count beyond 80, and 40% could not do a one-digit addition problem. UNESCO (2011) stated that, 43% of 67 million children out of school globally lived in Africa. UNESCO added that, every year 10 million children dropped out of primary school in Sub Saharan Africa.

Uzochukwu (2020) also identified a number of challenges plaguing schools in Africa among which were poor computer literacy, inadequate government funding, unqualified teachers, poor infrastructure, inadequate payment, and insecurity in schools. With regard to computer literacy, Uzochukwu admitted that African countries like Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa,

Ghana, Ethiopia, Congo, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Mali, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Zambia, Gabon, Zimbabwe have made some efforts in secondary schools in particular by installing computers to facilitate students' learning. This notwithstanding, these countries faced the challenge of getting qualified instructors for students.

Another challenge that has accentuated the ineffectiveness in African schools is the evidence of minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. For example, majority (more than 8 out of 10 students) did not meet minimum proficiency levels in reading (88%) and mathematics (84%) in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2021). In fact, over 200 million children and adolescents who were in school in 2018 were not achieving minimum proficiency levels according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics – UIS (UNESCO, 2018). UNESCO has established a link between the minimum proficiency level and teacher qualification stating that Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest proportions of teachers with minimum required qualifications to teach.

It can be maintained from the above that the reality of school ineffectiveness in Africa spans from issues such as poor computer literacy, inadequate government funding, unqualified teachers, poor infrastructure, inadequate payment, insecurity in schools etc. These data on Africa indicate that Africa has a lot to do in improving its basic schools there by making studies on school improvement in Africa and Ghana in particular very relevant.

School improvement in recent times in Ghana has come up as the basis of all pre- tertiary education policies. For example, the introduction of the capitation Grant, the fCUBE, establishment of GETFUND, free uniforms and school feeding programme are all attempts by the government of Ghana to improve the quality of its education. These programmes and

policies are all founded on school improvement. However, these efforts and many more would not realize their goals if school improvement is not understood as a collaborative effort at the school level involving all key stakeholders of education at the local level. In Ghana school improvement is perceived more as a responsibility of the central government than the local people who in principle own the school.

Moreover, a number of basic schools in Ghana were started by the natives before the government take-over. However, it appears when government takes over the schools it takes over everything. This practice has gone on for a very long time to the extent that the local folks who own the schools practically dissociate themselves from the schools. In recent times, efforts have been made by the government to strengthen its ties with educational stakeholders at all levels of management of education in Ghana. The government is currently involving stakeholders at the local level through the SMC, PTA (currently known as Parents Association- PA), Old students and Non-Governmental Organisations. The challenge however is that, the level of involvement is not integral and also not well structured. The current performance challenges facing Ghanaian basic schools call for a holistic stakeholder engagement in almost all the activities of the schools.

Also, school authorities in Ghana are in practice accountable to the state authority at the local level or district level. This pattern of accountability has engineered the top-down approach to school management and by extension, school improvement activities in Ghanaian JHSs. Understanding school improvement as a collaborative local effort will require a full collaborative participation of the school's key stakeholders in its school improvement planning and implementation. This is because research has shown that schools that engage with parents, youth, and the community make improvements that lead to a better school

climate and better educational outcomes for a diverse range of students (Cook, Murphy & Hunt, 2000; Malloy & Rayle, 2000; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Epstein, 2005; Sheldon, 2010). Furthermore, studies have indicated that school improvement programmes are likely to fail if relevant stakeholders are not properly engaged (Mugenyi, 2015; Hofosha, 2012 & Gichohi, 2015). There was also a belief that the failure to engage multiple stakeholders in decision-making in public schooling undermined the task of school improvement (Apple, 2008; Epstein 2011).

Finally, a number of JHSs in Ghana are not run in terms of strict adherence to school improvement plans generated locally and collaboratively to tackle educational challenges created by the contexts of the schools. This informed the thesis of this study that: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*.

1.2 Statement of the problem

School improvement planning is top-down oriented in Ghanaian basic schools. In view of this, local stakeholders have been reduced to mere implementers when they are actually expected to be active players in the planning process. This means, school improvement planning is losing its local touch in Ghanaian basic schools. This has impacted on the level of effectiveness of basic schools in Ghana. Moreover, given the top-down nature of school improvement planning, it will be difficult for school improvement programmes to be responsive to school needs. This explains why a number of Ghanaian basic schools are facing a challenge relating to underperformance which is a key indicator of school ineffectiveness.

Furthermore, the trend of underperformance in Ghanaian Junior High Schools in recent years is a worry because a substantial part of Ghana's budget as a percentage of GDP goes into education – 2010 (20.70 %), 2011(30.63 %), 2012 (37.52 %), 2013 (21.22 %), 2014 (20.99 %), 2015 (23.81 %), 2016 (22.09 %), 2017 (20.10 %) and 2018 (81.60 %) (Macrotrends, 2022). Also, over the last five years, the government of Ghana has doubled the public expenditure on Education from GH¢20.7 billion, between 2013 and 2016, to GH¢40.4 billion, between 2017 and 2020 (Yeboah, 2022). Despite the substantial investment into education in Ghana, a number of Ghanaian basic schools continue to underperform, with schools in Gomoa West and Central Districts not being an exception. In addition, the tables below illustrate the phenomenon of poor academic performance which is an evidence of school improvement challenge in the two districts.

Table 1.1: 2019 BECE Results analysis (Gomoa West District)

Description	2017	2018	2019
Total No. of candidates Presented	2345	2580	2493
Total No. of candidates who passed	1558	1688	1682
Total No. of schools	98	97	99
Overall % pass	66.4	65.43	67.47
Less than 50% pass	23 (22.5 %)	26 (25.2 %)	25(24.8 %)
Less than 30% pass	17 (16.7 %)	10 (9.7 %)	11(10.9 %)
Less than 20% pass	7 (6.9 %)	5 (4.9 %)	9(8.9 %)
Less than 10% pass	2 (1.9 %)	3 (2.9 %)	5(4.9 %)
0% pass	0	0	1(0.9 %)

Source: Gomoa West Education Directorate (2019)

Table 1.2: 2019 BECE Results analysis (Gomoa Central District)

Description	2019
Total No. of candidates Presented	1800
Total No. of candidates who passed	1304
Total No. of schools	52
Overall % pass	72.44%
100 % pass	12 (23.07 %)
Less than 70% pass	19 (36.53 %)
Less than 60% pass	13 (25 %)
Less than 50% pass	9 (17.30 %)
Less than 30% pass	5 (9.61 %)

Source: Gomoa Central Education Directorate (2019)

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 above provide simplified data on BECE performance of Gomoa West and Central districts from 2017 to 2019. The tables indicate that underperformance is a reality but not a perception in the two districts. For example, in Gomoa West district (Table 1.1), 23 (22.5 %) schools, 26 (25.2 %) schools and 25(24.8 %) schools scored less than 50 percent overall pass in 2017, 2018 and 2019 BECE respectively. Furthermore, 17(16.7 %) schools, 10(9.7 %) schools, and 11(10.9 %) schools scored less than 30 percent in 2017, 2018 and 2019 BECE respectively. Also, 7(6.9 %) schools, 5(4.9 %) schools, and 9(8.9 %) schools scored less than 20 percent in 2017, 2018 and 2019 BECE respectively. Additionally, 2(1.9 %) schools, 3(2.9 %) schools, and 5(4.9 %) schools scored less than 10 percent in 2017, 2018 and 2019 BECE respectively. In 2019, 1 school scored zero percentage pass in the BECE performance. The data above present a strong evidence to emphasize the phenomenon of underperformance which is interpreted as school ineffectiveness within some schools in the Gomoa West district. Comparatively, in 2019, the problem of underperformance in Gomoa Central was lower than Gomoa West District. In Gomoa Central,19(36.53 %) schools scored less than 70 percent, 13(25 %) schools scored less than 60 percent, 9(17.30 %) schools scored less than 50 percent with 5(9.61 %) schools scoring less than 30 percent in the 2019

BECE. The above picture of BECE performance in the Gomoa Central also expresses the typical problem of underperformance displayed in Gomoa West though in a different magnitude. However, fundamentally, the two districts are not performing to the expectation of stakeholders. This study is arguing the phenomenon of school ineffectiveness from this context of underperformance in schools in the two districts which also bothers on school improvement planning and implementation efforts of the schools.

In addition, there is a gap in literature with particular reference to Ghana regarding a comprehensive analysis of the collaborative roles of stakeholders in school improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in JHSs in particular. For example, studies reviewed on stakeholder involvement in education focused on NGOs as stakeholders and their peculiar role in infrastructure development (Adu-Baffoe, 2016; Biyeen, 2016; Essel-Okyeahene, 2008; Bonsu, 2008; Abotsikumah, 2008 & Amokase, 2006). Meanwhile, school improvement issues go beyond mere infrastructural development. Also, sections of other studies reviewed looked at the roles of PTAs and SMCs in education but not specifically on school improvement planning and implementation (Owusu, 2017 & Sacramento, 2013). From these discussions the researcher submits the central problem underpinning this study as: *Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts is the result of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort*. This problem led the researcher to begin the study with a focal theory that: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be improved when school improvement planning and implementation is pursued as a collaborative local effort*. Based on the thesis and the focal theory which are established on the identified problem in the districts, the study sought to investigate school

improvement planning and implementation and how these set the pace for making schools effective in the accessed districts and Ghana in general.

Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework, according to Vinz and Tegan (2022) is a foundational review of existing theories that serves as a roadmap for developing the arguments the researcher will use in a study. It is a means by which researchers explain the theories that support their research in order to demonstrate that their work is grounded in established ideas (Vinz & Tegan, 2022). Kivunja (2018) conceptualized theoretical framework in a number of ways: (1) It is a structure that summarizes concepts and theories, which a researcher develops from previously tested and published knowledge which are synthesized to develop a theoretical basis for the entire study; (2) It is a synthesis of the thoughts of giants in a researcher's field of study, as they relate to the proposed thesis and as the researcher understands those theories and how they can be used to understand the data; (3) It is a structure or a data mining lens that uses knowledge from research done to date in one's field, to make sense of the data in one's study. From these definitions, a theoretical framework is understood in this current study as a body of tested concepts or ideas woven together in a discourse to provide a theoretical base for a study. In other words, it is the use of theories to make a study more understandable within a specified field of study.

The theoretical framework for this study was built around the basic theory of the study (collaborative planning theory) and two examples or models of collaborative planning theories- theory of Collective Impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011) and the Collegial Model of Stakeholder Involvement (Bush, 2003). These theories have been explained emphasizing

their relevance to this study. Additionally, the discussions on the theoretical framework have been consolidated through the entire conceptual review at the literature review section. In the conceptual review, the key ideas or concepts from studies related to the objectives were discussed to consolidate the theoretical base of the study. This understanding and approach in developing the theoretical framework was influenced by Bryman (2012) who perceived a strong link between theories and concepts. For him, concepts are a key ingredient of theories. Thus, for him it is almost impossible to imagine a theory without concepts. This means, concepts are used to build theories. In a similar fashion, the empirical conceptual review in chapter two of this study was done to strengthen the theoretical foundation of the study, hence it being considered as essential part of this theoretical framework.

1.3.1 A collaborative planning theory

The idea of collaborative planning has gained widespread acceptance among planning scholars and practitioners. It is very difficult to identify a particular author who has coined this term. Rather, it seems to have evolved out of previous debates around the desirability, timeliness and effectiveness of various planning dispositions in the late 20th century (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 2002). Brand and Gaffikin (2007) stated however, that it was feasible to name those authors who helped to refine and popularize the concept. Among them in the American context are scholars such as Innes, Booher, Forester, Friedman, Hoch, Fischer, and in Europe, Albrechts, Swyngedouw, Hajer, Davoudi, Moulaert and, maybe most prominently, Healey. These founding authors generally considered collaborative planning as a "shift to new modes of governance that acknowledges the need to involve multiple stakeholders; the cross-fertilizations among these stakeholders, supportive of a creative milieu for the changing economy…" (Brand & Gaffikin**,** 2007).

To understand collaborative planning properly, it is crucial to conceptualize 'collaboration'. According to Mbokodi and Singh (2011), collaborative efforts are meant to discover means to combine most resources and strategies to achieve outcomes. Setlhodi (2020) also stated that collaboration usually takes place through dialogue, involvement, sharing and conversation to communicate plans and intentions. Basson and Mestry (2019) emphasized that collaboration needs to be intentional yet volitional, to encourage dialogue and determination to participate. Chrislip and Larson (1994) also observed that collaboration is more than simply sharing knowledge and information and also more than a relationship that helps each party achieve its own goals. For them, the purpose of collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party. Richards, Elliot, Woloshyn and Mitchell (2001) opined that, collaborative partnerships are joint efforts that involve pooling and sharing of expertise for the attainment of common goals.

Proceeding, it is crucial to note the relationship between collaboration and participation since the two terms are very close but not interchangeable. Thus, the concept of collaboration is contained in participation but it is only at a point in participation that collaboration sets in. Arnstein's (1969) 'ladder of citizen participation' has provided a lot of insights on this subject. It must be added here that, a 1969 document like this may be old, but since a number of participation models (such as Elizabeth Rocha's Ladder of Empowerment and Roger Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation) were premised on this, it becomes imperative to refer to the original and hence the reference to Arnstein (1969).

Arnstein's(1969) citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. She presented her typology as a metaphorical "ladder," with each ascending rung representing increasing levels of citizen agency, control, and power. The ladder comprised eight "rungs" that describe three general forms of citizen power in democratic decision-making: Non-participation or no power (Manipulation and Therapy), Degrees of Tokenism or counterfeit power (Informing, Consulting, Placation), and Degrees of Citizen Power or actual power (Partnership, Delegated power, Citizen control). Arnstein's ladder implies that participation ascends from a level of imperfection to perfection. Participation begins from the first rung and moves up in a continuum of perfection. However, the first five rungs (Manipulation, Therapy Informing, Consulting, and Placation) constitute the part of participation which is non-collaborative. Thus, at these stages or rungs, key elements in collaboration such as negotiation, dialogue, shared vision and joint strategies are non-existent therefore making collaboration impossible at these stages of participation. Collaboration then sets in from the sixth rung upwards (Partnership, Delegated power and Citizen control). Thus, collaboration begins at the level of participation where there is partnership in which case parties with differing interests can work together through dialogue, negotiation, shared vision and joint strategies to solve a particular problem. From Arnstein's model, it can be inferred that effective collaboration requires partnership, delegation of power and control among the actors or stakeholders.

In a similar fashion, Beierle and Cayford (2002) noted that the distinguishing feature of collaborative planning is that it delegates the responsibility for planning directly to stakeholders. Gunton and Day (2003) held further that, collaborative planning acknowledged the existence of competing interests and that these different interests must be engaged in a

negotiation process to seek mutually acceptable outcomes. Leach, Pelkey and Sabatier (2002) maintained that, collaborative planning employed a higher level of collaboration by directly delegating control of the planning process to stakeholders who work together in face-to-face negotiations to reach a consensus agreement ideally in advance of disputes.

Furthermore, the definition of Heck and Hallinger (2010) for collaborative leadership has more to offer to the understanding of the concept of collaboration. They said, collaborative leadership emphasizes governance structures and processes that foster shared commitment to achieving school improvement goals, broad participation and collaboration in decision making, and shared accountability for student learning outcomes. Chrislip and Larson (1994) understood collaborative planning theory in terms of collaborative leadership where individuals with requisite knowledge about a situation are brought together to create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organisation or community. Hurley (2011) offered his contribution to collaborative planning theory when he said that collaborative leadership is grounded in the belief that when a group of people come together, they can be smarter, more creative, and more competent than each of them alone.

From the views above, collaborative planning can be summarized as a sustained group effort resulting from commitment to a common goal pursued through dialogue, involvement and a philosophy of shared responsibility to bring a positive change. Thus, collaborative planning theory emphasizes ideas such as: coming together, team work, negotiation, participation, commitment to common concerns, shared responsibility, collective impact, collegiality etc. From this general understanding of collaborative planning theory, the discussion has been narrowed down to two examples of collaborative planning theories – theory of Collective

Impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011); and the Collegial Model of Stakeholder Involvement (Bush, 2003).

1.3.2 Theory of collective impact

The concept of collective impact was first articulated in the 2011 Stanford Social Innovation Review article *Collective Impact* written by Kania and Kramer (2011). Collective Impact is the commitment of a group of actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem using a structured form of collaboration. Collective impact becomes operational if a core group of community leaders decided to abandon their individual agenda in favour of a collective approach to improving student achievement. The concept of collective impact hinges on the idea that in order for organizations to create lasting solutions to social problems on a large-scale, they need to coordinate their efforts and work together around a clearly defined goal. Unlike most collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants. Successful collective impact initiatives typically have five conditions that together produce true alignment and lead to powerful results: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations. These five basic tenets of the theory of collective impact are briefly explained below:

1. Common agenda

Common agenda means that all participating organizations (government agencies, non-profits, community members, etc.) have a shared vision for social change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed upon actions. Collective impact requires all participants to have a shared vision for change, one that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions. Each organization often has a slightly different definition of the problem and the ultimate goal. These differences are easily ignored when organizations work independently on isolated initiatives, yet these differences splinter the efforts and undermine the impact of the field as a whole. Collective impact requires that these differences be discussed and resolved. Every participant need not agree with every other participant on all dimensions of the problem. All participants must agree on the primary goals for the collective impact initiative as a whole (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

2. Shared measurement system

It refers to the agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported with key indicators by all participating organizations. Developing a shared measurement system is essential to collective impact. Agreement on a common agenda is illusory without agreement on the ways success will be measured and reported. Collecting data and measuring results consistently on a short list of indicators at the community level and across all participating organizations not only ensures that all efforts remain aligned, it also enables the participants to hold each other accountable and learn from each other's successes and failures (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

3. Mutually reinforcing activities

This is about engagement of a diverse set of stakeholders, typically in multiple sectors, coordinating a set of differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Collective impact initiatives depend on a diverse group of stakeholders working together, not by requiring that all participants do the same thing, but by encouraging each participant to undertake the specific set of activities at which it excels in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others. The power of collective action comes not from the sheer number of participants or the uniformity of their efforts, but from the coordination of their differentiated activities through a mutually reinforcing plan of action. Each stakeholder's efforts must fit into an overarching plan if their combined efforts are to succeed (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

4. Continuous communication

Collective impact requires frequent communications over a long period of time among key players within and between organizations, to build trust and encourage ongoing learning and adaptation. Developing trust among nonprofits, corporations, and government agencies is a monumental challenge. Participants need several years of regular meetings to build up enough experience with each other to recognize and appreciate the common motivation behind their different efforts. They need time to see that their own interests will be treated fairly, and that decisions will be made on the basis of objective evidence and the best possible solution to the problem, not to favour the priorities of one organization over another (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

5. Backbone organization

This refers to an ongoing support provided by an independent staff. Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization and staff with a very specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. The backbone staff tends to play six roles to move the initiative forward: Guide vision and strategy; support aligned activity; establish shared measurement practices; build public will; advance policy; and mobilize funding. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails. The backbone organization requires a dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, technology and communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad of logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function smoothly. In the best of circumstances, these backbone organizations embody the principles of adaptive leadership: the ability to focus people's attention and create a sense of urgency, the skill to apply pressure to stakeholders without overwhelming them, the competence to frame issues in a way that presents opportunities as well as difficulties, and the strength to mediate conflict among stakeholders (Kania & Kramer, 2011).

1.3.3 Collegial model of stakeholder involvement

Basson and Mestry (2019) considered Collegial Model, as an aspect of collaboration or an example of collaborative planning theory. Coleman and Anderson (2000) asserted that the Collegial Model supports the principle of participatory, consultative and collaborative leadership, and joint decision-making, thus encouraging collaboration among various

stakeholders. The collegial model of stakeholder involvement developed by Bush (2003) describes participatory management as a form of Transformational Leadership. In this type of leadership, school policy is determined within a participative framework. Bush (2011) explaining collegial model argued that power and decision-making should be shared among some or all members of the organisation. Bush assumed that organisations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus. Also, power is shared among some or all members of the organisation who are thought to have a mutual understanding about the objects of the institution. This model is based primarily on the principles of collaboration and participation that facilitate collegial leadership practices to flourish in an environment characterized by shared decision-making, shared values, shared vision, and shared leadership.

Conclusion

The researcher is of the view that successful education is not a responsibility of only the government of Ghana or the school authorities. Good performing schools over the world have achieved their feats as a result of the concerted efforts of all those who have the well-being of the school at heart. The time has come for Ghanaian schools to be seriously owned by its stakeholders and therefore come together to work toward the progress of the schools. This calls for a systematic approach or tested procedures like those espoused in the collective impact theory and the collegial model of stakeholder involvement which flow from collaborative planning theory. These theories are relevant to the study because they are consistent with the study's purpose of investigating the phenomenon of school ineffectiveness resulting from ineffective school improvement planning and implementation, where ineffective planning and implementation is understood as a non-collaborative

planning and implementation. These theories were found relevant to this study also because they resonate with the position taken in this study that when schools embark on school improvement planning in a collaborative manner at the local level, schools will produce better academic results.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

According to Swaen and Tegan (2022) a conceptual framework illustrates what the researcher expects to find through his or her research. It defines the relevant variables for a study and maps out how they might relate to each other. He said a conceptual framework is often represented in a visual format. The conceptual framework displayed in figure 1 is built on the focal theory of this study which states that: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be improved when school improvement planning and implementation are pursued as a collaborative local effort.* In other words, when stakeholders participate in education delivery in a more collaborative manner, the result is school improvement which is measured in academic achievement of students. The figure below is the diagrammatic representation of the conceptual framework for this study.

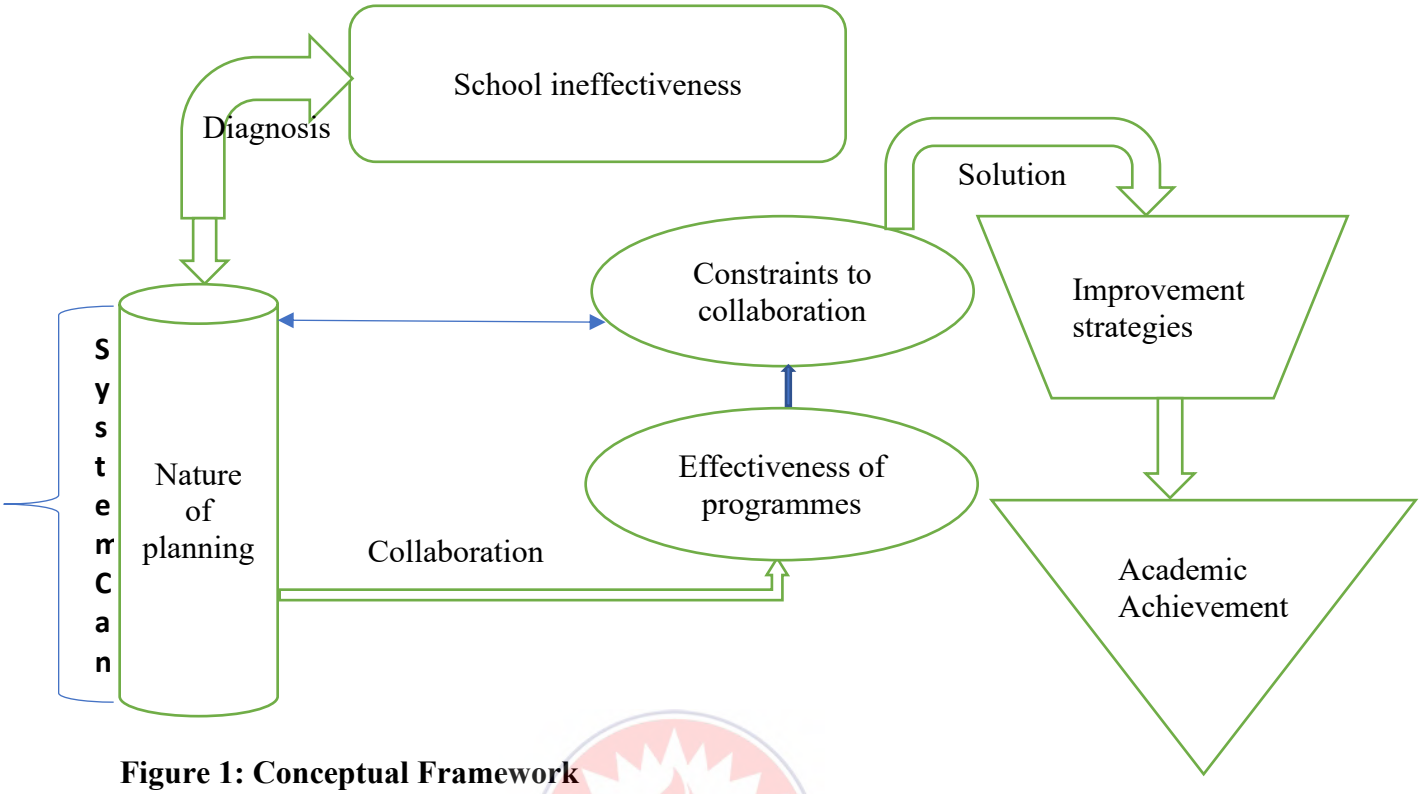

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Author (2023)

Figure 1 displays the conceptual framework of the study. The conceptual framework is built around the six key concepts (Nature of planning; Effectiveness of programmes; School ineffectiveness; Performance improvement strategies; Constraints to collaboration, and Collaboration and academic achievement) of the study. These concepts are all based on the thesis, focal theory, purpose and objectives of this study. In essence, this conceptual framework serves as a diagrammatic presentation of what this research is about. It also represents a model of school improvement posited in this study.

The diagram has 'school ineffectiveness' at its starting point meaning school ineffectiveness is the premise of the study. The left arrow from school ineffectiveness leading to the '*can*' named *'system can'* in this study is an indication of the need for diagnosis for purposes of planning. Thus, school improvement usually comes into focus when schools become

ineffective. And moreover, any effort to address the challenges must begin with a diagnosis of the school's peculiar context. The diagnosis will require an investigation into the kind of planning in the school. So, the *'system can'* is the most essential part of the model. In this sense, effective planning must therefore take place in a collaborative manner. This is illustrated with the arrow from the *'system can'* to the circle containing 'Effectiveness of programmes'. This means, collaborative planning among the schools' stakeholders will produce effective school improvement programmes. For the programmes to retain their effectiveness overtime, constraints to collaboration in planning and implementation must be identified and controlled in order to sustain the system. Hence, an arrow pointing to a second circle upward (Constraints to collaboration) illustrates this. The control measures at the second circle (Constraints to collaboration) interacts with the *'system can'* as displayed by the arrow connecting the '*system can*' and the 'constraints to collaboration' circle, meaning that control measures in relation to constraints to collaboration must be focused on planning in order to achieve a smooth planning experience for stakeholders as they collaborate.

Furthermore, control measures at the 'constraints to collaboration' in planning and implementation begin the process of providing solution to the problem of school ineffectiveness. In view of this, an arrow from the second circle (Constraints to collaboration) points right to a trapezium containing 'strategies for improvement'. Thus, the solution to the problem of school ineffectiveness comes in the form of improvement strategies. Therefore, when the devised strategies are effective because of the element of collaboration in the system, the expected result is improved academic achievement. This explains why academic achievement is placed at the bottom of the model.

Once again, this conceptual framework is posited as a model for school improvement hereby labelled as *'System can model of school improvement'*. It is named as *a system can* because, in the *can* is the most essential activity in the system which will determine the desired result. The model which is a system actually starts its process with planning which must be collaborative. However, the planning depends on a proper diagnosis of the school's context in order to establish a solid premise for planning and possibly, a successful implementation. A scientific justification for this model would among others include an establishment of a statistically significant relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement.

1.5 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the phenomenon of school ineffectiveness resulting from ineffective school improvement planning and implementation in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts and how this affects academic achievement. This purpose is founded on the thesis of this study that: *Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts is the result of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort*. Thus, the study sought to gather enough evidence to support the position that when schools embark on school improvement planning in a collaborative manner at the local level, schools will produce better academic results.

1.6 Objectives of the study

Based on the purpose of the of the study, the following objectives were formulated to guide the study:

1. To appraise school improvement planning and implementation efforts of public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts.
2. To assess the effectiveness of the school improvement programmes of public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts.
3. To analyze the reasons for ineffectiveness in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts.
4. To explore ways of making public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts more effective in their performance.
5. To investigate the existing constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration for school improvement planning and implementation in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts.
6. To determine the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts.

1.7 Research Questions

The following research questions were derived from the objectives:

1. How do public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts engage in school improvement planning and implementation?
2. How effective are the school improvement programmes of public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts?
3. What reasons account for ineffectiveness in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts?
4. How can public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts be made more effective in their performance?
5. What are the existing constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts?
6. What is the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts?

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no statistically significant relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts.

H_1: There is a statistically significant relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts.

1.8 Significance of the study.

The study is significant in three main areas namely policy, theory and professional practice. In terms of policy, the findings would be useful in guiding the government through the Ministry of Education in formulating policies that would enhance effective stakeholder participation in school improvement activities. In terms of theory, the study has added to the body of literature on school improvement planning and implementation and its relationship to academic achievement. In terms of professional practice, the study has provided guidance for school leaders on effective ways of improving schools through collaborative planning and implementation of school improvement plans at the school level.

In terms of policy development and professional practice, recommendations of the study would be made available to the two district education directorates to influence district level policy on school improvement and professional practice. This will be done through a workshop for the staff of the directorates, to present to them, the key findings and recommendations of the study. Articles will be published from this study in peer reviewed

journals with high impact factor to disseminate the findings to a wider audience and contribute to theory development on school improvement planning and implementation.

1.9 Delimitation of the study

The study was delimited to JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts in the Central Region of Ghana. Its focus was to investigate the phenomenon of school ineffectiveness resulting from ineffective school improvement planning and implementation in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts. Ineffective planning in this study is understood as the kind of planning which is non-collaborative. Collaborative school improvement planning in this study, is expected to involve stakeholders such as Education Directorates, Parents' Associations (PA), School Management Committees (SMC), and Schools. The selection of the four stakeholders was based on a reason that they are the key stakeholders in education at the local level, therefore it would be easy to investigate collaboration among these stakeholders because all of them have closer relationship with the school in each community. Key concepts investigated in this study were: (1) Public schools and school improvement planning and implementation (Nature of planning); (2) Achieving results from effective school improvement programmes in public schools (Effectiveness of programmes); (3) Public school ineffectiveness (School ineffectiveness); (4) Strategies for achieving better academic performance in public schools (Performance improvement strategies; (5) Constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration for school improvement (Constraints to collaboration), and (6) Relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement (Collaboration and academic achievement). These six concepts are the pillars of the study as they are all based on the objectives of this study.

1.10 Definition of terms/ Concepts

The terms explained in this section are part of the key concepts discussed in detail in chapter two which constituted an empirical conceptual review for the study. These brief explanations are meant to provide preliminary understanding to these concepts to prepare the grounds for a comprehensive discussion in chapter two.

1.10.1 School improvement

According to Reezigt (2001) school improvement refers to a planned educational change that enhances student learning outcomes as well as the school's capacity for managing change. Hopkins (2005) perceived school improvement as a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. For him, school improvement is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching-learning process and the conditions which support it. It is about strategies for improving the school's capacity for providing quality education in times of change. In this study, school improvement will be understood as all the efforts of the school with support from its stakeholders which are geared toward the attainment of the immediate goal of the school which is academic achievement. School improvement embodies a set of actions or efforts by schools or education institutions meant to enhance students' academic achievement. School improvement is a means of establishing effective systems in schools in order to improve students' academic achievement. Because of the diversified nature of schools, school improvement is to be perceived as a local activity where schools develop specific strategies and practices that cohere with their peculiar circumstances in order to enhance students' academic achievement.

1.10.2 School improvement planning and implementation

School improvement planning is a strategic planning process by which members of the school community conduct a thorough evaluation of their school's educational programme and performance in the previous school years and develop a written plan that establishes the starting point for ongoing evaluation of efforts to achieve improvements in student outcomes in succeeding years (Thompson, 2018). Thompson considered a school improvement plan as a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to make to improve the level of students' achievement. Van der Voort (2013) also perceived school improvement plan as an agenda that school management teams could use to improve school functionality, as well as acting as an accountability tool to measure their progress. Baldanza (2016) defined school improvement planning as the process through which schools set goals for improvement, and make decisions about how and when the goals will be achieved. He described a school improvement plan also as a road map that sets out changes a school needs to make to improve the level of students' achievement, and shows how and when these changes will be made. Reezigt (2001) stated that, the implementation phase is the most substantial phase in the cycle of improvement. For him, when implementation does not occur, all efforts have been in vain and the pursued goals will not be achieved. He added that the implementation phase will generally involve more persons in the school improvement activities than the planning. School improvement implementation involves conscious efforts made by school improvement teams to carry out activities meant to achieve the goals in the school improvement plan. School improvement implementation must be governed by a set of predetermined guidelines to keep the implementation team on track. School improvement

planning and implementation are bedfellows meaning that they go together. Thus, school improvement plans are designed for implementation.

1.10.3 Education stakeholders

In education, the term stakeholder typically refers to anyone who is interested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives. Stakeholders may also be collective entities, such as local businesses, organizations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions, in addition to organizations that represent specific groups, such as teacher unions, parent-teacher organizations, and associations representing superintendents, principals, school boards, or teachers in specific academic disciplines. In a word, stakeholders have a "stake" in the school and its students, meaning that they have personal, professional, civic, or financial interest or concern (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014).

Generally speaking, the growing use of '*stakeholder'* in public education is based on the recognition that schools, as public institutions supported by state and local tax revenues, are not only part of and responsible to the communities they serve, but they are also obliged to involve the broader community in important decisions related to the governance, operation, or improvement of the school (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014).

1.10.4 Stakeholder collaboration

Collaboration takes place when a group of people agree among themselves to operate around principles set by them which are geared toward the attainment of certain objectives. Collaboration thrives on interest of the collaborating parties. Collaboration becomes effective when the parties involved can merge their interests. Stakeholder collaboration in schools takes place when people, groups or organisations with interest in the school come together to work to make the school more effective. Making the school more effective means the school is put in the position to achieve its immediate goal which is better academic performance of students. Stakeholder collaboration is understood in this study as the combined effort of education stakeholders which is geared toward the improvement of a particular school.

1.10.5 Academic Performance

Lamas (2015) observed that, several authors agree that academic performance is the result of learning, prompted by the teaching activity by the teacher and produced by the student. According to Martínez-Otero (2007) academic performance is the product given by the students and it is usually expressed through school grades. For Pizarro (1985), academic performance is a measure of the indicative and responsive abilities that express, in an estimated way, what a person has learned as a result of a process of education or training. These are expressed through grades which are the result of an assessment that involves passing or not certain tests, subjects or courses. Willcox (2011) defined academic performance as the level of knowledge shown in an area or subject compared to the norm, and it is generally measured using the grade point average. From the above definitions,

academic performance can be conceptualized as a measured outcome of students' learning expressed in grades obtained through tests. Academic performance is understood further as the immediate indicator of successful or effective education. It is the ultimate end of all educative decisions made by school leaders. It is through academic performance that school improvement programmes are measured in terms of their efficacy.

1.10.6 Academic Achievement

According to Steinmayr, Meibner, Weidinger, and Wirthwein (2014) academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, such as school, college or university. It is also understood as a procedural and declarative knowledge acquired in an educational system. Academic achievement can be measured by the GPA (grade point average) or by standardized test. This means grades, degrees and certificates are all measures of academic achievement. Academic achievement therefore determines whether a student will have the opportunity to continue his or her education. Therefore, academic achievement defines whether one can take part in higher education, and based on the educational degrees one attains, influences one's vocational career after education (Steinmayr, Meibner, Weidinger, & Wirthwein, 2014). Like academic performance, academic achievement could also be perceived as the ultimate end of all educative decisions made by school leaders. Similarly, through academic achievement, school improvement programmes are measured in terms of their efficacy.

1.10.7 School ineffectiveness

Gager (2022) defines effectiveness as the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result. Effectiveness is always conceptualized around results. Effectiveness in this sense will be ascertained by establishing a link between an institution's goals and the successes or results achieved within a given period. Schools will be considered effective when they are found to be achieving goals for its establishment. The goals of schools are to be realized in the long term and so researchers usually study effectiveness of schools in terms of schools' immediate goal which is academic performance which is quantified in grades. A school with a higher performance rate will be considered as effective since there is evidence to support attainment of desired results. School effectiveness is a concomitant of school improvement. All school improvement programmes are in essence meant to make schools effective. Studies on school improvement must therefore be premised on school effectiveness, as a school's level of effectiveness will be the basis for whether there is the need for a specific school improvement programme or not. Ineffective schools are schools which are not producing the expected results. An ineffective school is a school with a higher failure rate. Poor academic performance is a key indicator of school ineffectiveness.

1.11 Chapter summary

This chapter (Chapter One) addressed the introductory issues relating to the study. It began by establishing the context or background of the study in terms of studies conducted on the global, continental and national levels. Having established the background of the study, the basis for stating the problem became very clear. The statement of the problem was therefore

followed with discussions on theoretical and conceptual frameworks for the study. Thus, the theoretical basis of the key concepts investigated in the study were therefore provided through the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. These were followed with the purpose, objectives, research questions and hypotheses of the study. Issues of significance, delimitation and definition of terms were the last to be addressed in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter serves a purpose of providing the conceptual basis used to establish a theoretical foundation for this study. The concepts are presented as a framework with six major elements. Each of these concepts or themes was derived from an objective of the study to encompass the central idea in the purpose of the study. These six concepts comprise:

a. Public schools and school improvement planning and implementation
b. Achieving results from effective school improvement programmes in public schools
c. Public school ineffectiveness
d. Strategies for achieving better academic performance in public schools
e. Constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration for school improvement
f. Relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement

The concepts or themes above are hinged on both the focal theory and the thesis of the study. Based on the focal theory: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be improved when school improvement planning and implementation is pursued as a collaborative local effort*, school improvement is generally understood in this study as 'a collaborative local effort'. Thus, in what ways can collaborative practices be upheld in the districts to sustain school improvement efforts? From this theoretical stance, a thesis is posited that '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*. This thesis suggests that, schools will be ineffective, if school

improvement planning and implementation are not done collaboratively. This is the reason why, running through the themes in the review is the concept of stakeholder collaboration which has been thoroughly explored leading to an identification of a gap. The review has indicated that multiple stakeholder engagement in schools is a common practice and has been studied to some extent across the globe. What was missing is the specific emphasis on collaboration in the engagement because multiple stakeholder engagement does not necessarily embody collaboration. While admitting the fact that, quite a number of studies have been conducted on school improvement, not much directly touched on school improvement planning and implementation with more emphasis on stakeholder collaboration in planning and how it relates to students' academic achievement.

From the six concepts enumerated above, a conceptual framework has been posited. The main effort in developing the conceptual framework was centred on identifying the harmony between the concepts espoused in the objectives of the study. This conceptual framework reflected the researcher's line of thought through the concepts in order to establish their interconnectedness and to make a case for the conceptual and theoretical coherence in the study.

The study is fundamentally premised on school ineffectiveness and how this can be explained in terms of planning and implementation in public schools. The first concept explored which is related to the first objective was centred on how public schools planned and implemented school improvement programmes. In this concept, the main emphasis was to ascertain the processes involved in planning and implementation and the requirements for effective school improvement planning and implementation. To understand this, effectiveness of school

improvement programmes must be assessed in terms of how school improvement plans have enabled schools to achieve the desired results. This is related to the objective two of the study from which the concept, achieving results from effective school improvement programmes in public schools was derived.

Furthermore, effectiveness of school improvement programmes is understood in this study as having a connection with school ineffectiveness since the existence of weak programmes in public schools makes schools ineffective. This provided basis for investigating into 'public school ineffectiveness' in the third objective. This is one of the points of intersection between the objectives of the study which has provided adequate support for the conceptual and theoretical coherence in the study.

Additionally, the reality of school ineffectiveness in public schools demanded an investigation into reliable strategies for improving the situation and hence make students perform creditably in their exams. In view of this, the concept, strategies for achieving better academic performance in public schools, which was based on objective four, was designed. In addition, achieving better academic performance is understood in this study as a collaborative venture which is not without constraints. Therefore, it was necessary to explore constraints to stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation for better academic performance. This led to the derivation of the concept, 'constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration for school improvement', which was premised on the fifth objective of the study. Moreover, since much emphasis has been placed on collaboration in school improvement planning for academic achievement, a strong case needed to be made in terms of how stakeholder collaboration in planning is related to academic achievement.

To achieve this, the concept, 'relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement' was created from the sixth objective of the study.

Finally, the above line of thought can be simplified in the following statements. Ineffective public schools need to evaluate their activities in terms of the nature of their planning and the quality of their school improvement programmes. Such an evaluation must therefore emphasize the constraints to collaboration among stakeholders in planning and implementation of school improvement programmes. Since the ultimate goal of school improvement planning is the achievement of better academic performance in schools, the diagnosis will then call for a solution which is conceptualized as 'performance improvement strategies' which is based on the fifth objective of the study. To provide a solid ground for the study, it became necessary to determine how collaboration among stakeholders in school improvement planning is related to academic achievement. This line of thought is the conceptual framework for the study.

2.2 Public schools and school improvement planning and implementation.

The concept above was derived from the objective one of the study: "To explore school improvement planning and implementation efforts of public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts". Through this objective, the researcher was bent on exploring the nature of school improvement planning and implementation in public schools in terms of the processes and requirements for planning and implementation within a collaborative context.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing school improvement

The concept of school improvement has evolved over the years from the research conducted into school effectiveness (Akyeampong, 2004). Akyeampong added that school improvement studies have been more sceptical about single-cause explanations of improvement, and have come to recognize the full variety of changes going on in schools and which interact with student characteristics to produce differences in student learning outcomes. Finally, Akyeampong settled with the meaning that essentially, school improvement has come to stand for how schools are able to improve their effectiveness over a period of time and is particularly concerned with activities that bring about change in teaching and learning.

Generally, the phrase "school improvement" relates to efforts to make schools better places for pupils and students to learn. However, in a more technical sense, school improvement is about raising students' achievement by placing much emphasis on the conditions which support teaching and learning (Government of Samoa, 2005). Hence, the government of Samoa described school improvement as a continuous activity. This led to the concept "continuous school improvement" which is about establishing a school culture that is focused on improving the achievement levels of students and increasing the overall performance of the school through a planned set of processes and strategies. These processes and strategies include: collecting and analyzing information and data to identify needs and plan improvements; making decisions about priorities for improvement; identifying the changes that will lead to improved performance; implementing those changes; monitoring and evaluating outcomes in terms of improved performance of students. According to Reezigt

(2001) school improvement refers to a planned educational change that enhances student learning outcomes as well as the school's capacity for managing change. Hopkins (2005) perceived school improvement as a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change. For him, school improvement is about raising student achievement through focusing on the teaching-learning process and the conditions which support it. It is about strategies for improving the school's capacity for providing quality education in times of change.

From the definitions and discussions above, a clearer picture of school improvement was obtained which set the pace for a conceptualization of school improvement. It is clear from the above that, school improvement constitutes a set of efforts geared toward improving students' performance. The efforts must not be a one-time activity but continuous thereby making school improvement a constant feature of the school which must always be guided by a set of principles. Notable among the principles is the fact that school improvement is meant for all schools but not underperforming schools alone and that efforts that go into school improvement must be premised on need assessment of individual schools. Also, the school Principal must be the leader in the school improvement process. This means the school authority has a greater responsibility of initiating activities that will improve its performance. It was also clear from the views above that, the ultimate goal of school improvement is students' performance. In this study, school improvement was understood as all the efforts of the school with support from its stakeholders which are geared toward the attainment of the immediate goal of the school which is academic achievement. School improvement embodies a set of actions or efforts by schools or education institutions meant to enhance students' performance. School improvement is a means of establishing effective

systems in schools in order to improve students' academic performance. Because of the diversified nature of schools, school improvement is to be perceived as a local activity where schools develop specific strategies and practices that align with their peculiar circumstances in order to enhance students' performance.

2.2.2 Effective school improvement planning

School improvement planning emerged as a phenomenon out of the "effective school movement" of the 1980's (Thompson, 2018). Thompson defined school improvement planning as a strategic planning process by which members of the school community conduct a thorough evaluation of their school's educational programme and performance in the previous school years and develop a written plan that establishes the starting point for ongoing evaluation of efforts to achieve improvements in student outcomes in succeeding years. In essence, a school improvement plan is a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to make to improve the level of student achievement. Thompson held further that, school improvement planning in recent times has reflected a realization that school contexts and realities differ. In view of this he said that, system-wide planning predicated on a "one size fits all" philosophy was not only inadequate but irresponsible. For him, a fundamental element of this shift, from what may be called mass planning to contextual and individualized planning, was collaboration among stakeholders. Moreover, school improvement planning is understood in this study as a collaborative effort and this theoretical lens has provided direction for the review in this section.

Furthermore, for school improvement planning to achieve the desired goals for schools, Agi (2017) argued that there was the need for governments to allow significant autonomy to

reside in schools to enable school leaders initiate school improvement plans. The relevance of autonomy for school improvement had been emphasized in the study of Hamilton (2014) when he examined school leaders' efforts to implement school improvement initiatives. Hamilton's study centred on school initiatives that directly responded to China's school improvement policy focused on expanding school-level autonomy regarding leadership practices, curriculum development, student learning opportunities, parental involvement, and community relations. The issue of autonomy as raised by Agi (2017) is very crucial because it is the means by which school improvement planning can be understood as a collaborative local effort as posited in this current study. Agi indicated further that effective school improvement planning required that the roles of community and other relevant stakeholders be defined and mobilized in the school improvement planning process. It can be deduced from the observations of Agi that, effective school improvement planning requires the existence of autonomy, definition of roles and stakeholder mobilization.

Moreover, autonomy appears to exist in South African schools judging from the study of Van Der Voort and Wood (2014). They stated that the South African Department of Education had made it mandatory for schools to develop their own school improvement plans. In South Africa, development of school improvement plan is a necessary first step to whole school development. School improvement planning is a responsibility of school management teams according to Van Der Voort and Wood. With the kind of autonomy that South African schools had with regard to school improvement planning, it could be expected that schools became more diligent in school improvement planning. However, the opposite was the case as exhibited by the study of Van Der Voort and Wood. Their study was premised on reports that revealed a lack of understanding on the part of School Management Teams in

underperforming schools of the significance of school improvement plans. Within the context of school development in South Africa, their study also emphasized School Management Teams' lack of capacity to design and implement such plans (Department of Education, Eastern Cape, 2009). Van Der Voort and Wood noted that these reports indicated that School Management Teams tended to have a very laissez-faire approach to school improvement planning in South Africa and that even if school improvement plans did exist, they were seldom implemented. Their study confirmed the reports as the study revealed the School Management Teams' general disregard towards the school improvement plan as well as limited insight into what skills they needed to develop it, and their imperfect understanding of whole-school development. This may result from the lack of recognition of the value of school improvement plan as a tool for developing a culture of effective teaching and learning in underperforming schools as found by Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo (2008). Clarke (2011), on his part discovered poor planning practices in underperforming schools resulting from non-involvement of stakeholders among whom were the school management team. Again, the finding of Van Der Voort and Wood (2014) indicated that the mere existence of autonomy in schools may not be enough to warrant effective school improvement planning as Agi (2017) indicated earlier. The contrary position of Van Der Voort and Wood makes sense because autonomy may be a good context for effective school improvement planning, but if it does not come with leadership competency in planning and the readiness to collaborate, ineffective plan may be the result.

Additionally, Adelman and Taylor (2005) highlighted how schools in Los Angeles had not been diligent in their school improvement planning efforts. They said, school improvement planning processes had not been conceived in ways likely to produce desired learning

outcomes for many students. Their report focused on one fundamental reason for that state of affairs, namely the lack of attention given to how schools did and did not address barriers to learning and teaching (Adelman & Taylor, 2005). This situation usually bothers on school leadership. Therefore, it is not surprising when Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020) considered school leadership as a key element in improving schools since they believed that school leadership affects the features of schools, enhances the quality of teaching and learning at schools.

Furthermore, from an in-depth analysis of two major school districts' school improvement guides, Adelman and Taylor (2005) found that the focus of school improvement planning was determined by the interests, agenda, and beliefs of those who developed frameworks or protocols used to structure planning. They used a three-component model for school improvement planning (Instructional component; learning supports component; and management component) as a lens to analyze the breadth and depth of planning guides developed by the districts for their schools. Adelman and Taylor (2005) discovered that, the planning guidance for schools often did not adequately focus on the need for schools to play a significant role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching.

After their analysis, Adelman and Taylor (2005) came up with a number of recommendations which provided substantial direction in school improvement planning to schools across the globe. They recommended that: (1) Every school improvement planning guide should have a focus on development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and cohesive learning supports system which is fully integrated with plans for improving instruction at the school (2) Guidelines for school improvement planning should delineate the content of an enabling or learning supports component (3) Guidelines for school improvement planning should

incorporate standards and accountability indicators for each area of learning supports content (4) Guidelines for school improvement planning should specify ways to weave school and community resources into a cohesive and integrated continuum of interventions over time (5) Guidelines for school improvement planning should include an emphasis on redefining and reframing roles and functions and redesigning infrastructure to ensure learning supports are attended to as a primary and essential component of school improvement and to promote economies of scale. Their report concluded that, addressing barriers to learning and teaching must be made an essential and high-level focus in every school improvement planning.

Furthermore, Adelman and Taylor (2005) indicated that, New York City developed PASS (Performance Assessment in Schools Systemwide) as a process to enable schools develop, review, and revise their school Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). They said the overriding goal of the PASS was to provide schools with a process for conducting independent self-assessments in order to help them plan more effectively for school improvement. They added that by presenting a comprehensive set of standards of practice, the PASS Performance Review Guide enabled members of a PASS review team (including school leaders and visitors) to determine how well a school was performing, how thoroughly its CEP had been implemented, and which sections of the CEP to revise. This represents a kind of a top-down approach to school improvement planning in schools as the whole planning exercise is initiated at the top and sent down to the school level for implementation. One thing is however clear thus, the schools have the liberty to rethink the guides provided from the top and generate planning models suitable for their situation. This makes school improvement planning a localized activity which is being pursued as a theoretical lens in this current study.

The insights of Arnold (2017) additionally provided a body of knowledge on development of effective school improvement plans. His article focused on how to write effective school improvement plans for maximum impact on pupil outcomes in the United Kingdom. Arnold indicated that effective school improvement planning should not be devoid of a thorough analysis of school data from school self-evaluation. Such data should always include attendance, students' behaviour, outcomes of statutory assessments, examination and test results for all pupils and then for groups of pupils. He advised that the school's internal data about different year groups and subjects must also be analyzed before the school improvement plan can be drawn up. A key feature of Arnold's contribution to school improvement planning is his observation that effective school improvement planning should be cyclical. For him school improvement planning is not a one-time activity to address a specific performance challenge but there must be on-going review, updated planning, implementation and evaluation throughout the school year. Explaining his position, he said the cycle required that the school carried out in-depth evaluation of its performance, identifying strengths and areas for improvement or development. These findings are then written up in a self-evaluation report. Using the report, school leaders should then produce an improvement plan ensuring that it matches the conclusions identified in the report and the actions which need to be taken. The plan must then be implemented, monitored and evaluated on a termly basis to assess the impact the school improvement plan is having on improving outcomes and performance. Findings are then shared with governors and staff and the improvement plan is modified to respond to the evaluation findings.

Additionally, Garira, Howie, and Plomp (2019) outlined six essentials or key concepts of school self-evaluation, which are: Evaluation instrument, Evaluation team, Portfolio of

evidence, Evaluation process, Evaluation report, and School Improvement Plan. The evaluation instrument is a special document designed as a guide for the entire evaluation exercise (Schildkamp, Visscher & Luyten, 2009). The evaluation team are a group of experts to carry out the evaluation exercise. The portfolio of evidence constitutes a collection of all work done in schools. The evaluation process is a description of how evaluation should be carried out. The evaluation report is a description of strengths and weaknesses of a school as well as recommendations for improvement. The school improvement plan is a roadmap that ought to spell out changes that a school needs to make in order to improve its quality of education after school self-evaluation (MacBeath, 2006). This model simply implies that school self-evaluation must ultimately lead to a school improvement plan, a document not to be shelved but implemented strictly to enhance students' learning.

With regard to the components of a school improvement programme, Glickman (1993), Harris and Young (2000) had considered student learning, local needs, priorities, and data as key elements in school improvement plans. This means every school improve plan must focus on students' learning in terms of devising strategies to improve it. The plan must focus on actual needs of the school as perceived and felt by the immediate stakeholders of the school. The needs may be numerous but the critical ones must be addressed. In doing all these, decisions must be driven by data about the school.

Furthermore, Arnold (2017) prescribed what should go into a good school improvement plan. He said the school improvement plan is not necessarily a list of everything which the school will do during the year; instead, it is a list of the key objectives which school leaders need to address if the school is to remain or move towards excellent outcomes for pupils. Therefore

he prescribed that a school improvement plan should include overall success criteria; objectives and targets for improvement; details of the actions which will be taken and the outcomes which will be achieved as a result of each action. He stated further that, a school improvement plan should include details of the costed actions required to achieve the target; details of who is responsible for each of the action; a timeline for implementation with key dates and/or milestones; details of what, who, when, where and how the impact of the plan will be evaluated. Finally, he said, a school improvement plan should also indicate a space under each key objective for the impact of actions every time the plan is reviewed. Arnold's contribution to school improvement planning is not limited to only what should go into it but also the tools that support effective school improvement planning. With regard to the tools, he suggested a monitoring, evaluation and review policy which is shared with everyone; a monitoring, review and evaluation calendar or schedule which is published and shared with staff and Governors or School Boards; agreed formats for completing school improvement plans and action plans which are used by all staff, a training or development programme for leaders, middle leaders and appropriate staff, which focuses on making accurate judgements that contribute to self–evaluation and improvement planning.

2.1.3 Steps towards effective school improvement planning

The Government of Samoa (2005) has provided a four-step process of school improvement planning involving a determination of achievable priorities, setting of realistic targets for each priority area, determination of strategies or actions that will achieve those targets and finally completion of a written school improvement plan. In determining achievable priorities, each school had to rely on the baseline checklist and other data held by the school for information on where improvement was required. Each school was therefore expected to

choose priority areas that will make a real difference to the teaching and learning process; choose challenging but achievable priorities; choose at least three priorities for improvement; and spread their priorities across a number of factors. At the second step (setting of realistic targets for each priority area), targets were understood as the specific details on what, when or where the improvement was to be made. The targets were to be specific and they must be measurable outcomes. The third step bothered on procedure for implementation (determination of strategies or actions that will achieve those targets). The implementation strategies were the planned steps that the school intended to take to reach each of its targets. The implementation strategy had to include all steps that were critical to the achievement of each target. The implementation strategy was to serve as a guide to an assessor to determine whether satisfactory progress was being made towards achieving the target.

In addition, the fourth and the final step (completion of a written school improvement plan) was the stage where a summary is made in a single document of the decisions made under steps 1, 2 and 3. After everything, the school improvement plan will be signed off by the Principal, School Committee Chairperson and SRO (School Review Officer). The school will be assessed at the end of the year on whether it has met the targets. Generally, schools in Samoa operated on a three-year assessment cycle. Assessment was by a combination of self and external assessments. For the first two years the assessment was to be a self-assessment carried out by a representative group within the school. The self-assessment representative group comprised the principal or headteacher, teachers and school committee members. External assessment was carried out by a review team of three or four SROs plus an advisor from Curriculum, Materials and Assessment Division (CMAD). The external assessment report was to be discussed with the principal whilst still in draft form. The first

assessment for any school in any year was meant to test the school's performance against the baseline checklist. The results of the first assessment enabled the determination of priorities and targets for improvement for the following year. The second assessment towards the end of the following year was to evaluate the extent to which the school had achieved those targets. This planning model may appear old but very relevant as it displays a collaborative outlook. The four steps are followed collaboratively by school teams comprising the principal, school committee members and the SROs. The presence of the SRO on the school improvement team for instance was significant for ensuring the quality of the plan developed. This means school improvement planning in Samoa was not an exclusive school affair but a task of the school in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. This observation again coheres with the theoretical stance of this study which perceives school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative activity at the school level.

2.1.4 Stakeholders' roles and attitudes towards effective school improvement planning

A 2014 Hanover research on school improvement planning reviewed by Thompson (2018) emphasized the importance of broader stakeholder involvement in the planning process. According to Thompson, the Hanover research posited that comprehensive stakeholder involvement is the first fundamental indicator of effective school improvement planning and that it is only through comprehensive stakeholder involvement that a school can undertake a responsive and context-sensitive prioritization of needs. Thompson added that responsive and context-sensitive prioritization of needs is the second fundamental indicator of effective school improvement planning. A basis for this can be found in Hopkins (2002) who observed that school improvement reforms have attempted to change the professional and

organizational culture of schools to promote a more collegial environment with emphasis on collaboration and professional relations among school staff and the local community. Hopkins stated further that, school improvement planning was no longer perceived as a sole responsibility of the school and its staff who previously were perceived as experts employed to handle every aspect of the school's activities. In view of this, he posited that it was incumbent on the school authorities to invite key stakeholders for purposes of collaboration in order to improve students' performance. He emphasized that, a number of states and schools have achieved successes through collaborative planning in schools.

In a study conducted by Thompson (2018) in the Caribbean to explore the attitudes and perspectives of school administrators and other stakeholders on the school improvement planning process, he found that four key factors were associated with effective school improvement planning, namely: involvement, accountability, plan implementation, and efficacy. He held that the importance of collaboration in school improvement planning is reinforced by these four factors. He said, these four factors accounted for 68.83% of the variation in the data with involvement alone accounting for a total of 47.82% of the variation in the data. This suggested that the most critical issue that defined how stakeholders viewed the school improvement planning process was the degree of their involvement.

Also, Thompson (2018) identified differences in the perceived degree of involvement of stakeholders which he considered critical, since for him, it has implications for how well stakeholders will collaborate and commit to making the plan for school improvement work. As a result of this, he posited that, the success of any planning initiative is dependent on the degree to which the planning process can create a sense of commonality among stakeholders to produce the collaboration necessary for success. For him, ensuring that all stakeholders

feel that their inputs are equally valued and valid is critical to such an outcome. Explaining this, he said that stakeholders usually interpret the extent of their consultation as a basis for how they are valued and this affects their commitment to the planning process. It must be stated that Thompson identified four factors but attention has been paid to 'involvement' because of its direct link with the motif of collaboration which is perceived as a necessary ingredient for effective school improvement planning in this current study. The implication of Thompson's study for Ghanaian schools is that, school leaders need to enhance their relationship with stakeholders in terms of consultation in order to improve stakeholder commitment to school improvement planning in Ghanaian schools.

2.1.5 Collaborative planning in schools

Collaborative planning as a contemporary approach to planning is applicable to all institutions but in this discussion, it has been reviewed emphasizing its relevance in schools. Lacey (2001) held that working collaboratively in a school means that staff and parents agree to pursue shared goals in a coordinated manner, applying joint decision-making and problem-solving methods. Jordan, Chrislip and Workman (2016) perceived a difference between stakeholder engagement and stakeholder collaboration. For them, stakeholder collaboration goes beyond stakeholder engagement. They argued further that, successful efforts of collaboration can transform a diverse group of stakeholders into a "constituency for change" that has the influence and credibility to achieve real results. Also, Blank and McGuire (2016) identified four key principles of collaboration as inclusion, accessibility, sustainability and focus on results. Inclusion required the engagement of a wide range of people and organizations with a stake in education to benefit from the value of diverse perspectives. Accessibility made it possible for people to participate, to understand what was happening

and to be heard. Sustainability implied that stakeholder engagement must be perceived as a continuous process involving ongoing dialogue – not as a one-time proposition. It was only in that regard that the engagement assumed a collaborative character. Focus on results implied using engagement as a stepping stone toward building long-term partnerships that can help school systems get results that matter.

According to Bernhardt (2017), developing a school improvement plan that will foster a collaborative culture includes leadership that reinforces collaboration and teacher ownership of results. Within the context of their study in relation to School Management Teams (SMTs) and School Governing Boards (SGBs), Basson and Mestry (2019) held that schools needed to initiate and maintain a collaborative relationship between members of SMTs and SGBs, based on mutual trust, teamwork, joint decision-making, open communication and cooperation to achieve school goals. This means by extension that, the school must always create the enabling environment for effective collaboration with its stakeholders.

Having reviewed a number of studies, such as Beierle and Cayford (2002), Leach, Pelkey, and Sabatier (2002), and Frame, Gunton and Day (2003) on best practices of collaborative planning, Gunton and Day (2003) posited that successful collaborative planning was contingent on following ten key design and management principles: (1)Determine if collaborative planning is appropriate; (2) Ensure inclusive representation (3) Provide clear ground rules; (4) Reduce inequities among stakeholders; (5) Ensure process accountability; (6) Remain flexible and adaptive; (7) Provide sound process management; (8) Provide realistic timelines; (9) Provide implementation and monitoring processes; and (10) Use multiple-objective evaluation.

Again, in a study conducted in South Africa, Van Der Voort and Wood (2016) sought to develop a theoretical model to assist circuit teams to support school management teams of underperforming schools. They finally presented a model as a basis for how schools and district officials can collaborate towards school improvement, while adapting it to their individual contexts. Their model represented a circuit level improvement plan meant to be adapted. Again, this supports an earlier observation made in this review that school improvement planning however localized the whole exercise may be expected to be, could still adopt a top-down approach where it is developed from above and transferred to the school level for 'adapted implementation'. Nonetheless, Van Der Voort and Wood mentioned the possibility of a bottom-up approach to school improvement planning in the context of collaboration. They said, unless each school developed its school improvement plan based on its specific needs and handed it to the district office for intervention, the district office cannot assist schools to make qualitative improvements. This position is supported by Sister (2004) that, in order for schools to succeed in the implementation process, planning by the district needed to be influenced by the needs at school level.

Westraad (2011) observed additionally that once the school level improvement was submitted to the school's circuit manager, it could be integrated into a circuit improvement plan. In this sense, the top-down and bottom-up approaches to school improvement planning represent two different forms of collaborative school improvement planning that can exist in various districts. Based on these, it could be expected that, at all levels of planning, the element of collaboration among the team of planners and implementers be applied. Furthermore, the study of Van Der Voort and Wood (2016) emphasized the needed collaboration expected to exist between district officers and schools in order to improve the

performance of schools in South Africa. However, this appeared not to be the situation as Van Der Voort and Wood observed based on Bantwini and Diko (2011) that the lack of effective district support to schools was not only a South African challenge. They indicated further that, there was evidence that district offices in numerous countries were unresponsive to the needs of public schools. Also, there was a clear link between the lack of support and district officials' understanding of educational reforms that they had to deal with. The call for collaboration between schools and district officers is in line with the position of Pollock and Winton (2012) that principals needed to consult all relevant stakeholders for inputs that will lead to whole-school development, since for them school success will always be a dynamic process that requires on-going efforts by all involved. This explained why Van Der Voort and Wood (2016) suggested that leadership should employ honest communication, competence and openness, shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, and collaboration which are necessary to building and sustaining whole school development.

2.1.6 Collaboration between schools and district office

It is obvious that collaboration between district office and schools for school improvement planning and implementation is standing out in the review as a key issue to be discussed further. In the first place, Van Der Voort and Wood (2016) made an emphatic statement that whole-school development has to be supported by the district office. Moreover, Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011) pointed out that the role of the district office in supporting schools is indisputable, and that officials at the district level are pivotal in capacity-building at school level. Bantwini and Diko (2011) argued that schools cannot redesign themselves and that districts play an important function in establishing the conditions for long-term

improvements in schools. Taylor and Prinsloo (2005) had identified a number of factors hampering successful school support at district level. They found that district officials were unsure about their roles and did not possess the authority required to fulfil their functions. Also, a lack of resources handicapped the intentions of these officials as well. Similarly, Bantwini and Diko highlighted a deficit of human capacity as a factor hindering and incapacitating the few officials from effectively servicing, schools indicating that district officials often lacked in-depth understanding of the mandates they had to deliver to schools. This creates the awareness that collaboration by nature does not possess the inherent quality to automatically bring the desired change in schools but that its effect is determined by the enabling context within which the collaboration takes place. The 'enabling context' is hereby conceptualized as the competences of the planning team and resources taking clues from Taylor and Prinsloo.

2.1.7 Implementing school improvement plans.

'Implementation' as employed in this section is a borrowed term from policy studies. In policy studies, implementation is viewed as an intrinsic part of the policy formulation process as the two phases are inseparable. Though the concept of implementation may not be explored in this review as rigorously as is done in policy analysis, key issues in policy implementation discourses in policy studies are provided to set the pace for the discussion on implementation of school improvement plans. Odei-Tettey (2021) considered implementation as an evolving process and a response to changing forces and circumstances as well as a struggle over the realization of ideals. He emphasized that the habit of playing down the implementation stage in the policy process is the reason why a number of public policies have failed. He noted that this usually happened when implementers were excluded

from the policy formulation process. This, in fact, is the situation in Ghanaian schools as most of the policies formulated exclude the implementers in the formulation process. Thus, a number of educational policies in Ghana have taken the form of top-down policies.

Furthermore, Odei-Tettey (2001) had observed that successful implementation was usually influenced by factors such as the level of information available about the policy, the psychological characteristics of actors, actors' perception based on training and experience, the degree of change that is required to implement the policy, style of intervention, and the interests of implementing agencies. In addition, Odei-Tettey (2021: 254) outlined five conditions for successful implementation:

1. There must be sound theory underlying the policy and the target group. The theory must link target group behaviour to the objectives of the policy.
2. There must be unambiguous objectives that structure the implementation so as to maximize the compliance of the target group.
3. There must be leaders who have the requisite skills, are supportive of the objectives, and have the necessary resources.
4. There must be active support from potentially affected parties, including legislators, courts, interest groups, etc. This is because, there may be lack of interest or active opposition to the policy from organised groups with the resources to combat the policy.
5. There must be no conflict with other public policies and the policy must not be undermined by changing socio-economic conditions or competition from other issues and demands, even though priorities may change over time.

These initial observations from Odei-Tettey (2021) are significant for school improvement plan implementation. It has been learnt for example that, key actors in school improvement planning process cannot exclude implementers, in this context, the school and its immediate stakeholders. The stakeholders must be part of the planning process in order to understand the policy and its objectives properly. Again, in order to achieve successful implementation of school improvement programmes, ways of winning support for the programme should be conceived at the initial stage of the planning process where implementers are key actors in the entire exercise. It can be observed further based on Odei-Tettey's (2021) conditions that, schools must ensure not to formulate and implement conflicting school improvement programmes.

In addition, developing and implementing school improvement plans is a common undertaking for school administrators (Fernandez, 2011; Strunk, Marsh, Bush-Mecenas, & Duque, 2016) and has been a critical part of school leadership for decades (Huber & Conway, 2015; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019). Once again, the motif of collaboration is basic to this discussion. Gonzales, Bickmore, and Roberts (2020) indicated that implementation of school improvement plans is founded on a shared vision and successful collaboration with teachers and stakeholders. Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, and Hargreaves (2015) affirmed this position of Gonzales et al. that schools that produce substantial improvements are those that have built "a collaborative culture that combined individual responsibility, collective expectations, and corrective action" (p. 4). From this point of view, the review in this section was done paying much attention to implementation practices or models that have a bearing on collaboration since collaboration is the pervasive idea in this study.

2.1.8 Stakeholder roles in implementation of school improvement plans

The study of Gonzales, Bickmore and Roberts (2020) which focused on a university programme for aspiring principals is not only important to this study due to its emphasis on collaboration but also its strength in highlighting the key position of school leaders in school improvement implementation and the need to get them adequately prepared for that task. Their study is also important on grounds of identifying a number of key elements for collaborative implementation of school improvement programmes among which are feedback, time management, trust, resource availability, and delegation. The key position Principals hold in school improvement implementation had also been emphasized by Fowler (2000), Hope and Pigford (2001) as they stated that principals were ultimately responsible for putting most policies into effect in schools. Torres, Zellner, and Erlandson (2008) also contributed that the perceptions of the Principal of a policy played a very significant role in determining how and to what extent a policy was implemented in a specific school. Oterkil and Erstevag (2012) emphasized that despite the vast array of external, school-based, and individual factors that can affect the dynamics of school improvement implementation, leadership is still one of the key factors affecting the school's ability to successfully adopt a change innovation.

In addition, it is expected that school improvement programmes are designed bearing in mind where funding would be sought and how to get the required funding. This is because no programme can be successfully implemented without adequate funding. This makes the issue of funding very key in a discussion on school improvement programme implementation. In relation to this, once again, Davis (2002) offered a number of insights. She identified four sources of funding for school improvement programmes – individuals and community

groups; corporations and small businesses; governments; foundations; fundraising; grants and donations. To reach individuals and community groups for funding, Davis advised that the specific school project for which funding is sought be publicized through media and other outlets. This is possible in the Ghanaian context as the social media in particular has become very useful in a number of school activities in recent times. With regard to corporations, Davis suggested that schools looked for corporations that engaged in business activities within the catchment area of the school, preferably the immediate area. Such businesses could comprise utility companies, chain retail stores, manufacturers, and professional service firms. She said small, locally owned businesses in the school's immediate area such as print shops, and grocery stores could be approached. She indicated that, government agencies could be useful in directing schools to state resources.

In Ghana, a school can rely on the district/municipal/metropolitan assembly to have access to state resources to aid in an implementation of a specific school improvement programme. Foundations were described as non-profit organisations which had interest in education in specific school districts. Davis (2002) advised that such foundations or non-governmental organisations be approached for assistance to implement a specific school improvement programme. Again, in Ghana a school seeking funding for a school improvement programme could consider Plan Ghana which has demonstrated much interest in rural education projects in a number of districts. Davis also mentioned fundraising which entailed activities such as sales, special events and drives. She described drives as the collection of donations during high traffic events at the school or other community locations to raise funds. A special event, for her, could be a school charging a fee to contests such as art or costume competition or to shows (movies, plays, fashion) to raise funds for a school improvement programme. She

observed further that greater funding could be obtained through securing grants and in-kind donations. She advised that schools should however follow official procedures since a lot of donors required that donor seekers be legally backed or official. One major step in achieving this was preparation of a good grant proposal document. After writing a good grant proposal, the school would then be expected to look for grant opportunities from the local community foundation, all levels of government, and corporations and foundations with local interests.

Additionally, the role of principals in school improvement implementation had been established (Gonzales, et al., 2020; Van Der Voort & Wood, 2014; Pollock &Winton, 2012) but not much has been said about teachers. However, Hamilton (2014)'s theme on 'increasing teacher participation in school-wide decision-making' is a contribution to that effect. The theme on 'creating a shared vision and a shared leadership model to support school improvement' is an important factor for collaborative school improvement planning and implementation and it also coheres with the collegial model of school improvement by Bush (2003) which formed an integral part of the overall theoretical construct for this current study. The most relevant of Hamilton's themes to this study is the theme 'increasing locally-based curriculum development' which directly relates to the theoretical stance of this study which considers school improvement planning and implementation *as a collaborative local effort*. With the findings of Hamilton, it can be posited that, school improvement implementation should be pursued having identified the relevant stakeholders who must focus their efforts on local factors in a more collaborative manner, and their efforts driven by shared vision and leadership ideals.

2.1.9 The four domains for rapid school improvement- An implementation model

Jackson, Fixsen, and Ward (2018) in their 'four domains for rapid school improvement', a document prepared for National Implementation Research Network (NIRN), provided a comprehensive model of school improvement implementation. The model was structured into five blocks of activities – usable practices; implementation teams; implementation drivers; implementation stages; and improvement cycles. Usable practices were operational descriptions of practices that included a practical assessment of fidelity that highly correlated with intended outcomes. They said, for a practice to be usable, it has to be teachable, learnable, doable, and easily assessed in practice. Jackson et al. explained further that, the implementation teams constituted groups highly skilled in the use of the active implementation frameworks and affecting organization and system change. The implementation teams took responsibility for implementation and created an enabling context for effective use of a practice in schools. They added that 'implementation teams' consist of three to five members with expertise in all aspects of an identified implementation framework.

Adding to the above, Jackson et al. (2018) defined implementation drivers as the critical components that formed an implementation infrastructure that was used by teams to continuously improve competency, organization, and leadership. They stated that, the implementation drivers summarized the core components of the factors to consider when attempting to use any practice in order to realize intended outcomes by teams at every level. The fourth component on the implementation model of Jackson et al. (2018) mentioned earlier was 'implementation stages. They stated that implementation stages comprised specific components and activities that guided a systematic approach to selecting, designing,

and using a practice in a non-linear process. The implementation stages were made up of four set of activities involving exploration (creating readiness), installation (amassing human and financial resources), initial implementation activities and outcomes (beginning to support the use of the practice), and full implementation within organizations and systems. They emphasized further, that in the life of a school, few of its school improvement programmes can achieve full implementation and even among the few, most of them must have had the support of an expert implementation team. This underscores the need to attach much importance to the formation of the implementation teams as the success of every school programme to a large extent would depend on them.

Finally, 'improvement cycles' was the fifth component on the school improvement implementation model of Jackson et al. (2018). They observed that the improvement cycles required an on-going iterative process of using plan-do- study-act cycles (PDSA-C) in a system where time is allocated for this reflective and collaborative process. The cycles constituted a purposeful problem solving and continual improvement in methods and outcomes. Jackson et al. perceived the PDSA-C as a way to empower educators and have them generate practices that can be tried out to see if they work or not.

2.1.10 Contextualizing the 'four domains for rapid school improvement' in Ghana

The model of Jackson et al (2018) may appear quite complex, but it is nevertheless very relevant to this study, as it can offer a number of crucial lessons on implementation of school improvement programmes in Ghanaian basic schools. The first lesson is that, implementation presupposes an identification and adoption of a specific practice or a tested implementation framework which would guide every step in the overall implementation process. The

watchword is that, the adopted framework should fit into the requirements of the programme being implemented. This agrees with the view of Hamilton (2014) that, the source and complexity of a school improvement programme can affect the specific attributes and the success of the implementation process. In the Ghanaian setting, an implementation framework especially in the case of locally initiated programmes may not necessarily have to be a document, but impressions gathered from the experiences of a school when a similar programme was implemented successfully.

The second lesson from the model is that, implementation of school improvement programmes, especially in Ghanaian schools should not be done without a proper formation of an implementation team who are knowledgeable in whatever implementation framework adopted for the whole exercise. Members of the implementation team in the Ghanaian context could be taken through workshops and seminars on the adopted implementation framework to prepare them adequately for the implementation exercise. Meeting this requirement could increase the success rate of implemented programmes in Ghanaian schools.

The third lesson is that, every implementation exercise should possess internal functions that could keep the whole exercise alive. These internal functions were presented as drivers in the model of Jackson et al. (2018). This is the stage where the implementation team need to focus and improve human and organizational or institutional factors that are needed as the primary agents in driving the programme to achieve its intended outcomes. This means achieving the best from implemented programmes would require building human capacity and providing functional systems and infrastructure to serve as the pillars of the programme. It must be emphasized that the first three components of the model of Jackson et al could be

summed up as preparatory measures within the implementation process itself. It may take a considerable number of times to plan an improvement programme for a school, but that does not take away the ample time needed to prepare for the actual implementation. In this sense, the last two components on their model – implementation stages and improvement cycles would serve as the actual implementation stage and evaluation stage respectively. Thus, when adequate preparation is made, the actual implementation will have to begin and as this is done evaluation would have to take place to assess the whole process to determine level of adherence to the goals set initially. This can lead to new decisions and this makes implementation of school improvement programmes a cyclical venture, the fourth idea or lesson learnt from the model of Jackson et al. After a careful analysis of their model, a critique is hereby presented simplifying their model into a three-component model – preparatory stage, implementation stage and evaluation stage. This can therefore be adopted in Ghanaian schools.

2.1.11 Challenges in school improvement implementation

Mekango (2013) conducted a study to assess the practices and challenges of school improvement programme implementation in selected secondary schools in Ethiopia. The objectives of his study were: (1) to identify the extent to which stakeholders contributed to the implementation of school improvement programme activities in secondary schools of Metekel zone; (2) to examine the extent to which the major activities of school improvement programme were implemented to achieve the expected outcomes of the school improvement programme. The study found that the contribution of stakeholders for effective implementation of school improvement programme was not adequate. He added specifically that the provision of technical support by Woreda education office, cluster supervisors, PTA

and Kebele Education and Training Board members were not adequate to support the implementation of school improvement programme. He highlighted further that, because of the weak stakeholder roles in the implementation of the school improvement programme, not much achievements were made with regard to the implementation of the school improvement programme.

Finally, Stevenson (2019) observed that the success of every implementation effort depended to a large extent on the specificity of the items on the school improvement plan being implemented. He added that if a school improvement plan is vaguely designed, it will be difficult to assess the implementation efficacy of the programme. He stated categorically, that it is dangerous to invest in educational programmes without offering a clear explanation of what exactly they entail and why they are worth pursuing. The provision of clear explanation or meeting the requirement of specificity is what he termed as a 'strategy'. From this, he further expressed a belief that, having a school improvement plan is not enough but the plan should come with a 'strategy', thus, specific steps to be taken to achieve the goals of the programme and upon which the efforts of the implementation team would be assessed. In view of all these, Stevenson posited that, the usual habit of blaming unsuccessful school improvement programmes on the implementation team is flawed. Sometimes the failure might have resulted from the flaws in the school improvement plan.

2.2 Achieving results from effective school improvement programmes in public schools

The above title is the second major concept or theme explored in this review which is based on the second objective of this study: 'to assess the effectiveness of the school improvement programmes of public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts'. In this section, the emphasis has been on discussing how schools become effective in virtue of the school improvement programmes they initiate. The effectiveness of school improvement programmes determined the results of schools and so the main focus has been also to make a general exploration on models of school improvement and then narrow the discussion down to the effectiveness of school improvement programmes run in public schools.

2.2.4 Boston's Whole School Improvement Programme (BWSIP)

The essentials of Boston's Whole School Improvement programme in its first phase between 2002 and 2007 were: (1) Use effective instructional practices and create a collaborative school climate to improve student learning (2) Examine student work and data to drive instruction and professional development (3) Invest in professional development to improve instruction (4) Share leadership to sustain instructional improvement (5) Focus resources to support instructional improvement and improved student learning (6) Partner with families and community to support student learning. Each of the six essentials of the Boston's Whole-School Improvement (WSI) has received ample elaboration from Adelman and Taylor (2005). Their explanation to each is summarized below.

The first essential was stated: use effective instructional practices and create a collaborative school climate to improve student learning. Commenting on this, Adelman and Taylor (2005)

indicated that the essential 1 required primary emphasis on teacher implementation of instructional practices and teacher collaborative learning about such practices. For them, focusing on improving instruction in isolation of addressing barriers to learning and teaching tends to ignore essentials that enable students to learn and teachers to teach. They identified a limited reference to school climate in Boston's WSI guide. This position was held because for them, school and classroom climate have been identified as major determinants of classroom and school behaviour and learning (Ezike, 2018; Ekpo et al. 2009; & Hanushek, 1997).

The second essential was stated: examine student work and data to drive instruction and professional development. In relation to this point, the WSI guide indicated that analyses of student work and data (especially accountability indicators) increasingly were seen as drivers for the work and professional development of school staff. In view of this, one of the goals of school improvement programmes should be to gather the most pertinent information and use it appropriately. Research overwhelmingly support this relationship between prudent data use and school improvement planning (Earl & Torrance, 2000; Heritage & Chen, 2005; Timperley, 2005; Wohlstetter, Datnow, & Park, 2008). This position met a criticism from Adelman and Taylor as it was perceived that the WSI's second essential failed to focus on data to drive efforts to prevent learning, behaviour, and emotional problems and respond to problems when they emerge.

The third and fourth essentials were stated: Essential 3: Invest in professional development to improve instruction. Essential 4: Share leadership to sustain instructional improvement. With respect to both, the guide clearly stated that the focus is on teachers and administrators, with the intent of directly improving instruction. What Adelman and Taylor (2005) identified

as missing in relation to these were student support personnel, other school staff, problem prevention, and solution to problem. The essential 3 in particular was very crucial for helping schools improve performance by developing the capacities of the teachers in terms of content and pedagogy. It can be deduced that the essential 3 can be achieved through shared leadership or collaborative leadership. Thus, the task of improving instructions in schools for achieving better academic results should not be left to the teacher alone. It must be perceived as a collaborative responsibility of all stakeholders of the school.

In addition, the fifth essential was stated as: focus resources to support instructional improvement and improved student learning. In the guide, "Resources to support" included staff assigned to support targeted instruction. Investment in instruction improvement had already been highlighted in essential 3 but essential 5 moved the discussion further on lines of specificity to focus on what kind of instruction or programmes need much resources and attention. This brings to bear the issue of "targeted instruction" in terms of individualized instruction, grouping, common planning time, and scheduling to maximize learning as found in WSI's guide. Adelman and Taylor (2005) however found in relation to the essential 5 that no direct mention was made of resources for problem prevention and correction.

The sixth essential was stated as: partner with families and community to support student learning. Community engagement was seen in terms of involvement in "whole school improvement" and bringing more adults into students' lives. In order to get families and communities to work with schools, the guide emphasized communication and encouragement of involvement in school governance to support learning and academic performance. This point has been criticized on grounds that the focus on the role of families

and community in supporting student learning tends to ignore matters related to addressing barriers to learning and teaching as essentials that enable students to learn and teachers to teach.

The purpose for reviewing this programme in this study is that, it constitutes a best effort of a city in addressing its educational challenge thereby helping to improve performance of schools and children. The programme through its six essentials provided useful pathways for making schools more effective. It can be deduced that, in order to achieve better academic performance in schools, teaching and learning should take place in a collaborative school environment, students' performance data should inform instructional decisions in schools which must call for professional development for teachers, prudent allocation of resources, and stakeholder collaboration in school improvement activities. There is a sufficient reason here to posit that it would not be in the school's interest to attempt solely to improve students' academic results as it stands a better chance of achieving great success if key stakeholders of the school are coordinated in terms of their efforts in improving performance of students.

2.2.2 Ghana Whole School Development Programme

Whole-school development is a holistic process that aims to improve all aspects of the school (such as its academic achievements, infrastructure, social environment and security). It also involves all members of the school community (i.e. School Management Team, School Governing Body, educators, support staff, learners, parents, community members, alumni, Departments of Education and Social Development as well as donors) to contribute collectively to quality education (Naidu et al., 2008; Westraad, 2011, & Moolla, 2006).

The Whole School Development (WSD) programme in Ghana has been framed within the context of a policy of educational decentralization underpinned by a change management strategy that is aimed at improving quality of teaching and learning, access and participation in primary schools (Akyeampong, 2004). WSD in Ghana is the Ghana Education Service's (GES) intervention strategy for achieving the objectives of FCUBE. Thus, the WSD programme has been operated through the existing structures of the GES headquarters, regions and districts. At the regional and district levels, decentralization support structures made up of District Support Teams (DSTs) and Zonal Coordinators were engaged to manage the intervention. The DSTs were made up of three groups of consultants in the three key FCUBE areas: quality of teaching and learning, access and participation, and management efficiency. The intervention sought to promote the following: (a) Child-centred primary practice in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving with the view to improve the quality of teaching and learning in basic school classrooms; (b) Community participation in education delivery; (c) Competencies of teaching and learning through school-based in-service training; (d) Participatory planning and resource management at school and district levels (e) Improve efficiency in resource management (Ghana Education Service [GES], 2004).

A key feature of the WSD process in Ghana is the provision of support to headteachers and teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools. This focus was rooted in the belief that quality teaching provided by competent teachers would result in effective teachers (Whole School Development Training Document, 1999). To achieve quality schooling outcome, WSD workshops for headteachers and district support personnel focused their attention on three instructional areas for improvement - literacy, numeracy and problem solving. The workshops followed the cascade model of in-service training where head

teachers and district school circuit supervisors were given training, and were in turn expected to provide similar training at local district and school levels. The training also placed considerable emphasis on child-centred pedagogy, the use of appropriate teaching and learning materials, and the use of the local environment as an important learning resource (Whole School Development Training Document, 1999).

Another crucial feature of WSD in Ghana was the attempt to foster better organisation of in-service training. Cluster in-service workshops were therefore organised to form the focus and centre of school improvement activity. Head teachers were expected to work in close collaboration with 'District Teacher Support Teams' (DTST) to offer instructional and management support to schools. It was expected that headteachers within a cluster would meet with the DTST's to identify common unsolved problems relating to teaching and learning in the schools forming the cluster. The problems then became the basis for a cluster-based workshop in which DTST's and headteachers acted as resource personnel. When solutions to problems were found to be beyond the expertise of head teachers and the DTST's, other cluster centres were approached for assistance. Finally, the problem was then relayed to the National WSD coordinator for support. From this perspective, the school cluster became the unit of change for school improvement (Whole School Development Training Document, 1999).

The WSD programme was found relevant to this study because it represented a systematic and collaborative approach to making schools more effective. The programme appeared to have been premised on the philosophy that better results in schools can be achieved if the school received maximum collaboration from its key stakeholders. Irrespective of the fact

that the WSD programme in Ghana was implemented in the 1990s, its basic tenets have formed the basis of a number of local and national school improvement programmes in Ghana. From the objectives of the WSD programme in Ghana, a simple proposition can be put forward as a strategy for achieving good results from school improvement programmes. Thus, school improvement programmes should be planned collaboratively involving relevant stakeholders of the school. The planning should result in a model of instruction that is child-centred, and the instruction should be constantly enhanced through a school-based in-service training. From this it can be posited that, every school improvement programme should possess internal properties for its own success.

2.2.5 The systemic school improvement model

The systemic school improvement model was designed by JET Education Services (JET) in South Africa over 20 years of experience in education. The model was designed to be implemented on circuit levels in South African schools. The design was then tested in two main projects: the Bojanala Systemic School Improvement Project (BSSIP) in the North West Province, 2009–2013; and the Centres of Excellence Project (COEP) in the Eastern Cape, 2010–2014 (Khosa, 2013).

This current study relied on the account of Khosa (2013) on the systemic school improvement model to make a review of the model. The model was born out of the identification of a range of interconnected challenges to improvement of education in South Africa. JET discovered that the challenges existed at the district, school, classroom and household levels. Central to the concept of systemic school improvement is a realization that sustainable school improvement would happen if school interventions aimed to change the schools and the

subsystem in which they operated. Furthermore, the key philosophical assumption which underpinned the model was that educational outcomes at school level would improve if teachers were effective and the teaching and learning environments were supported by effective school organisation and community involvement. The model further assumed that the district office provided guidance, support and monitoring. The purpose of the model was to assist the target districts to improve the learning achievements of the learners in their schools. The expected outcomes of the model were: (1) improved support and monitoring of schools by districts (2) increased community involvement (3) improved functionality of schools as organisations (4) increased teacher competence and performance (5) increased learning and educational outcomes. The model was also developed around seven key variables: (1) stakeholder mobilization (2) planning and organisation (3) teacher performance (4) parent involvement (5) district support (6) teacher competence (7) research, monitoring and evaluation (Khosa, 2013). These components are briefly discussed below:

1. Stakeholder mobilization

Stakeholder mobilization in the context of the model had to do with getting all concerned to support the schools and whatever project being implemented. The inclusion of this variable in the model was supported with the position of Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) (2009), which called for a coalition of the community and all development practitioners for development processes to shift from planning for people to planning with people. JET sought to contextualise this position in schools stating that all school improvement projects should be planned with the stakeholders of the school. In addition, JET identified two approaches of stakeholder involvement – *outside-in* and *inside-out* approaches. Of these two, JET opted for the *inside-out* approach as reliable, having

unsuccessfully operated with the *outside- in* approach for sometime. The inside-out approach took the school performance needs as the starting point and used the needs to identify the support required from stakeholders (Khosa, 2013).

2. Planning and organisation

The planning and organisation component sought to improve the functioning of schools as organisations. It targeted the school management team (SMT), which was viewed in this model as the hub of curriculum delivery activities in the school and the broader social developmental elements outside the school. This component was subdivided into three sub-components: curriculum management, school strategic planning and financial management (Khosa, 2013). Unfortunately, the financial management sub-component could not stand the test of time as a number of South African schools at the time solely depended on state funds to run schools and could not under the given circumstances raise additional funds to run schools. Most of the financial management systems that were put in place could not be implemented since the financial contexts of the schools could not provide supporting grounds for that. To achieve the purpose indicated in this section of the model, schools should have received massive support from other stakeholders. However, as Bantwini and Diko (2011) had indicated, support to disadvantaged schools in South Africa, was often fragmented and uncoordinated. It is therefore not surprising that the financial management sub-component of the model could not stand the test of time.

3. Teacher performance

Teacher performance was influenced by a wide range of factors which included teachers' characteristics (knowledge, skills, ethos and motivation), learners' characteristics and

features of the classroom and the school (Khosa, 2013). Teacher performance as a component was concerned with the classroom environment and sought to ensure that teachers: (1) were aware of the teaching goals that they needed to pursue; (2) embraced their role in the learning process; (3) focused teaching on learning outcomes; (4) had access to efficient curriculum delivery systems and resources for achieving the teaching goals; and (5) were excited about teaching. To achieve these, JET encouraged provision of curriculum planning and delivery materials which must be supported via school visits and cluster level activities. The curriculum materials included learning programmes, work schedules, lesson plans and assessment tasks.

4. Teacher competence

Teacher competence refers to the knowledge and skills that teachers use to facilitate learning (Khosa, 2013). This component is grounded on the position of Whelan (2009) that "students taught by an effective teacher would make three times as much progress over the course of the year as students taught by the least effective teacher" (p. 31). In addition, this component enabled a better understanding of the ethics of the teacher assessment process, which included understanding the views and concerns of the teachers and their unions (Khosa, 2013). The teacher competence component required a profiling of teachers' content knowledge and initiation of responsive teacher development interventions. JET had in fact appraised this component as having been implemented successfully in the Bojanala Systemic School Improvement Project (BSSIP) thereby making it a reliable component for every school improvement project.

5. District support

The role of education districts in school improvement is to support schools with relevant resources, systems and professional development (Khosa, 2013). In fact, JET designed the systemic school improvement model and implemented it in the Bojanala Systemic School Improvement Project (BSSIP) while expecting district support in all stages of the project. The district support component of the model was intended to provide additional strategic capacity in the planning and programming of school support and monitoring activities. The importance of district support had been emphasized by Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011) that the role of the district office in supporting schools is indisputable, and that officials at the district level are pivotal in capacity-building at school level. Furthermore, JET sought to coordinate and integrate project activities with those of the district. The anticipated outcomes of the district support component were: (1) improved district operations in terms of school support and monitoring; (2) improved communication and cooperation among the education stakeholders in the circuit; (3) effective implementation of the project; (4) mobilization of additional financial and non-financial resources from the partners; and (5) achievement of the project outcomes.

6. Parental involvement

The parental involvement component of JET's systemic school improvement model aimed to achieve: (1) improved involvement of parents in their children's education, demonstrated by increased monitoring of home study, number of completed homework exercises, school visits by parents and parents' interest in school reports; and (2) improved learner behaviours at school and after school in respect of learners' conduct and specifically how they managed their after-school time, homework, study and reading for enjoyment. After implementing this

component in the Bojanala Systemic School Improvement Project (BSSIP), JET made a number of observations. JET observed a low level of involvement of rural parents in the education of their children. JET learnt that the rural schools were generally not as strong as urban schools and were unable to compensate for the lack of parental involvement to an extent that would enable learners from poor, rural households to compete with urban middle-class learners whose parents made significant additional inputs into their education. This observation is similar to what Quansah (2020) found in Ghana in terms of low involvement of parents of public school students as compared to their private school counterparts.

7. Research, monitoring and evaluation

The research, monitoring and evaluation component was designed as the central driving force of the model. It served as the compass and gauge of the programme as it provided the research information required to design the intervention and provided data on how the intervention was implemented. It was required to supply constant relevant information to stimulate change among the participants, upholding the principle of evidence-led change. To meet the objective of this component, a number of activities were carried out covering the period 2009 to 2012. JET engaged in Baseline Learner Assessment where learners and classroom practice were assessed and evaluated respectively at the beginning of the projects in 2009 and 2010. Also, Baseline Teacher Assessment and Diagnostic assessments were carried out with teachers annually. Research was conducted on the level of parental involvement in order to determine the effectiveness of homework in the schools (Khosa, 2013).

The systemic school improvement model was considered relevant to this study because its seven components constitute a reliable pathway to making schools effective in Ghana, and

moreover, the model has been found effective over the years (Khosa, 2013). One interesting feature of the model making it suitable for this study is its localized dimension. Thus, the model was developed not as a national model but as a district level model. With that, it provided a theoretical support to this study which perceives school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort. In addition to this, the model, whose basic tenets were – stakeholder mobilization; planning and organisation; teacher performance; parent involvement; district support; teacher competence; and research, monitoring and evaluation, constituted an effective approach to achieving results from school improvement programmes. From the systemic school improvement model, it can be posited that, schools that intend to improve their performance must focus their efforts on stakeholders, planning, teachers, district support and research and evaluation.

Additionally, the seven components of the systemic school improvement model have been compressed into five variables. Thus, schools must begin their improvement efforts with a consideration of key stakeholders among whom are parents who must be given special attention and be actively involved in all the improvement activities. Furthermore, school improvement programmes should result from rigorous planning involving all relevant stakeholders. And moreover, the centre of every school improvement programme should be teachers. Thus, school improvement programmes should ultimately make teachers more functional in terms of their performance and competence. This will require professional development for teachers and provision of required resources for effective teaching. The school must usually seek support and guidance from the district and in the Ghanaian context, the district assembly, especially for the reason of getting financial support for programmes.

Finally, in order for schools not to engage in exercises of futility, they must constantly engage in research and evaluation. The purpose of this, is to adopt current and more efficient practices in order to improve their own practices. These suggestions have been made in the light of the systemic school improvement model meaning that Ghanaian school districts can inculcate the ideals of the model to make schools more effective in their delivery. And more importantly, the model as a whole is not devoid of the element of collaboration which is presented in this study as a constant feature of all school improvement programmes. Thus, schools can achieve the best from this model if the components are carefully implemented in the sense of collaboration.

2.7 Public school ineffectiveness

'Public school ineffectiveness' is the third major concept or theme in this study, based on the third objective: 'to explore the reasons for the ineffectiveness in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts'. The focus of the review in this section was to emphasize the reality of public school ineffectiveness in Africa and Ghana in particular and also to identify the reasons which account for this.

2.3.1 Conceptualizing ineffectiveness in public schools.

School effectiveness is a hidden concept in school ineffectiveness. It is in determining the benchmarks for school effectiveness that school ineffectiveness can be properly understood. In view of this, the conceptualization of 'school ineffectiveness' in this study began with a preliminary consideration of school effectiveness. Gager (2022) defined effectiveness as the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result. Effectiveness is always conceptualized around results. Effectiveness in this sense will be ascertained by

establishing a link between an institution's goals and the successes or results achieved within a given period. Schools will be considered effective when they are found to be achieving goals for its establishment. The goals of schools are to be realized in the long term and so researchers usually study effectiveness of schools in terms of schools' immediate goal which is academic performance which is quantified in grades. A school with a higher performance rate will be considered as effective since there is evidence to support attainment of desired results. School effectiveness is a concomitant of school improvement. All school improvement programmes are in essence meant to make schools effective. Studies on school improvement must therefore be premised on school effectiveness, as a school's level of effectiveness will be the basis for whether there is the need for a specific school improvement programme or not. When a school fails to be effective, it is considered as ineffective. Ineffective schools are schools which are not producing the expected results. An ineffective school is a school with a higher failure rate. Poor academic performance is a key indicator of school ineffectiveness.

Additionally, Bush and Glover (2012) identified weak leadership as a common characteristic of an ineffective school. They said such a weak leadership usually manifested itself in the form of an invisible leadership where the school Principal seldom walked around the school and classrooms and had little or no interaction with communities, teachers and learners. They added that in ineffective schools, the principal usually lacked focus and the school itself is instructionally disengaged. They said ineffective schools experienced high levels of truancy, absenteeism and inadequate control. Similarly, Odei-Tettey (2017) understood school ineffectiveness in terms of the contradictions in school decision- making.

2.3.2 The reality of school ineffectiveness

A study by the World Bank highlighted that Africa was facing a severe learning crisis that undermined economic growth and the well-being of its citizens. Irrespective of the fact that, Africa has made considerable progress in boosting primary and lower secondary school enrolment, it was still estimated that about 50 million children remained out of school, and moreover even most of those attending school were not acquiring the basic skills necessary for success later in life (World Bank, 2018). Wolfenden (2015) shared the same view when she said that a number of children attending school in Africa were not learning. The World Bank observed further that among second grade students assessed on numeracy tests in several Sub-Saharan African countries, three-quarters could not count beyond 80, and 40 percent could not do a one-digit addition problem. In reading, between 50 and 80 percent of children in second grade could not answer a single question based on a short passage they had read, and a large proportion could not read even a single word.

Moreover, the global community has promised children through the Millennium Development Goals that, all children will receive quality education regardless of their gender, ethnicity and educational needs. Wolfenden (2015) held that, the number of pupils in school has increased by a third across Africa since 1999, but considerable challenges remained and would require attention in the policies and commitments developed by African nations. UNESCO (2011) stated that, 43% of 67 million children out of school globally lived in Africa. UNESCO added that every year 10 million children droped out of primary school in Sub-Saharan Africa. Way back in 2015, Wolfenden had identified challenges with Africa's education system but the situation does not appear to have improved much as Wolfenden might have expected. Uzochukwu (2020) realizing that the situation has not

improved much placed the causes of Africa's education challenges at the door step of politicians in terms of corruption involving the political class. Aside his corruption allegation, Uzochukwu also identified a number of challenges plaguing schools in Africa among which were poor computer literacy, inadequate government funding, unqualified teachers, poor infrastructure, inadequate payment, and insecurity in schools. With regard to computer literacy, Uzochukwu admitted that African countries like Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Ethiopia, Congo, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Mali, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Zambia, Gabon, Zimbabwe have made some efforts in secondary schools in particular by installing computers to facilitate students' learning. This notwithstanding, these countries faced the challenge of getting qualified instructors for students. In Ghana, this problem is encountered mostly in basic schools with inadequate computers and qualified ICT teachers. Uzochukwu's study is silent on the prevalence of this problem in basic schools in the listed countries because his write-up was focused on secondary schools. This means the problem of poor computer literacy could also be prevalent in basic schools in the listed African countries.

Furthermore, the covid-19 pandemic which occasioned the full closures of schools in 2020 has exposed the cracks in the level of effectiveness of African schools. UNESCO (2021) indicated that the closing of schools interrupted the functioning of education systems, reducing student learning, and restricting the activities of education authorities, parents, and decision-makers, but also disrupting many vital functions that schools fulfilled. School closures were longest in Eastern and Southern Africa where a third of countries closed schools for 40 or more weeks. School closures lasted for nearly a full year in some countries in Africa between March 2020 and March 2021. This is followed by Central and Northern

Africa where about two in three countries closed for 21-30 weeks. School closures were shortest in Western Africa where more than half of the countries (57%) closed for 11-20 weeks (UNESCO, 2021). UNESCO identified, among others, that access to internet was a major obstacle to Africa's efforts in sustaining education delivery during the full closures of schools. UNESCO drawing on household data available to her, stated that Sub-Saharan Africa and, to a lesser extent, Northern Africa, lacked sufficient devices and internet to sustain online and other remote forms of teaching and learning for all students.

Moreover, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the great majority of students had no access to computers and internet, while about 4 – 5 out of 10 students in Northern Africa also lacked access. More specifically, 199 million students were without internet during the 2020 covid 19 crisis. Also, 25 million students in Northern Africa had no internet access to support teaching and learning during the height of school closures during the 2020 COVID-19 crisis (UNESCO, 2021). Talsma, Robertson, Thomas, and Norris (2021) indicated that although teachers made every effort to continue students' learning, they had to encounter several challenges in adopting digital platforms for teaching, which include insufficient inter-institutional coordination. Also, a number of nations could not invest in advanced technologies (Akram, Aslam, Saleem, & Parveen, 2021). Additionally, ICT tools and Internet were least frequently provided as just 12% and 4% of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, respectively, but to none in Northern Africa were provided support in ICT and internet. One in five countries in Sub-Saharan Africa reported providing no additional support to teachers (UNESCO, 2021). The pandemic enjoined on nations to adopt remote teaching but even with that, a number of African teachers did not possess the required skills to use online remote technology as just 1 in 4 of teachers were able to teach using remote online technology in Africa. Akram et al. (2021) held a

similar position when they stated that a number of teachers exhibited minimum understanding and ability to adopt technology education during the COVID-19 crisis.

Furthermore, the only African sub-region where most countries required teaching using online remote technology was Southern Africa (75% of countries). Moreover, just 1 in 4 countries or less required teachers to teach online in all other sub-regions. In view of this the most common form of remote teaching required of teachers across Africa was radio and television-based learning (3 in 4 countries) both during the peak of the pandemic and by September 2020 (UNESCO, 2021). In line with this, instructions on distance education were provided to teachers in 62% of countries globally but in Africa, this proportion was reduced to 50% of countries in Northern Africa, and to only 27% of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Also, content for remote teaching was offered to just one in three countries in the continent (UNESCO, 2021).

Another challenge that has accentuated the ineffectiveness in African schools is the evidence of minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics. For example, majority (more than 8 out of 10 students) did not meet minimum proficiency levels in reading (88%) and mathematics (84%) in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2021). In fact, over 200 million children and adolescents who were in school in 2018 were not achieving minimum proficiency levels according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics – UIS (UNESCO, 2018). UNESCO has established a link between the minimum proficiency level and teacher qualification stating that Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest proportions of teachers with minimum required qualifications to teach. In 2019, just 65% of primary and 51% of secondary teachers were trained to the required level. While all primary teachers had the minimum required qualifications in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, and Mauritius, only

37% had minimum qualifications in Equatorial Guinea, 27% in Sao Tome and Principe, and 15% in Madagascar. Western Africa is the subregion where the challenge is more acute, while in Northern Africa almost 90% of primary teachers have minimum qualifications. Compared to the world average, the quality challenge faced by Sub-Saharan African countries is vast (UNESCO, 2021).

Additionally, the issue of lack of qualifications is compounded by high pupil-teacher ratios that result in large classroom sizes which have a negative effect on educational quality. The pupil-qualified teacher ratios show a major gap in the availability of qualified teachers across all education levels in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in primary education (UNESCO, 2018). In another paper published on persistent teacher gap in Sub-Saharan Africa, UNESCO (2021), observed that, to reach education goals by 2030 in accordance with new calculations, Sub-Saharan Africa will need to recruit about 15 million teachers. Despite some gains in the past 5 years, progress in recruiting more teachers has been too slow, and many countries need to accelerate the number of teachers they recruit per year. Countries need teachers with the qualifications to provide education of high quality to children and youth. However, due to growth in enrolment in recent decades, a high proportion of teachers are unqualified. In 2000, an average of 84% of primary teachers had the minimum required qualifications, but by 2019, only 65% did (UNESCO, 2021).

Furthermore, school ineffectiveness can be inferred from the challenges described in the preceding paragraphs in this section of the review. It is clear from the facts above that school ineffectiveness, is not a recent phenomenon in Africa. The pandemic has only compounded it. It can be maintained from the above that the reality of school ineffectiveness in Africa

spans from issues such as poor computer literacy, inadequate government funding, unqualified teachers, poor infrastructure, inadequate payment, insecurity in schools etc. For example, Ghana's basic education is saddled with gaps such as poor school leadership and management from headmasters/headmistresses, centralized and weak teacher deployment system which does not respond to local needs, high number of untrained teachers at the basic level, teacher absenteeism and low levels of commitment, inadequate use of teacher–learner contact time in schools; extreme focus on merely passing exams; poor linkage between management processes and schools' operations; and inadequate funding sources for education (Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan -ESMTDP, 2018–2021). These challenges are not peculiar to Ghana as the data above provide enough justification for a position that Africa's educational challenges are similar.

In fact, all the efforts being made in the African continent to tackle the identified educational challenges are not up to the expected standard. Moreover, these challenges as evidenced in the data above have one ultimate result, i.e., poor learning outcomes or poor academic performance which has usually been the common standard used to judge the effectiveness of schools. Additionally, it has been observed that a number of African teachers were deficient in computer literacy and this has serious implications for school effectiveness. For schools to achieve their ultimate goal, they need funding, well-paid teachers, good infrastructure, safe school environment etc., and so if African nations are faced with these challenges, it would be difficult for schools to realize an appreciable level of effectiveness. It can be said, on the basis of the discussion above that, in Africa, school ineffectiveness is not a perception but a reality to be tackled and overcome to enable the continent achieve its aspirations.

2.3.3 Reasons for ineffective public schools

There is a general perception that a number of public schools, especially in Africa, have become ineffective. In Ghana for example, textbook–student ratios have declined substantially since 2011/12, reaching 0.5 in 2016/17 for mathematics, and textbook production is often delayed. In terms of learning outcomes, results from the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Exam (WASSCE) have been poor for both core and elective science and mathematics subjects, particularly in 2015. The situation was not any better in JHSs in terms of the BECE (Education Sector Medium-Term Development Plan [ESMTDP], 2018–2021). A number of factors could account for this phenomenon. Meador (2020) indicated that there are so many factors beyond any one person's control that can strip a school of its effectiveness. In this section of the review, a general discussion has been made on what factors are responsible for ineffectiveness in public schools. The aim was to present these reasons as premise for school ineffectiveness in Ghana in particular.

Meador (2020) identified poor attendance, students' indiscipline, lack of parental support, lack of student motivation, poor public perception, lack of funding, too much testing, lack of respect, and bad teachers as key factors causing school ineffectiveness across the globe. Meador stated that poor attendance severely limits both a teacher's overall effectiveness and a student's learning potential. In fact, these two are strong enough to pull a school along the path to ineffectiveness. Poor attendance comes in two forms, either teacher absenteeism or student absenteeism. Teacher absenteeism which leads to low time on task has been a challenge Ghana government has been battling with over the years. For example, Ghana recorded 5% teacher absenteeism between 2014 and 2015 (ESMTDP, 2018–2021). The problem is not peculiar to Ghana alone as UNICEF identified teacher absenteeism as a major

obstacle in efforts to address the learning crisis in children of low- and middle-income countries around the world. UNICEF observed further that teacher absenteeism and reduced time on task waste valuable financial resources, short-change students and is one of the most cumbersome obstacles on the path toward the education Sustainable Development Goal and to the related vision of the new UNICEF education strategy: Every Child Learns (UNICEF, 2020).

On 4th November 2020, UNICEF launched a new research on teacher absenteeism in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study found that in Sub-Saharan Africa, there was evidence that teacher absenteeism ranged from 15 to 45 percent. The study found further that, across the region, 15.5 percent of surveyed teachers reported being absent from school at least once a week. The highest national rates of teacher absenteeism were reported in South Sudan (30 per cent) and the Comoros (20.6 percent) and the lowest in Kenya (8.9 percent) and Rwanda (9 percent). In addition, almost 17 percent of surveyed teachers reported arriving to school late or leaving school early on a frequent basis (i.e., once a week or more). Among participating countries, the highest national rates of late arrival and early departure were reported in Uganda (25.7 percent), South Sudan (23.7 percent) and the Comoros (22 percent) and the lowest in Puntland (5.3 percent), and Kenya (8.9 percent). As much as 15.7 percent of surveyed teachers reported missing lessons while at school at least once a week. Teachers in South Sudan and in Zanzibar reported the highest rates of classroom absenteeism (26 and 22.7 percent respectively) and teachers in Rwanda and Kenya the lowest rates (7.6 and 8.4 percent respectively). Absence from teaching, defined as reduced time on task while in the classroom, was reported by 17.8 percent of surveyed teachers as occurring at least once a week. It was found also that absenteeism was higher in rural areas (18 percent) than in urban/

peri-urban areas (15 percent). In all countries, teacher absenteeism was higher among volunteer teachers (28 percent) than non-volunteer (civil servant or contracted) teachers (16 percent). With regard to why teachers were absent in schools, the study found that, in the eight countries, ill health was the most frequent answer given for the absence from school, late arrival/early departure and reduced time on task. Weather conditions were cited as a reason in particular for late arrival and early departure (UNICEF, 2020). Family reasons were also mentioned.

As indicated above, the other part of poor attendance in schools is student or learner absenteeism. In fact, three of Meador (2020)'s factors – students' indiscipline, lack of parental support, lack of student motivation – can be explained in the context of student absenteeism. Thus, these three factors are closely associated with student absenteeism as they all contribute to student absenteeism in schools. In a study to explore the challenges and factors contributing to learner absenteeism in selected primary schools in Acornhoek in South Africa, Mboweni (2014) identified bullying, poor school facilities, corporal punishment, lack of parental involvement, unstable family backgrounds, teenage pregnancy, lack of transport, overcrowding in classes, unhealthy student- teacher relationship and child labour as some of the factors contributing to student absenteeism in South African schools. These factors do not just cause absenteeism but also school ineffectiveness. Most of these factors especially bullying, poor school facilities, corporal punishment, teenage pregnancy, overcrowding in classes, and unhealthy student- teacher relationship can serve as demotivators to students from attending school.

Unfortunately, students' indiscipline did not come up in most of the papers reviewed as a contributing factor, but that nevertheless does not rule students' indiscipline out of the

picture. Students' indiscipline has kept students out of the class in a number of schools in Africa and Ghana in particular. Some students roam about in town after spending their transport fares to school. Some girls visit their boyfriends instead of going to school though they had given an indication of going to school to their parents at home. These issues bother on discipline. Meador (2020) himself explained that all discipline issues disrupt the flow of a class and take valuable class time away for all students involved. He said, each time a student is sent to the Principal's office it takes away from learning time. This interruption in learning, for him, increases in cases where suspension is warranted. In view of these, Meador stated categorically that students' indiscipline constitutes continual disruptions which can limit a school's effectiveness. Adeniyi and Adedotun (2019) and Ofori, Tordzro, Asamoah, and Achiaa (2018) however, found a link between indiscipline and academic performance. For example, Adeniyi and Adedotun found a significant relationship between indiscipline and academic activities of students. Ofori, Tordzro, Asamoah, and Achiaa on their part also found that the effects of indiscipline on academic performance included; students' inability to concentrate in class, loss of materials taught due to absenteeism and increase in rate of school drop-out. At least there is a clear case made in the finding of Ofori, Tordzro, Asamoah, and Achiaa that students' indiscipline can lead to students' absenteeism. This provides adequate support for the position of Meador that students' indiscipline limits school effectiveness.

As noted earlier, Meador (2020) listed poor public perception and lack of funding as some of the factors causing school ineffectiveness across the globe. Meador stated that the school used to be the focal point of every community where teachers were respected and looked at to be pillars of society. Unfortunately, he observed that, there is a negative stigma associated

with schools and teachers in recent times. He believed that when people and the community talk negatively about a school, administrator, or teacher, it undermines their authority and makes them less effective. Such a phenomenon is likely to reduce community support for schools and this can go a long way to impact on the effectiveness of the school. Meanwhile, Safanova (2017) had already indicated that negative public school perception is a problem for all stakeholders and that it can lead to a lack of support in the form of funding for schools.

Additionally, Chen (2022) observed that, in the United States, funding challenge in schools could come in the form of budget cuts which have actually created huge problems for most public schools in recent years. Chen added that less funding means smaller staffs, fewer resources and a lower number of services for students. Moreover, Meador (2020) stated that, when there are educational budget cuts, the quality of education each child receives will be affected. He continued that if cuts are made, teachers and schools will figure a way out to make do with what they have, but their effectiveness will be influenced in some way by those cuts. In fact, it is however unclear from Chen's position as to whether the budget cuts result from a dwindled public perception of schools. It is highly improbable for states to cut budgetary allocations to schools due to poor public perception of schools. However, the public contribute to public discourses that advance stronger arguments for governments to increase budgetary allocations to schools. This means, if the schools' stakeholders relent in their efforts to convince government to increase allocations to schools, schools will struggle to achieve their set objectives. So whichever way the issue is looked at, negative public perception of schools impacts on school funding. These views simply establish the fact that poor public perception of schools can contribute to school ineffectiveness.

Another key issue Meador (2020) considered as causing school ineffectiveness was too much testing. He stated that the overemphasis of standardized testing is limiting schools in their approach to education as teachers have been forced to teach to the tests. For him, this has led to a lack of creativity, an inability to implement activities which address real life issues, and has taken authentic learning experiences away in virtually every classroom. This has had a negative impact on school effectiveness and is an issue that schools will find it difficult to overcome. Ghana in particular has detected this challenge and has embarked on a comprehensive curriculum review leading her to produce the new Standards- Based Curriculum which is being implemented in primary schools. In providing a reason for the introduction of the Standards-Based Curriculum, the Ministry of Education stated that, the old primary school curriculum stressed too much on the teaching of content and passing of exams instead of ensuring that children acquired lifelong skills which can be applied easily (Ministry of Education, 2018). Ghana's Standards-Based Curriculum provides national assessments at P2, P4 and P6 to ensure that children's performance is being tracked. This replaces the old system where students were assessed termly and yearly for promotion to new grades. Ghana, by this practice has reduced the number of occasions that pupils will be assessed. This provides a justification for Meador's position that too much testing contributes to school ineffectiveness.

Additionally, Meador (2020) mentioned lack of respect and bad teachers as some of the factors causing school ineffectiveness. Public school teaching as a career path has lost much of its appeal and as such fifty-four percent of parents would not like one of their children to take up teaching in the public schools as a career in the United States (Phi Delta Kappan, 2018). When teachers lose their respect in the sight of students and parents, it becomes very

difficult for them to make meaningful impact in students' studies. Meador said, lack of respect for a teacher undermines the teacher's authority and minimizes his or her effectiveness in the classroom. More serious is the situation where the lack of respect is caused by the fact that the teacher is simply a bad teacher. Among the qualities of bad teachers identified by Meador were lack of classroom management, lack of content knowledge, lack of organizational skills, lack of professionalism, poor communication skills, and lack of commitment (Meador, 2018).

Adding to the above, Kodero, Misigo, Owino, and Simiyu (2011) made similar findings in their study in Kenya which explored salient characteristics of trained ineffective teachers in secondary schools, meaning that a trained or certified teacher can be ineffective. Among the characteristics identified by Kodero et al included wastage of students' time, poor mastery of the subject, partial treatment of students, lack of respect for students, low level of self-confidence, poor mastery of teaching skills, emotional immaturity, inappropriate dressing, miscommunication in class, poor in providing feedback, poor in maintaining discipline, immoral in behaviour, unapproachable to students, poor in counseling, and autocratic to students. Thus, the study of Kodero et al found that some Kenyan teachers were ineffective as they exhibited the enumerated characteristics. Furthermore, Meador (2018) considered classroom management as the single biggest downfall of a bad teacher because for him, if a teacher cannot control his or her students, he or she will not be able to teach them effectively. Meador observed further that certification of teachers in specific subject areas is not a guarantee of their proficiency in that area.

Finally, Meador (2018) added that, teachers lose credibility with their students quickly if they do not know what they are teaching, thus making them ineffective. He also noted that,

teachers who lack organizational skills are usually overwhelmed and so become ineffective. He stated further that teacher unprofessionalism usually expressed itself in acts such as teacher absenteeism, improper dressing and use of inappropriate language in the classroom. Meador added that an ineffective teacher also communicates poorly, or not at all, with students, parents, teachers, and administrators. He was of the view that lack of teacher commitment results from lack of motivation and for that matter such teachers never arrive early or stay late in school, do not challenge their students and are often behind on grading.

The views expressed have emphasized more clearly, the teacher factor in school ineffectiveness. Teacher factor has been presented in the sense of teacher ineffectiveness which expresses itself in diverse behaviours. It is important however to note that teacher ineffectiveness should not always be perceived as caused by teacher related factors alone. This is because Berry (2010) was of the view that teacher working conditions can determine teacher effectiveness. This means a school's ineffectiveness can also be caused by its own characteristics in terms of the existing conditions in the school. If teachers do not have the required resources to teach and generally work under poor conditions, it would be unfair to expect the best from them.

2.8 Strategies for achieving better academic performance in public schools

The theme or concept above was derived from the fourth objective of the study: 'To explore ways of making public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts more effective in their performance'. The discussions that follow are built on the position that effectiveness of schools is realized ultimately in the academic performance of students. So, the various

strategies discussed in this section are understood as reliable ways of making public schools effective in terms of the achievement of better academic performance of students.

2.4.1 The strategic pillars of 'Eight Cities'

'Eight Cities' was a 2018 Bellwether publication which was focused on seven key strategies for improving schools in general and students' academic performance in particular. The seven strategic pillars were school performance frameworks, performance contracts, school quality oversight body, school autonomy, new school incubation, talent strategies and unified enrollment. The seven strategies were meant to be adopted as district wide strategies to improve schools (Eight Cities, 2018). Nevertheless, some of the seven strategic pillars can be adopted as school-based strategies. Because this current study is focused on schools as individual units, attention would be paid to the strategies that are applicable to schools as individual units. Among the seven strategic pillars, five of them – school performance frameworks, performance contracts, school quality oversight body, school autonomy and talent strategies are directly applicable to individual school improvement planning and implementation for bettering students' academic performance. In view of this, these five pillars are reviewed in this study citing sources from other authors to enrich the discussion.

1. School performance frameworks

It is posited right from the onset here that school performance frameworks (SPF) could be employed as essential tools for achieving better academic performance in public basic schools. This is the reason why Eight Cities (2018) listed it as one of the seven strategic pillars for improving students' performance in schools. The position that school performance frameworks (SPF) could be employed as essential tools for achieving better academic

performance in public basic schools is based on the assertion of O'Keefe, Lewis, Schiess, and Weeby (2019) that what sets a SPF apart from other data systems is the fact that it is explicitly designed to inform action that can lead to greater student achievement. School performance frameworks (SPFs) are action-oriented information tools that provide information on school performance and quality across a variety of measures.

In advancing their argument on the relevance of SPFs in improving students' academic performance, O'Keefe et al. (2019) came up with three key principles or themes which they thought should guide every SPF. These three key principles or themes, they termed 'use cases'. A "use case" is a term they borrowed from the world of technology and software design. Use cases are designed to describe in detail how a system or product might be used. In essence, these use cases are general goals that are to be pursued in every SPF. With their three 'use cases' – system management and accountability; school continuous improvement; and family and community information, O'Keefe et al. provided credible steps through which schools can improve their performance through their own locally designed school performance framework.

From the views of O'Keefe et al. (2019), the principle of collaboration is again echoed as a requirement for driving all efforts that would lead to the desired performance. Key among the stakeholders that cannot be left out are parents or families. Collaboration among the stakeholders in achieving the set goals would not be possible without intentional communication. O'Keefe et al. held this view because they believed that SPF itself is a tool for communicating information about schools to stakeholders. In order for a SPF to be successful, school leaders must consider how key stakeholders will receive information about the SPF. Such information will sustain the commitment of the stakeholders to SPF. In

view of this O'Keefe et al. held that the absence of a strong communication strategy could result in a SPF losing credibility and impact with critical audiences.

2. Performance contracts

Performance contracts in recent times have been perceived as an effective and promising means of improving the performance of public enterprises and government departments. Performance contract is defined as an agreement between a government and a public agency which establishes general goals for the agency, sets targets for measuring performance and provides incentives for achieving these targets. Performance contracts represent a state-of-the-art tool for improving public sector performance. They are considered an essential tool for enhancing good governance and accountability for results in the public sector. Performance contracts are meant to control the outcome rather than the process (BIDE, 2007). Eight Cities (2018) observed that, to improve students' academic performance, there was the need for a performance contract between schools and an oversight body that monitors performance. They held this position on the basis that many communities lacked clear standards for school accountability and interventions which resulted in inconsistent and subjective school interventions and management decisions.

Moreover, in the United States, Charter Schools are one of the more familiar examples of schools operating under performance contracts. A number of schools in Kenya also operate under performance contracts. Ghana is almost at the point of adopting performance contracts in its schools. Unfortunately, Ghana is faced with some initial resistance as steps taken to implement such a policy has been criticized by some relevant stakeholders. Amofah (2021) criticized that the Ghana Education Service (GES) wanted to force through the throats of

headteachers of Basic schools to sign the performance contract. He was of the view that even though the rationale behind the performance contract is to enhance the delivery of key educational outcomes in the teaching and learning process, the headteacher should not be seen as the sole target of GES to single-handedly deliver these outcomes. He posited that a contract is supposed to be signed after the parties involved have all gone through the contractual terms with the one signing fully satisfied with the terms but this appears not to be happening in the case of GES. Amofah was of the view that effective education delivery requires the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, playing their optimal parts to achieve the desired outcomes. In view of this he observed that headteachers and teachers alone cannot meet all the specific outputs and deliverables if other stakeholders (Government, MoE, GES management, parents, chiefs and opinion leaders, PTA/SMC, religious organizations, etc.) do not play their part.

In this current study, performance contract is viewed as a local performance management tool to control the performance of teachers in a manner that would enable the schools to achieve their specific goals which are in line with the district and national performance goals. A practical strategy gathered from this pillar of Eight Cities is that, to get academic performance to improve in schools, schools must collaborate with stakeholders to design performance contract and monitor it closely. Stakeholders such as parents, chiefs and opinion leaders, PTA/SMC, religious organizations, especially in Africa, may constitute the contract oversight team to whom teachers would be accountable at the local level. An important point to emphasize is that, when performance contracts are designed, it must be accompanied with the needed enabling environment to enable teachers give off their best. It is in this regard that we can talk about 'fair contract'.

3. School quality oversight bodies

Quality means a characteristic, property or attribute that devotes a high grade, great excellence, accomplishment, or attainment (Zuber-Skerritt & Rayan, 1994). Hoy, Bayne-Jardine, and Wood (2000) considered quality as a tool for evaluating the educational process to meet the standards that are set by clients. They considered the learners to be customers and the parents as clients. Asadi (2021) stated that low education quality reduces the probability of children staying in school and attaining any educational qualification. He added that low school quality decreases the future return of any qualifications. For him, the outcome of low school quality is inefficient education systems which make it less incentive for parents to invest in education. Asadi observed further that Ghana is experiencing significant increases in enrolment rates in basic schools but still finding the quality of schooling lagging behind.

In addition, Asadi (2021) stated that, in 2015, 55% of teachers were not trained, 16% of students in primary schools were over-aged, and 8.1% of children of primary school age were out of school. He observed based on international reports on schooling outcomes that, 21.1% of Ghanaian sixth-grade students have not learned to read, and 43.1% have not learned mathematics. He however admitted significant efforts being made over the years to salvage the situation. For example, Asadi identified that net enrolment in primary education increased from 62% in 1999 to 91% in 2015. Over the same period, the primary school completion rate went from 65% to almost 100%. Repeaters decreased from 4.2% to 1.9%, and the share of trained teachers increased from 29.2% to 45.5%. Despite these significant improvements, Asadi observed that there were still gaps in the provision of quality education, especially in rural areas in Ghana. This Ghanaian reference is meant to drive home the point

that issues relating to school quality are so critical to the primary and immediate goal of schools which is to improve students' academic performance. This makes it interesting to find Eight Cities devise a strategy on school quality (School Quality Oversight Bodies). This provided enough justification for Eight Cities' consideration of school quality oversight bodies as one of the key strategies for achieving better academic performance in public schools.

Additionally, Eight Cities (2018) stated that, for schools to improve the performance of students, there is the need for an establishment of school quality oversight bodies. These school quality oversight bodies were charged to ensure that schools met national standards in education delivery in a particular school district. Eight Cities expected that districts established oversight offices or teams tasked with monitoring enrolment, demand for schools and academic performance. This team then makes recommendations to top district leaders about which schools should be opened, closed, replicated, or expanded.

Moreover, though Eight Cities (2018) perceived school quality oversight body as a district level institution, it could be established on the school level which could comprise teachers and other educated members of the community in which the school is established especially in Africa. This team can be derived from the School Management Committee and the Parents' Associations. This team would then have to collaborate with the district's inspectorate team to ensure that schools deliver up to expected standards. In Ghana, the recommendations of this team may not include closure of schools but could lead to sanctioning of teachers for non-performance. Almadani, Reid and Rodrigues (2011) however, considered such a sanction as inappropriate. He said:

> It is a sad observation that most systems of quality assurance involve the inspection of schools and any faults or failings are almost always laid at the door of the teachers. It is rare to find quality assurance that actually looks rigorously at curriculum and examination provision, usually determined nationally (Almadani, Reid & Rodrigues, 2011, p. 6).

To achieve their goal, the school quality oversight body at the school level may at the beginning of the academic year sign contract based on targets with teachers and ensure the creation of enabling environment for the attainment of the targets. There could be a mid-year review of these targets for adjustment. The adoption of this strategy especially in Ghanaian schools can help improve teacher and students' performance in public schools. In this sense the task of improving students' performance becomes a collaborative affair rather than a responsibility laid on the shoulders of teachers alone.

4. School autonomy

It had already been mentioned in earlier discussions citing Agi (2017) that for school improvement planning to achieve the desired goal for schools which in this section would entail specifically, improvement in students' academic performance, there is the need for governments to allow significant autonomy to reside in schools. The autonomy would enable school leaders initiate school improvement plans that can enhance students' academic performance. Hamilton (2014) emphasized the relevance of autonomy for school improvement when he examined school leaders' efforts to implement school improvement initiatives that directly responded to China's school improvement policy focused on expanding school-level autonomy regarding leadership practices, curriculum development, student learning opportunities, parental involvement, and community relations. Van Der Voort and Wood (2014) on the contrary held the view that the mere existence of autonomy

in schools may not be enough to warrant effective school improvement planning and hence improved academic performance as indicated earlier by Agi. The contrary position of Van Der Voort and Wood made sense because autonomy may be a good context for effective school improvement planning, but if it does not come with leadership competency in planning and the readiness to collaborate, ineffective plan may be the result which ultimately may not lead to improved academic performance. This is true because irrespective of the efforts made by the school, if they do not have the autonomy to hire competent teaching staff to deliver the new instructional programme, desired performance of students would not be attained. These set the context for Eight Cities' 'school autonomy' as a strategy for improving students' academic performance.

It is the opinion of this current researcher that, Ghana is not oblivious to the importance of autonomy in its basic schools but the centralized nature of its administrative structure in schools has made school autonomy a critical issue in Ghana's education delivery. For example, headteachers in Ghanaian basic schools play no role in the hiring of teachers to their schools. Headteachers do not even play ultimate role in the discipline of teachers in their schools. Headteachers in Ghana play minimal role in infrastructure development in their schools not because they are incapable of leading in that regard but because they are not autonomous enough to do that. Over the years, Ghana has made strides through her decentralization policy to make schools quite autonomous but it appears the wind of autonomy blown by the decentralization policy was felt most at the district level but not at the school level.

However, and as posited by Eight Cities (2018), school level autonomy is needed as a strategy to improve academic performance. Until 2016, headmasters and headmistresses in second cycle schools exercised maximum autonomy in the hiring of teachers that impacted on the quality of staff in various secondary schools in Ghana. That level of autonomy enjoyed in the past by secondary school headmasters and headmistresses is needed by Ghanaian basic school headteachers to help improve academic performance. It must however be pointed out that, success of schools is not only tied to the autonomy of schools to hire their own staff. The schools need autonomy in enrolling students, reviewing curriculum to suit local needs, raising funds to finance school-initiated programmes, developing school-based standards for teachers and students, and disciplining non-performing teachers and students. The exercise of this autonomy in the school should take place in a context of collaboration among the key stakeholders of the school at the local level to yield the desired result which is improvement in the academic performance of students.

5. A talent strategy

Talent strategy is generally about how managers source, hire, engage and retain talent in an organisation (Slayton, 2021). It describes the process companies use to find, hire, and retain top-tier talent in the most cost-effective way. A strong talent strategy can help ensure companies do not lose out on talent to their competitors (Bray, 2022). Laine, Begrstock-Sherrat, Lasagna (2011) have posited that the school teaching profession requires the best talents available. They looked at this in terms of selection and initial training as well as how teachers are supported and rewarded at various stages in their careers. They emphasized affirmative support at all stages, with teachers being valued and resourced. Eight Cities (2018) observed that, attracting, developing, and retaining effective teachers and leaders is

at the core of any school system's success. They included talent strategy in their seven pillars because they believed that a coordinated talent strategy can have a big impact on students' achievement and school success. They said an effective talent strategy designed to recruit and retain a diverse set of high-performing leaders and teachers is especially important for those systems with a significant number of autonomous schools. For them, the school leader, as the school's chief executive officer, must be prepared to make school-level hiring decisions and design appropriate professional development and staff supports.

This strategy was developed within the context of a developed world with functional institutions. Implementing the pillar of talent strategy in a country like Ghana with limited school autonomy operating under a highly centralized administrative structure would not be easy. Nevertheless, the pillar of talent strategy would have to be re-interpreted in the Ghanaian context for effective implementation because to improve academic performance in Ghanaian basic schools, talent strategy is needed in schools. In Ghana, talent strategy appears to be working at the level of training of teachers in colleges and universities but not at the school levels. This means the state is making efforts to improve teacher quality in Ghana but schools need autonomy to assess the level of quality of teachers churned out by the training institutions. A talent strategy in Ghanaian basic schools would mean school management having the authority to determine the competences expected of teachers to be posted to the school as well as available resources to develop posted teachers and bring them to the competency level expected by the school. Since it does not appear Ghanaian basic schools would be having the complete autonomy to hire their own teachers anytime soon, a talent strategy would have to focus much on in-service training for recruited teachers. Schools may not have the power to hire teachers but could be given the authority to release non-performing

teachers. This would sensitize teachers to work harder which would remove the teacher factor in the performance challenges facing Ghanaian basic schools.

2.4.2 Lezotte's correlates of effective schools

The 'correlates of effective schools' is a model developed by Lezotte (2010) from 1991 to 2010. Since 1991, Lezotte had committed himself to conceptualizing his seven correlates of effective schools in line with the current understanding of the key variables in the model. Meanwhile many perceive this model as a means to achieving high levels of student-learning in schools. Lezotte was of the view that given a strict adherence to these principles, students are expected to learn essential skills, knowledge, and concepts needed to be successful in society. The seven correlates of effective schools are: (1) Strong instructional leadership, (2) Clear and focused mission, (3) Safe and orderly schools, (4) Climate of high expectations for success, (5) Frequent monitoring of students' progress, (6) Positive home-school relations, (7) Opportunity to learn. According to Lezotte (2010), these seven correlates of effective schools are powerful indicators of successful schools where all children learn, regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity. In this current study, Lezotte's seven correlates of effective schools are interpreted as strategies for improving academic performance at the school level. Using these seven principles as a guide, reference would be made to other authors to offer a broader understanding to how schools can improve academic performance of students through the seven correlates of effective schools. The seven correlates are discussed below:

1. Instructional leadership

Lezotte (1991) argued that, an effective school principal must act as an instructional leader and frequently communicate the school's mission to staff, parents, and students. Furthermore, the principal must understand and apply the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional programme. By persistently reinforcing the school's mission, Lezotte argued that the principal should create a shared sense of purpose and establish a set of common core values among the instructional staff. He added that having common core values and a shared sense of purpose helps guide all members of the instructional team and avoids individuals straying from the intended goals. The principal is therefore not seen as a sole leader but as a leader of leaders empowering teachers and including them in decisions about the school's instructional goals (Lezotte, 1991). Similarly, Cibulka and Nakayama (2000) had indicated that in order to achieve significant changes in classroom practice, teachers must have an opportunity to participate in shaping a school's vision.

The principle of instructional leadership as espoused by Lezotte (2010) indicated that in improving students' academic performance, schools must strategize to deliver a very effective instructional regime that is capable of justifying investment made into education both within short-term and long-term expectations. To do this, two key things are needed – training and collaboration. The headteacher with his/her teachers must have frequent training on contemporary trends in instructional leadership. The teacher must be made to understand and accept his/her role as an instructional leader in the classroom who must do all it takes to enhance students' learning in the most effective way. The role of the headteacher would be

to provide strict supervision and provide an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning. This would need the contribution of other stakeholders of the school especially the community leaders. This re-echoes the element of collaboration in instructional leadership as a strategy for improving students' academic performance in basic schools. The headteacher must be at the center of this collaboration. In the school, the headteacher with his teachers must form a team of instructional experts in designing an instructional regime and committing to its implementation. The headteacher must draw the community leaders into the school to support the school's instructional programme. This means, instructional leadership as a strategy is no single person's responsibility but the responsibility of all stakeholders of the school.

2. Clear and focused mission

Lezotte (2010) posited that in an effective school, there is a clearly articulated mission through which the staff shares an understanding of and a commitment to the school's goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. Haberman (2017) had indicated that greater part of this responsibility rested on the principal as he /she was expected to create a common vision, build effective terms to implement that vision, and engender commitment to task. Lezotte added that the staff in the effective school accept responsibility for the students' learning of the essential curricular goals. However, for teachers to be an integral part of the change process, they need to do more than blindly accept a principal's vision. In this sense teachers must be part of the processes leading to the creation of the vision and mission of the school. Creating an atmosphere in which teachers are considered professionals and have opportunities to continue their professional development, leads teachers towards excellence. This atmosphere, in turn, will help them lead the children to excellence

(Nyagosia, Njuguna, & Waweru, 2013). Once again, it is clear from the observations above that for a school's mission and vision to have impact on teachers and students' delivery, it must be collaboratively developed. Involvement of teachers in the creation of a school's mission and vision predisposes them to be fully committed to the mission and vision and that is the starting point to achieving the contents of the mission and the vision.

3. Safe and orderly environment

Lezotte (2001) posited that, every effective school must have an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. He said, the school climate in an effective school is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning. For him the effective school has a duty of teaching students the necessary behaviours to make the school safe and orderly. In making the school environment safe and orderly, undesirable behaviours must be avoided as more emphasis is placed on desirable behaviours such as cooperative team learning, respect for human diversity, and an appreciation of democratic values. In this sense, teachers must have a key duty of modeling these desirable behaviours. It is a common knowledge in Africa and especially Ghana that a number of schools do not have standard infrastructure. The details of these have been amply discussed in previous discussions but the emphasis to infrastructure is meant to drive home a point that, no matter the quality of teachers, if schools do not provide congenial environment for effective teaching and learning in schools, improvement in academic performance would always be a desire rather than a reality. Safe and orderly environment would require teachers who are more committed to their professional ethics, proactive headteachers and supportive community members. Headteachers need to lobby community members to initiate infrastructure projects in schools and teachers on their part must help to create a supportive

academic environment to effect the needed improvement in academic performance in schools.

4. Climate of high expectations

In the effective school, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believe and demonstrate that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum. The staff in the effective school also believe that they have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery (Lezotte, 2001). The effective school movement stressed on teacher excellence, collaboration, and mentoring so that schools become places where every educator is recognized as a valuable contributor with unique strengths and impressive potential to learn, grow, and improve (Johnson, 1997). Moreover, students in high performing schools are given challenging curricula and demanding tasks, and they are expected to succeed. High performing schools regard every child as an asset. Moreover, each child is considered to possess a unique gift to offer to society (Bauer, 1997).

As a strategy to improve academic performance in schools guided by Lezotte (2010)'s principle, these expectations must be translated into actions. Teachers need to show equal confidence in students' abilities. There must however be individualized teaching meant to support slow students. The school that desires to implement this principle must adopt a philosophy of no child left behind. Thus, the school must do all it takes to help every student to succeed. A number of factors come into play to achieve this. For example, the school's expectations from students in terms of behaviour and performance must constantly be reiterated. Once again, teachers need to be professionally committed to their duties. Teachers need to be motivated. Every little effort made by students must be appreciated and

encouragement given for a more improved performance in future. Emphasis must be placed on collaborative learning. There is the need to emphasize that, the phenomenon of higher expectations should not be restricted to students alone but teachers as well because teacher performance is generally perceived as related to students' academic performance.

5. Frequent monitoring of student progress

Lezotte (2001) held that, in the effective school, pupils' progress over the essential objectives are measured and monitored frequently and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviours and performances as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole. Lezotte (1991) identified two forms or stages of frequent monitoring of students' progress – first generation and second-generation frequent monitoring of students' progress. The first-generation monitoring is monitoring without technology. He said, after first-generation monitoring, schools will need to advance into a second generation of frequent monitoring of students' progress. During the second generation, the use of technology will permit teachers to do a better job of monitoring their students' progress. For him, this same technology will allow students to monitor their own learning and adjust their own behaviour. In the second generation of frequent monitoring of student progress, the monitoring will emphasize 'more authentic assessments' of curriculum mastery. Lezotte explained that the shift from first generation to second generation entails a less emphasis on the paper-pencil, multiple-choice tests, and more emphasis on assessments of products of student work, including performances and portfolios. He added that, the use of computerized practice tests, the ability to get immediate results on homework, and the ability to see correct solutions developed on the screen are a few of the available tools for assuring student learning. For him, two key questions that must underpin second generation frequent

monitoring are 'What's worth knowing?' and 'How will we know when the students know it?

It is important to consider the applicability of Lezotte's two forms of monitoring in the Ghanaian context in particular. Much of the monitoring of students' learning in Ghanaian public basic schools take the form of the first-generation monitoring. Without playing down the relevance of the second-generation monitoring to Ghanaian schools, Ghana as a middle-income nation can enhance students' performance even with the first-generation monitoring. Poor performance mentioned in relation to Ghanaian basic schools in this study, is in reference to performance in Basic Education Certificate Education (BECE) which can be improved through the first -generation monitoring. First generation monitoring in Ghana should be interpreted as a responsibility of parents and teachers. Parents and teachers would have to monitor students' progress both at school and home. Parents need to collaborate with teachers on this. Parents and teachers must be in constant talks on students' learning habits both at home and in school and together devise ways of improving the situation where there is the need. Whilst making the best from first generation monitoring, Ghana needs to prepare for second generation monitoring because the world as a global village is making demands on all nations to adopt common standards for achieving results. Thus, a time would come where Ghana would have no option than to monitor students' performance technologically. A key point gathered from this fourth principle of Lezotte (2010) is that schools need to commit efforts and resources into monitoring of student's academic progress. Once again, to improve academic performance in Africa and Ghana in particular, monitoring should not be restricted to students alone but teachers as well. This is because monitoring students' learning without monitoring teachers' performance would not yield the needed results.

6. Positive home-school relations

Henderson and Berla (2004) stated that the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status, but the extent to which that student's family is able to: create a home environment that encourages learning; express high (but not unrealistic) expectations for their children's achievement and future careers; and become involved in their children's education at school and in the community. They argued further that when parents are involved in their children's education at home they do better in school. Lezotte (2001) argued that, in effective schools, parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are given opportunities to play important roles in helping the school to achieve its mission. Meanwhile, much of the literature on effective schools have focused on the need for schools to include parents as valued members of the school family (Revilla & Sweeney, 1997). Johnson (1997) opined that there is the need for schools to treat parents as respected partners who bring important perspectives and often the untapped potential to grow in their capacity to support their children's education. Furthermore, a three-year study by Steinberg (2006) involving 12,000 students in nine high schools in the United States revealed that community involvement draws parents into the schools physically and are most effective in improving academic achievement through attending school programmes, extracurricular activities, and conferences. Steinberg concluded that when parents come to school regularly, it reinforces the view in the child's mind that school and home are connected and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life. Similarly, Goodman (1997) had indicated that schools can develop programmes for parents all with the aim of getting students to take their studies seriously as they see their parents go through learning experiences organised by the school.

It is clear from the above that, the school can hardly achieve its objectives solely on its efforts without the support of the home or parents. What Lezotte (2010) and the authorities cited sought to emphasize in this principle is that, schools need parents and the community in almost all their programmes to initiate activities that would improve students' academic performance. In view of this, parents and community hostility towards teachers should be a thing of the past in Africa and Ghana in particular. The tendency of teachers to discourage positive relationship with parents and community members thinking that they are not experts in educational matters, needs to be discouraged in Africa and Ghana. As has been indicated in other correlates above, the school needs the parents and the community even in its monitoring duty. The school needs the community and parents to create a safe and orderly academic environment. This means, the journey to improve students' academic performance must not exclude parents and community members and hence the need for schools to develop a positive relationship with parents and community members.

7. Opportunity to learn.

Lezotte (1991) stated that provision of adequate learning materials and time are necessary for effective instruction and that consideration should always be given to instruction materials and the limited time for effective teaching. According to Lezotte (2001), teachers in effective schools allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curriculum areas. For a high percentage of this time, students are actively engaged in whole-class or large group, teacher directed, planned learning activities. Knowing what to teach and providing adequate time to teach are essential for effective instruction. For him, teachers and administrators must balance issues of increasing curricular demands with

limited instructional time. Lezotte (2010) further emphasized the need for purposeful teaching within institutions that demands efficient organization, clarity of purpose, structured lessons and adaptive practice.

It can be inferred that Lezotte (2010) included 'opportunity to learn' in his model to address the challenge relating to wastage of instructional time in schools. This has been a big challenge in Ghana especially in the rural arears where students are engaged in unacademic ventures during instructional time. Teacher absenteeism in Ghana is also a contributing factor in wastage of instructional time in Ghanaian basic schools. A number of official activities such as sporting activities, workshops, in-service training and community service also keep teachers engaged both in school and outside school which contribute to wastage of instructional time. Practically, it would be difficult to eliminate these factors completely. However, in making the best out of this principle, schools should do all that it takes to provide students the opportunity to learn. Providing students an opportunity to learn would mean, converting a higher percentage of the school hours into productive academic interaction between teachers and students in the classroom. This would need teacher commitment and professionalism, strict instructional supervision, creation of supportive academic environment etc. It is clear from the above that, the seven correlates are directly or indirectly connected to each other. What to note is that, basic to almost all of them is the idea of collaboration at the school level so that together, the seven correlates can constitute a robust strategy to improve students' academic performance.

2.9 Constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration for school improvement

Constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration for school improvement is the fifth major concept or theme in this review derived from the fifth objective: 'To investigate the existing constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration for school improvement planning and implementation in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts'. The researcher is of the view that, knowledge about constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration is an essential tool for developing and implementing quality school improvement programmes in order to make schools more effective. Therefore, ignorance of the existence of some of the constraints discussed below could be the reason for unsuccessful school improvement programmes in public schools. Thus, knowledge about these constraints would call for ways of overcoming them in the course of planning and implementation of school improvement programmes.

2.5.1 School related constraints to collaboration

The focus of this section is to explore situations in schools that make collaboration among key stakeholders of the school very difficult. Meanwhile, Nkengbeza and Heystek (2017) have emphasized that development and sustenance of progress in schools can be strengthened when principals share power and authority and take collective decisions with all stakeholders. On the contrary, the study of Setlhodi (2020) which explored how shared leadership collaboration practices between the SGB and SMT can improve performance, discovered that individual planning in the schools reflected failure to equalize power. Thus, she found that the decision-making process was done unilaterally by the principals thereby, unintentionally excluding inputs by and dialogue with other stakeholders. For Setlhodi, this

constraint could have been the main cause of performance troubles experienced in the schools.

Additionally, Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools [REMS] (no date) also identified resource scarcity, organizational differences, institutional orientations, decision-making and procedures, and system complexity as key barriers to stakeholder collaboration in schools in the United States. REMS explained these barriers using school emergency as a reference of analysis. REMS perceived resource scarcity in three areas: time for planning, training, and building new community relations; available personnel appropriate to take on responsibility for developing emergency collaboration; and funds to add time, personnel or other resources necessary to the task. REMS observed further that collaborators in schools are made up of different professionals with different institutional orientations to authority and control, decision-making and other organizational procedures. REMS admitted that these differences could be a blessing to a school, but they can become barriers to collaboration if they are not clearly understood and coordinated. REMS held that the differences in the collaborators influence their responsibilities in complementing each other in the school especially in times of emergency. Thus, schools and their stakeholders approach preparing for, and responding to, an emergency with understandably different responsibilities and orientations.

More importantly, REMS (no date) observed further, that the effect of the differences among the collaborators in schools extends to decision-making. They said, the school's partners or stakeholders have a clear hierarchical structure aimed towards making quick assessments and rapid decisions in times of emergency. Meanwhile, schools tend to work within the

framework of committees and consensus and spend time processing decisions and weighing multiple factors. During a crisis, these different orientations may cause school personnel to feel like the partners are coming in and taking over. On the other hand, stakeholders may also feel that the school personnel do not sufficiently appreciate that crisis situations require quick actions with minimal time for consensus and dialogue.

2.5.2 Constraints from stakeholder characteristics

The findings of Setlhodi (2020) imply that stakeholder collaboration suffers when some of the stakeholders have limited understanding of their responsibilities. This is in line with the position of Mestry and Grobler (2007) that appropriate and shared decisions can only succeed if everyone is sufficiently knowledgeable and have information available to them. Setlhodi mentioned further that limited understanding of responsibilities and limited skills of stakeholders (in her case SGBs and SMTs) could compromise the pursuit of collegial spirit because for her those stakeholders who have limited skills may not participate fully which may lead to difficulties of implementation. In view of this, Setlhodi was of the view that the envisaged provision of collaborative leadership might be affected negatively since some of the stakeholders (parents) lacked the capacity to lead, as they could either agree to everything they were told or disagree, causing undue tension, which in turn could inhibit collaboration and affect the pursuit of interactive and operational purposes.

In addition, Basson and Mestry (2019), embarked on a qualitative study to determine the factors that drive or hinder authentic collaboration among SMT members and SGB governors in the Gauteng West and Johannesburg West education districts. Their study revealed that the availability of SGB members to attend extraordinary meetings other than formal

scheduled SGB meetings was a major concern in maintaining a collaborative relationship between the SGB and SMT. They held that, even if communication was identified as a key factor in promoting collaboration, the absence of the SGB parent component at special meetings hindered collaboration. The absence of parents was attributed to the busy schedule of parents who served on the SGB. They said, sometimes parents found it difficult to attend to financial matters of the school as they all had full-time jobs and other careers. Their data showed that most of the parents were not always available during school hours because most of them worked in the mines and in the private sector. Thus, to get all the parents on the SGB together was difficult. In view of that, very little collaboration between the SMT and SGB on financial matters existed, and where a strong collaborative culture prevailed, the Principal acted as link to facilitate collaboration between the SMT and SGB on school finances. It also became apparent therefore, that SGB members did not know their roles and responsibilities regarding the governance and management of the school, a situation which was also found in the study of Setlhodi (2020).

Moreover, after a thorough analysis of documents relating to the financial policies of the selected schools, Basson and Mestry (2019) concluded that although the policy for each school was well-formulated, the financial responsibilities of various role-players were not clearly defined, and financial duties not clearly assigned to individuals, teams or committees. It also emerged in their study that although the procedures of handling cash or the procurement of resources were outlined and the functions of the finance committee well-stated, the SGBs had neglected to include the roles of SMTs in the finance committee in the policies. The Act merely required that the principal must be a member of the finance committee. Also, no clear delegation of authority and responsibilities or collaboration

between the principal/SMT and SGB was noted in the documents they studied. This background would obviously stifle any effort to collaborate effectively. So it is not surprising that Basson and Mestry found challenges relating to collaboration among the key stakeholders of the selected schools. Thus, the contexts of the selected schools were unsupportive of effective collaboration. It must be mentioned that, the obstacles to collaboration identified by Basson and Mestry would not be applicable to only financial management in schools but all aspects of the schools' activities. Thus, limited time and understanding of the responsibilities of stakeholders in a school could pose a serious threat to any collaborative effort in the school geared toward implementation of any programme.

Furthermore, Yaro, Salleh, and Arshad (2018) identified delay in decision making, lack of consensus, and politicization of education policies as major constraints to stakeholder engagement or collaboration in Nigerian schools. They argued further that the obvious consequence of lack of consensus in decision making is delayed decision making. Bechuke and Nwosu (2017) stated that disagreements among education stakeholders affect development in school because focus is diverted due to personal strains and destruction. Also, disagreements could lead to loss of focus on work at hand which inadvertently results in poor performance. Yaro et al. observed that successive governments in Nigeria implemented their own policies promised in their manifestos with little attention to the real impact of the policies on the recipients and society at large. In fact, the politicization of educational policies could also be a source of disagreement among stakeholders who might belong to different political parties and would wish to defend their party's policies at all cost. A situation like this would obviously mar every effort towards effective collaboration. In Ghana, educational policies are similarly politicized and that could also affect the level of

commitment of stakeholders to such policies depending on their political affiliation. For example, the mode of implementation of the Free Senior High School (SHS) policy in Ghana has met fierce criticisms from other stakeholders. Moreover, the ruling government has responded to such criticisms as politically motivated. However, such a phenomenon fuels tension and poses serious threat to effective collaboration among stakeholders in achieving the objectives of educational policies. These disagreements may be happening at the national level but their replica could be found at the local level in schools.

Finally, it can be deduced from the observations of REMS (no date) that differences among stakeholders can pose a serious threat to stakeholder collaboration in schools. The effect of these differences could be dire in situations where there is minimum familiarity among stakeholders. This means, to overcome this obstacle, stakeholder collaboration should always be preceded by a stakeholder familiarization agenda for differences to be identified and strategies for adjustments be devised by the stakeholders before the collaboration actually begins. This obviously is not an easy thing to achieve, since in Ghana for example, stakeholder mobilization in schools usually does not follow formal procedures and also membership in a school's management team is not permanent thereby making familiarization among stakeholders very difficult.

2.5.3 Community and family constraints to collaboration

Roborife and Phasha (2010) conducted a study in South Africa to present the perspectives of parents, educators and school management teams about barriers which inhabit collaboration between the school and families. The barriers identified were categorized into three – community factors, school factors and family factors. They said, these factors interacted with

each other in a dynamic way to create challenges to undermine school-family collaboration. With regard to the community factors, they found that the unfavorable living conditions in the area of the study created difficulties for school and families to collaborate as a team.

Furthermore, Roborife and Phasha (2010) identified four factors occurring at the family level – time constraints, family composition, poor contacts with parents and parents' poor understanding of their roles. They said, employed parents indicated that their job responsibilities required them to leave very early in the morning and arrive home late in the evening, when school activities were over, thus making it difficult for them to participate in school- related activities. With regard to family composition, they observed that a number of families in the community were made up of children who had lost their parents to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, children who had fled as refugees to the community due to political unrest in their home countries and children who had left their parents in remote rural areas to live closer to 'well-resourced' schools located in urban areas. Roborife and Phasha understood that this kind of family composition undermined school- family collaboration because most of the parents were not staying with their biological children and therefore were not fully committed to their school affairs.

Moreover, key factors from the schools hampering collaboration were teacher insensitivity towards students and parents, cultural intolerance or unwelcoming school environment and poor communication on the part of schools. Teacher insensitivity expressed itself through unsavory comments of teachers against parents especially when parents failed to comply with the requirements of the school regarding school uniforms and performance of students in class. Cultural intolerance was believed to have resulted from the informal nature of the settlements since informal settlements were inhabited by people from diverse cultural

backgrounds. The inhabitants expressed conflicting cultural orientation to the teachers which usually created a language barrier and unfriendly relationship between parents and teachers. Moreover, schools were found not to be communicating frequently with parents and only did so when the school needed a financial support or when a child had a problem in school (Roborife & Phasha, 2010). Similarly, Ahmed, Zufi, and Hossen (2017) found in Bangladesh, that there was no collaborative bridge between teachers and SMC on sharing information and views. In the case of Ahmed et al, the fractured collaboration was as a result of the authoritarian leadership style of the SMC president who possessed much powers in the management team.

Notably, the phenomenon described above under the three factors reduced parents' interest in school activities and therefore made collaboration very difficult. The example of stakeholder collaboration presented in the study of Roborife and Phasha 2010) is a two-stakeholder kind of collaboration which on the face value would have been expected to undergo a smooth collaborative experience. However, it has become obvious through the study of Roborife and Phasha that the context of every kind of stakeholder collaboration impacts seriously on the success or failure of the collaboration.

In sum, a number of constraints to stakeholder collaboration in schools have been highlighted under this theme – Constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration for school improvement. Notable among them are inadequate empowerment or inadequate knowledge base of stakeholders, delay in decision making, lack of consensus, and politicization of education policies in schools (Setlhodi, 2020; Yaro, Salleh, & Arshad, 2018; Bechuke & Nwosu, 2017). REMS (no date) also identified lack of resources, organizational differences, institutional orientations, decision-making and procedures, and system complexity as key

barriers to stakeholder collaboration in schools. Furthermore, it has been learnt from Roborife and Phasha (2010) that community, school and family factors impact negatively on collaboration between schools and families. Specifically, Roborife and Phasha identified unfavorable living conditions (community factor); time constraints, family composition, poor contacts with parents and parents' poor understanding of their roles (family factors); teacher insensitivity towards leaners and parents, cultural intolerance or unwelcoming school environment and poor communication on the part of schools (school factors), as the components of the three broad factors hindering stakeholder collaboration. Thus, the three factors reduced parents' interest in school activities and therefore made collaboration very difficult.

Finally, it was stated by Basson and Mestry (2019) that parents as stakeholders lacked knowledge about their roles and responsibilities regarding school governance and management. Consequently, inadequate knowledge of parents created difficulties during implementation of school improvement programmes. From the discussions, the inadequacy of knowledge base of stakeholders was partly caused by the inability of parents and other SGB members to be present at meetings and training sessions organised for them (Basson & Mestry, 2019). Thus, parents' component in stakeholder groups had busy schedules and that negatively affected their level of collaboration. This means limited time and understanding of the responsibilities of stakeholders in a school could pose a serious threat to any collaborative effort in schools geared toward any programme.

2.10 Relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement.

Relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement is the sixth concept or theme in this review derived from the sixth objective of the study: 'To determine the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts'. This concept is pivotal because the main gap identified in literature concerns the silence on the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement. The thrust of this concept is the role of collaborative school improvement planning in bettering academic achievement of students in public schools.

2.6.1 Effectiveness of collaboration for school improvement

A number of studies have found that schools that engage multiple stakeholders can be successful in achieving improvements in school climate and academic achievement (Epstein, 2005; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Owens & Valesky, 2011; Sheldon, 2010). Moreover, Gcelu (2019) argued that working together as a team can lead to better results than working as individuals. Thus, when stakeholders collaborate, the results tend to be positive. Cameron and Green (2015) opined that group effort enables the promotion of organizational responsibilities that may be difficult to carry out. Also, Jimerson and Wayman (2012) indicated that collaboration is important to address challenges that deal with matters such as improvement of performance, and social and institutional culture issues that are complex to tackle adequately without support. Additionally, Fleming (2013) stated that collaboration constitutes a significant component for schools to continue improving performance. A

number of authors have explored collaboration and its effectiveness in diverse ways. For example, Halonen, Atkins, Hakulinen, Pesonen and Uitti (2017) emphasized a clear definition of roles and flexibility as a prerequisite for effective collaboration. Yaffee (2002) observed that collaboration generates wiser and more durable decisions, fosters action, and promotes change. Katzenbech and Smith (2003) held the view that collaboration involved complementary skills from team members, shared working approaches, and mutual accountability among all members. This section is devoted to exploring fundamentally, the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement.

The whole purpose of school improvement planning is producing better student outcomes and thus closing the gap between high and low achieving schools and students (Thompson, 2018). In their centre policy report on school improvement planning, Adelman and Taylor (2005), observed that collaboration is an essential tool for improving students' performance. This collaboration by extension could be between teachers or the school and its stakeholders. This means the school's collaboration with its stakeholders in its practices among which is school improvement planning can serve as a bedrock for improved performance (Adelman &Taylor, 2005). Also, Wight, Williamson and Henderson (2006) emphasized that forming profound trust with parents and collaborating with them in school activities as well as in the learners' studies can help to improve educational outcomes such as grade and test scores, as well as building self-esteem and decreasing the dropout rate.

Additionally, in a correlational study to examine the relationship between participatory management and teachers' job performance, Ajetunmobi, Maruff, and Muhideen (2020)

found a significant and positive relationship between participatory management and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Ogun State, Nigeria. Ajetunmobi et al. defined participatory management as constituting the involvement of teachers in the administration of schools. This study may not have a direct link to the theme explored in this section (stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement) because it focused on participatory management and teachers' job performance but not students' academic achievement. Nevertheless, the idea of stakeholder collaboration in planning could be inferred from participatory management.

Moreover, academic achievement could be perceived as having a direct link with teachers' job performance (Sanders & Rivers, 1996, Heck, 2009, & Meador, 2018). They argued that, involvement of teachers in the administration of schools ensures their commitment to change and the entire teaching-learning process. This is the point where the link between participatory management which could also imply stakeholder collaboration in planning, is perceived. Similarly, Gcelu (2019) found in a study focused on exploring the effectiveness of stakeholder collaboration in the prevention of learner pregnancy in secondary schools in South Africa that, pregnancies decreased in schools where stakeholder collaboration was effective. Gcelu concluded that stakeholder collaboration was not only important for the prevention of learner pregnancies in the schools, but was also important for every organization's effectiveness. And since a school's effectiveness is usually measured in terms of students' academic achievement, the position of Gcelu could be taken to mean that he supported a position that stakeholder collaboration could impact positively on students' academic achievement.

It must however be pointed out that, like Ajetunmobi et al. (2020), Gcelu' s (2019) study is also not focused on stakeholder collaboration in planning which is a theme being pursued in this current study. For example, the study of Ajetunmobi et al. focused on participatory management but not specifically, stakeholder collaboration in planning. Also, Gcelu's study was silent on the direction of stakeholder collaboration that it took but certainly it did not tackle stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning. The study of Huber and Conway (2015) meant to determine the effect of school improvement planning on students' achievement on the other hand found a positive correlation between students' achievement and school improvement planning. The correlation was established after obtaining and scoring school improvement plans from 108 schools in Connecticut's Alliance districts (lowest-performing districts). Furthermore, a multiple regression analysis conducted failed to predict students' academic performance with school improvement planning. What distinguishes this study from the current study is the obvious silence on collaboration in the preparation of the school improvement plans employed in their study. Moreover, the study of Huber and Conway focused on the quality of school improvement planning in the selected schools but not how collaborative the process was. On the contrary, this current study did not focus on the quality of school improvement planning and how it affects students' academic achievement. Nevertheless, the study is very relevant to this current study.

Furthermore, Guzman (2020) also employing the correlational research design assessed the extent of stakeholders' participation in the school improvement plan preparation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation and its connection to school performance of secondary schools in Philippines. The study gathered data from 75 participants who were composed of 15 heads of school, 15 teachers, 15 students, 15 officers of PTA, and 15 officers

from one district. The study found that there was no significant relationship between the extent of stakeholders' participation in the three stages of the school improvement plan and school performance. The finding suggested that the degree of stakeholders' involvement may not guarantee a very high school performance. A few observations can be made about this study. First the study focused on stakeholder participation but not collaboration. Meanwhile participation does not necessarily imply collaboration since members of a team can participate in a planning process without collaborating. This is one point where Guzman's study differs from the current study which is focused on stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning. Second, Guzman's study measured school performance in terms of dropout rate, repetition rate, completion rate, and graduation rate. Meanwhile, these indicators may only have indirect relationship with academic performance. In this regard, Guzman's study is again different from the current study which is focused on establishing a link between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. Nevertheless, Guzman's study is very relevant to this study as it provided a theoretical support to the central concept (stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning) in this study.

In addition to the above is the position of Bechuke and Nwosu (2017) that collaboration between parents participating in governing structures and teachers in leadership positions is essential for improvement of results in schools. Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018) observed similarly that for schools to achieve their desired results, School Governing Boards (SGBs) and School Management Teams (SMTs) in particular must collaborate in the sense of understanding their roles and observing boundaries while pursuing good performance. In a study to explore how shared leadership collaboration practices between the SGB and SMT

can improve performance, Setlhodi (2020) found that when developmental needs of SGBs are considered significant and stakeholders are mobilized towards collective effort, collaboration and interaction enable school performance. She suggested further that the essence of SGB and SMT collaboration in providing leadership and dealing with issues impacting on performance should be highlighted in SGB development programmes so that they can plan activities that bring about improved performance. These observations emphasize one simple fact, that collaboration among stakeholders is linked to students' performance. Though Setlhodi's study did not come up with its finding through a robust statistical analysis as her study was qualitative, it nevertheless added up to the body of data needed to conceptualize the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement.

Also, Heck and Hallinger (2010) believed that collaborative leadership in schools may contribute to school improvement in terms of student's performance. They held this position based on four assumptions they have derived from a careful review of the literature, that: (1) the practice of leadership involves developing a shared vision for change and then enabling people to work collaboratively to achieve the vision, (2) leadership in schools tends to be distributed among a variety of people in different roles, and therefore its measurement should not be limited to the actions of the principal alone, (3) leadership should facilitate conditions that support effective teaching and learning and build capacity for professional learning and change, and (4) leadership that increases the school's capacity for improving teachers' instructional expertise will affect student outcomes positively. They argued further that, collaborative leadership can increase a school's capacity for improvement. They defined school improvement capacity as a set of conditions that support teaching and learning, enable

the professional learning of the staff, and provide a means for implementing strategic action aimed at continuous improvement.

Quite contrary to the findings of Setlhodi (2020); Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018); Bechuke and Nwosu (2017); Heck and Hallinger (2010); Wight, Williamson and Henderson (2006); Adelman and Taylor (2005) but similar to the findings of Guzman (2020); and Lockheed, Harris, and Jayasundera (2010), is the study of Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) which found that student achievement does not seem to be influenced positively by principals' openness to community involvement. Louis et al. argued that even if Principals are open to community involvement, no significant effect on achievement will necessarily follow, over and above the effect of contextual factors such as poverty and school level. For them, simply changing structures, or being open to involvement, does not necessarily lead to increased student learning. Meanwhile, Principal's openness to community involvement could be understood as stakeholder collaboration which is found to be unrelated to students' academic performance. They believed that, there are more powerful forces in the school system pulling performance either upward or downward other than mere stakeholder collaboration.

2.6.2 Collaboration and performance in underperforming schools

Lockheed, Harris, and Jayasundera (2010) conducted a study on school improvement planning in Jamaica by examining a programme of support provided to poor-performing schools on the basis of needs identified in their school improvement plans. The programme was implemented in 72 government schools in Jamaica between 1998 and 2005. Their study showed that schools with school improvement plans did not outperform comparable schools

that did not have these plans. These findings superficially would tend to suggest that having a plan does not make a difference in the performance of the school. The National Education Inspectorate (2015) reported that 55% of the 953 schools in Jamaica were performing unsatisfactorily. Of that number, the majority apparently had School Improvement Plans, as data provided by the Planning Division of the Ministry of Education in 2016 showed that only 152 schools or approximately 16% of all schools had not submitted school improvement plans to the ministry. These facts would tend to corroborate the findings of Lockheed, Harris, and Jayasundera (2010). This corroboration raises a number of questions including whether the plans have been properly designed; the methodology used to develop these plans; the level of inclusivity and collaboration in the process; and the attitudes of school administrators and staff to the process of implementation.

In addition, Thompson (2018) commenting on the study of Lockheed et al. (2010) observed that while Jamaica's experience appeared to suggest that the practice of school improvement planning has not had system-wide impact, there were of course cases of spectacular turn around in the fortunes of some schools. Thompson, Burke, King and Wong (2017) found that two schools which had been found to be in need of support, when they were first inspected by the National Education Inspectorate (NEI) in 2010 and 2012, and which had subsequently developed School Improvement Plans (SIPs), experienced spectacular improvements in students' performance. Thompson et al. found however that, it was the quality of leadership in these schools, particularly the Principals' vision, tenacity and risk-taking which accounted for the turnaround.

In sum, the discussions above have indicated that there is no consensus on the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. Whilst Ajetunmobi et al. (2020); Setlhodi (2020); Gcelu (2019); Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018); Bechuke and Nwosu (2017); Heck and Hallinger (2010); Wight et al. (2006); Adelman and Taylor (2005) admitted of a relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement, Guzman (2020); Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010); and Lockheed, Harris, and Jayasundera (2010) found the two variables to be unrelated. The studies reviewed exhibited different degrees of connection with the theme under discussion in this section. It must be admitted that no study was found directly on the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. Moreover, a number of these studies touched on stakeholder collaboration either directly or indirectly but did not investigate it within the context of school improvement planning as has been done in this current study. For example, the study of Ajetunmobi et al. focused on the relationship between participatory management and teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. Gcelu's study focused on exploring the effectiveness of stakeholder collaboration in the prevention of learner pregnancy in secondary schools. Heck and Hallinger were focused on collaborative leadership and academic performance. A number of studies also focused on the relationship between planning and academic performance without paying attention to the element of collaboration expected to have been employed by the planners who must be stakeholders (Fernandez, 2011; Caputo & Rastelli, 2014; Huber & Conway, 2015; Meyers & VanGronigen, 2019). These attest to the gap in literature relating to the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and

academic achievement. Thus, the main gap identified is the limited attention paid to stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and its relationship to academic achievement.

2.11 Summary of literature review

Discussions on school improvement have school ineffectiveness as their general context and that is what the debates in the review have attested to. From the review, school ineffectiveness is not a recent phenomenon in Africa, just that the pandemic has only compounded it calling for rigorous strategies for improving schools in Africa and Ghana in particular. The reality of school ineffectiveness in Africa spans from issues such as poor computer literacy, inadequate government funding, unqualified teachers, poor infrastructure, inadequate payment, insecurity in schools etc. Generally, poor public perceptions, lack of funding, students' indiscipline, lack of parental support, lack of student motivation, too much testing, lack of respect, and bad teachers were among the causes of school ineffectiveness across the globe. It was emphasized that, to make schools more effective, school improvement planning and implementation must both be collaborative and systematic. This implies careful design or adoption of quality school improvement programmes.

It was clear in the review that school improvement planning and implementation require strict adherence to principles in order to achieve success. In adhering to principles, stakeholders must not lose sight of collaboration in all their efforts. Moreover, direct emphasis has not been placed on collaboration for school improvement because there appears to be an assumption that every stakeholder engagement naturally comes with collaboration and this is the major constraint to stakeholder collaboration as an essential tool for improving

schools. A number of constraints to stakeholder collaboration in schools have been highlighted, but notable among them were inadequate empowerment or inadequate knowledge base of stakeholders, delay in decision making, lack of consensus, and politicization of education policies in schools (Setlhodi, 2020; Yaro, Salleh, & Arshad, 2018; Bechuke & Nwosu, 2017). From the above, it is not surprising to have noted the limited attention paid to stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and its relationship to academic achievement in public basic schools as the main gap in literature. There appeared to be a lack of consensus on the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. In fact, whilst a kind of an indirect relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement could be observed (Ajetunmobi et al., 2020; Setlhodi, 2020; Gcelu, 2019; Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018; Bechuke & Nwosu, 2017; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Wight et al., 2006; Adelman &Taylor, 2005), others found the two variables to be completely unrelated (Guzman, 2020; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom & Anderson, 2010; Lockheed, Harris, & Jayasundera, 2010). It can finally be posited from the above that, localizing school improvement planning and implementation efforts can enhance collaboration since a lot of complexities might have been removed thereby simplifying the process and making success a possibility in schools.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter centres on the systematic approach employed in carrying out the study. It outlines the research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, instrumentation, validation of instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures. It also highlights the ethical issues that needed to be addressed before and in the course of the study.

3.1 Philosophical and theoretical considerations

The term philosophy in research refers to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge (Chetty, 2016a). Research philosophy is a particular way of developing knowledge that defines research paradigm. This understanding of knowledge depends on certain assumptions based on our perspective of the world, i.e. the practical considerations while selecting a topic of research (Holden & Lynch, 2004; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Methodological choices are underpinned by philosophical and theoretical positions regarding knowledge and how it can be created. These positions influence decisions regarding research approach or approaches, choices of methods and frames for analysis, among others, and guide research design at all stages. Theoretical issues in research bother on ontology and epistemology whilst philosophical issues bother on research paradigms (Kusi, 2012).

Ontology is based on the nature of reality. It is classified on the basis of objectivism and subjectivism. The first aspect of ontology, objectivism portrays the position that social

objects persist in reality external to social actors. Secondly, subjectivism is concerned with the social phenomena which are emerged from the perceptions and consequences of those social actors concerned with their existence (Thakurta, 2015). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) considered epistemology as the assumptions about the very bases of knowledge, its nature and form, how it can be acquired and how it can be communicated to other human beings. Dudovskiy (2019) views epistemology in research as the researcher's view regarding what constitutes acceptable knowledge. Al-Saadi (2014) identified two main epistemological positions: positivist epistemological position and interpretivist epistemological position. The positivist epistemological position assumes that the world is independent of and unaffected by the researcher, facts and values are distinct, knowledge is produced through the senses based on careful observation. It also assumes that objective and value-free inquiry is possible, only phenomena (and hence knowledge) confirmed by the senses can be genuinely regarded as knowledge. Knowledge is seen as hard, tangible and objective and that knowledge is arrived at through gathering of facts.

The interpretivist epistemological position, on the other hand, assumes that the researcher and the social world impact on each other, facts and values are not distinct, objective and value-free inquiry is not possible since findings are inevitably influenced by the researchers' perspectives and values. Also, knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding the social world of the people being studied, knowledge is seen as personal, subjective and unique. The researcher understands the social world using both his/her experiences as well as the participants' understanding. The social world is approached through the understanding of human behaviour. In a clear opposition to the positivist and objectivist tradition, interpretivism and constructionism approaches argue that knowledge is produced by

exploring and understanding (not discovering) the social world of the people being studied, focusing on their meaning and interpretations, i.e., meanings are socially constructed by the social actors in a particular context (Al-Saadi, 2014).

Ontologically, the researcher subscribes to both the objectivist and subjectivist views of reality as the study adopted the mixed methods design which allows the use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of a phenomenon. Epistemologically, the researcher also subscribes to both the positivist and interpretivist views of knowledge and its acquisition. The researcher's ontological and epistemological positions are founded on the view of Chetty (2016b) that choosing one research approach over another severely limits the scope of the study. In a similar way Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) stated that one approach alone cannot answer all the questions that might emerge in the course of researching a topic. They added that in order to facilitate a more comprehensive study, researchers should have access to all available research tools. The researcher believes in both objective and subjective reality and knowledge. It is the researcher's position that objective reality or knowledge alone is incapable of giving man a comprehensive understanding of the universe and man's position in it. In the same way, subjective reality or knowledge alone is incapable of giving man a comprehensive understanding of the universe and man's position in it. This means the path to knowledge acquisition should be flexible enough to allow researchers to use the most applicable means to arrive at truths about the world.

The philosophical position in this research as highlighted above perfectly suits the pragmatist view of research which lends itself to the mixed methods approach. Pragmatists believe that reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted, and therefore the best method to use

is the one that solves the problem (Salma, 2015). Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) contended that pragmatism is intuitively appealing, largely because it avoids the researcher engaging in what they see as rather pointless debates about such concepts as truth and reality. In their view, one should study what interests him or her and is of value to him or her and that researchers should study by employing different ways in which one deems appropriate, and use the results in ways that can bring about positive consequences within his or her value system (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Pragmatism emphasizes on utilizing both positivist and interpretivist philosophy and views as continuum rather than contradictions. Precisely, pragmatists avoid going into argument on concepts of truth and reality. Rather they focus on studying the issues of interest and value and use different ways to bring out positive consequences (Chetty, 2016a). Chetty stated further that the pragmatic philosophy lends itself to mixed methods approach since its flexibility makes it possible for both quantitative and qualitative approaches to be combined in a single study.

3.2 Research Approach

A research approach is a plan and procedure that consists of the steps of broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It is usually based on the nature of the research problem being addressed (Chetty, 2016b). The components of research approach have been viewed differently by different authors despite the fact that all of them end up arriving at the same conclusions on what essentially describes research approach. For instance, while Grover (2015) perceived three basic components of research approach being philosophical world view, research design and methods of research, Chetty (2016b) perceived two components of research approach being the approach of data collection and

the approach of data analysis or reasoning. The approach of data collection is further composed of two elements – quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection with the approach of data analysis also further composed of two elements being deductive and inductive analytical approaches. This means though Chetty perceived two broad components of research approach, her components of research approach were four being quantitative, qualitative, deductive and inductive.

Grover's (2015) first component – philosophical world view, originates from epistemological considerations, which determines a paradigm as per the philosophical orientation of a research approach. He defines his second component- research design, as the overall strategy that one chooses to attack the problem which requires integration of different components of the study in a coherent and logical way in order to solve the problem in efficient way. The third component- research methods, are ways to get information from the sample. According to Grover, a particular research approach necessitates matching research design and methods. He held, for example, that when a researcher chooses a quantitative research approach, he needs to choose quantitative research design.

It is clear from the above that research approach has corresponding research design which calls for possible methods which in turn provide a range of techniques to support the method. The understanding above provides the basis to consider the types of research approaches in existence. Grover identified three basic research approaches namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Quantitative approach includes positivism and post positivism world view. Qualitative approach includes constructivism and transformative world view and mixed method approach corresponds to pragmatism (Grover, 2015). According to Chetty,

Qualitative data requires an inductive approach to analysis. On the other hand, quantitative data uses the deductive approach. In a mixed method, both inductive and deductive approaches of analysis are utilized (Chetty, 2016b).

The mixed method approach was adopted in this study. Creswell (2013) held the view that mixed methods is a research approach popular in the social, behavioural, and health sciences, in which researchers collect, analyze, and integrate both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a sustained long -term programme of inquiry to address their research questions. One major justification offered for mixed method approach is that it offers the opportunity for the weaknesses of one methodology to be complemented by the strengths of the other in a single study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). For example, qualitative research has been criticized for its subjectivity and lack of generalization across a larger population. This difficulty with qualitative research can be catered for by quantitative methodology in a single study as quantitative methodology allows generalization to a wider population (Toomela, 2008).

Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) noted that the philosophy most commonly associated with mixed methods research is pragmatism, which offers an alternative worldview to those of positivism and constructivism and focuses on the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research. Hogue (2011) stated that a pragmatist believes in "that which works" therefore if a pragmatic researcher believes combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches will help answer his research questions more appropriately, then he is on the right path. In fact, the nature of the research questions for this study required a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches since it came up as the most workable design in this circumstance. In fact, this is the best way if a better understanding of

school improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement is to be gained through the study.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is a methodical, well-organized procedure utilized by a researcher, or a scientist to carry out a scientific study (Saeed, 2020). Bhat (2023) considered research design as the framework of research methods and techniques chosen by a researcher. For him, the design of a research topic explains the type of research (experimental, survey, correlational, semi-experimental) and also its sub-type (experimental design, research problem, descriptive case-study). In line with the research approach chosen, the embedded mixed method design was adopted in the study.

The embedded design is a mixed method design in which one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This design includes one phase of data collection in which priority is given to one approach that guides the project, while the other approach is embedded or nested into the project and provides a supporting role (Creswell, 2003). The premises of this design are that, a single data set is not sufficient, that different questions need to be answered, and that each type of question requires different types of data. Researchers use this design when they need to include qualitative or quantitative data to answer a research question within a largely quantitative or qualitative study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The embedded design includes the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, but one of the data types plays a supplemental role within the overall design. An embedded design can use either a one-phase or a two-phase approach for the embedded data. The embedded design data are

used to answer different research questions within the study. For example, a researcher could embed qualitative data within a quantitative methodology, as might be done in an experimental design, or quantitative data could be embedded within a qualitative methodology, as could be done in a phenomenology design (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). This design is employed when researchers need to include qualitative or quantitative data to answer a research question within a largely quantitative or qualitative study. This is done to gain broader perspectives from using the different methods as opposed to using the predominant method alone. For example, a primarily qualitative design could embed some quantitative data to enrich the description of the sample participants while qualitative data could be used to describe an aspect of a quantitative study that cannot be quantified (Lieberman, 2005).

The intent of the embedded design is not to converge two different data sets collected to answer the same question. Researchers using an embedded design can keep the two sets of results separate in their reports or even report them in separate papers (Almalki, 2016). The researcher embedded quantitative data into qualitative data in which qualitative data served as primary data with quantitative data playing a supplemental role. Creswell and Clark (2007) approve of this option saying that embedded design could also have quantitative data embedded within a qualitative framework. They added that supplementary data set is collected to enhance the overall study, and it can be collected before, during, or after the collection and analysis of the emphasized data. Kanga, Njeru, Wachera, and Rutere (2015) held that quantitative data can be embedded within a qualitative study for purposes of testing an emerging theory and for generalizing of qualitative findings.

The researcher's decision to embed quantitative data into a primarily qualitative study means that, fundamentally, this study adopted the embedded case study design which is a variant of the qualitative dominant embedded design (Kanga, et al., 2015). An embedded case study design provides a means of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods into a single research study (Scholz &Tietje, 2002; Yin, 2003). In embedded case study, qualitative data about an individual or a phenomenon is collected through in-depth interviews or document review and analysis while quantitative data is obtained from segments of the population. The two data sets are then analyzed and interpreted to give an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Different data sets captured using embedded qualitative strategies enhance transferability and generalizability of findings which otherwise would not be possible in qualitative designs alone. One data set complements the other either at the design level or identification of participants, during the process to explore on an issue or at the end to justify a new theory (Kanga et al., 2015). They added that literature subscribes to the fact that qualitative dominant mixed methods studies best capture the complexity of major educational and social issues.

One notable benefit of the embedded design is that it may be logistically more manageable for graduate students because one method requires less data than the other method. Thus, it requires less resources and produces less data which makes it an easier prospect for researchers to tackle (Almalki, 2016). For example, in this current study, the volume of quantitative data was less as compared to the qualitative data and that made the management of the entire data quite easier. The decision to embed quantitative data into a predominantly qualitative study was premised on the fact that, out of the six research questions, only one required a quantitative approach of investigation. So, the sequential designs were not found

to be appropriate in this context. Since the intention was not to strictly converge the two data sets but to present them separately, the convergent parallel design was also not considered for this study. The embedded design alone, provided the opportunity for presenting both quantitative and qualitative data separately in a single study like this without strict requirement to converge them though attempt was made to establish complementarity between the two data sets during the discussions and the concluding part of the study.

Nevertheless, the embedded design is not without a challenge for researchers who opt for it. Almalki (2016) noted that it can often be difficult to integrate the results when the two methods are used to answer different research questions, and that this approach is very difficult within qualitative research and that few examples exist from which researchers can model their study. With regard to the difficulty in integration of data, the researcher ensured that each research question required a single approach (qualitative or quantitative) of data collection and analysis to enable the researcher present findings specific to issues raised in each research question. In terms of there not being much of examples for this study to be modelled after, that also constitutes a premise for this study to contribute immensely to knowledge. Kanga, et al. (2015) affirmed this position of the researcher as they said that reported works in this area is limited showing a gap in literature on the need to embed quantitative data within predominantly qualitative studies.

3.4 Site and subject characteristics

This study was conducted in two of the three Gomoa districts – Gomoa West District and Gomoa Central District. The two districts were chosen on the basis of typicality and homogeneity of the problem investigated. Thus, the phenomenon of school ineffectiveness

expressing itself in poor academic achievement resulting from school improvement planning and implementation practices across Ghana, is fairly represented in these two districts as a case for investigation. This justification for the choice of the sites emanated from the understanding of Babaheidari, Pareto, Spante, and Svensson (no date) that, a typical case illustrates a case that is typical, normal or average in terms of exhibiting the known features of the problem. Similarly, Seawright and Gerring (2008) defined a typical case as a case which has its main focus on exemplifying a stable, cross-case relationship. According to them, a typical case may be considered a representative case. Furthermore, Babaheidari et al. (no date) explained a homogeneous case as a case which is selected on the basis that variation between cases is minimized thereby making analysis simplified and the study focused. The two districts were chosen as a singular unit for the study due to the typicality and homogeneity of the phenomenon investigated in the districts. This means, the two districts were not chosen for purposes of comparison because the phenomenon is fairly represented in the two districts.

Furthermore, information provided on the Gomoa Central District in terms of their characteristics was derived from the 2020 composite budget of the district. That of Gomoa West was derived from the composite budget for 2018-2021.

Gomoa Central District

Gomoa Central District is one of the twenty two (22) districts in the Central Region of Ghana. The district was carved out as a separate district from the then Gomoa East District in 2018 by the Legislative Instrument 2339 but became operational on 15th March 2018. It occupies an area of 260.69 square kilometers. The projected population for 2020 is 93,404. With this,

42,438 are males representing 45.4 percent with 50,966 being females representing 54.6 percent in the district. Agriculture is the key economic activity in the district. It employs over 70% of the total labour force in the district. Generally, farming in the district employs about 12,075 of which 60 percent are males with 40 percent being females with scale of production mostly on subsistence. Total agricultural land is estimated at 16925 square meters (Gomoa Central Composite Budget, 2020).

The district can boast of a private university namely, Perez University in Pomadze. It also has one community senior high school and one Islamic vocational school both in Gomoa Gyaman. Basic school infrastructure in the district is predominantly public since 1995. The district has about 54 Junior High Schools with 38 of them being public schools and 16 being private schools. Junior high school enrolment in 2018/2019 academic year was 3907. As at September 2019, there was a Junior High School teacher population of 257 with 10 of them being untrained. Data from statistics office at the district in 2021 indicated that the number of untrained teachers in public JHSs has risen to 20 in the district. There was a total of 59 untrained teachers in basic schools in the district as at 2019. The district has 5 circuits with 342 public JHS teachers of which 20 of them were untrained (Gomoa Central Composite Budget, 2020).

Furthermore, the district attained some educational achievements in 2020. In 2020, a total of GHS 67,961.59 was used to support brilliant but needy students in the district. Two classroom blocks were completed to ease congestion in two communities. The assembly supported the training of teachers in the district on the new curriculum for basic schools with an amount of GHS 11,250.00. These could be said to be achievements that bother on some aspects of school improvement. They constitute efforts made by the district to improve its

schools but they are not enough. It is clear that the district needs more resources to help improve education delivery in the district. The presence of untrained teachers in some Junior High Schools in the district is an evidence of school improvement challenge in the district. A number of Junior High Schools in the district need infrastructure boost. However, resource constraint did not permit the district to commit much resources into infrastructure development in their schools (Gomoa Central Composite Budget, 2020). The 2020 composite budget was silent on school supervision. Meanwhile resources need to be committed into school supervision to improve students' performance in the district. The district needs massive school improvement efforts as it faces a number of challenges in its basic schools. These coupled with students' performance challenges informed the choice of the Gomoa Central District as a site for the study.

Gomoa West District

Gomoa West district was carved out of the then Gomoa district through L.I. 1896. It is bounded on the North East and East by Gomoa East district and Efutu Municipal assembly respectively, on the west and north-west by Ekumfi and Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam districts and at the south shares boundary with the Atlantic Ocean. It covers a land area of 514.2 Square Kilometres. The 2010 population census projected the district's population at 169,062 in 2017 with an inter-censal population growth of 3.2%. The main occupations of the people are farming and fishing since the area lies in a forest and coastal belt where the land is fertile for the cultivation of food and cash crops including vegetables. Low crop yield is one main challenge facing farmers. Crop and livestock farming prevails in the district which mainly involves the rearing of cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry on small scale level. Fishing has been the main occupation for residents at the coastal belt of the district. Marine fishing is

predominantly practiced by the people. The main fishing communities are Apam, Mumford, Dago, Mankoadze and Abrekum (Gomoa West Composite Budget, 2018-2021).

The District recognizes the right of every child to education, as enshrined in the 1992 constitution. Hence, such policies and programmes as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), the Capitation Grant, School Feeding Programme and the Free School Uniforms to needy school children have been introduced and running over the years in the district. The extent of quality of education in the district could be measured by indicators on infrastructure, accessibility and quality. As part of its educational objectives, the district sought in 2018 to ensure adequate supply of teaching and learning materials, improve teaching and learning environments to increase pupil learning achievement and better schooling outcomes, improve facilities and curriculum for ICT education at all levels. The priority given to the educational sector is intended to address the numerous challenges facing education in the district. The challenges include declining enrolment, inadequate teaching and learning materials, inadequate professional teaching staff and poor infrastructure, among others. Other challenges facing the district are poor registration and documentation of school lands leading to encroachment on school lands, inadequate and late release of funds leading to wrong timing of operations and projects implementation, poor and inaccessible road networks hindering monitoring and supervision of schools. As a response to some of the challenges, the district planned to embark on enrolment drive in 80 communities, construct 3-unit Classroom block in 2018 at a community; support BECE mock ; renovate three 6 unit classroom blocks in three communities; support brilliant but needy students; construct one ICT/Library block in one community; provide support for District Education Oversight

Committee (DEOC); Supply 25 computers to schools; support for Sports and cultural development; supply of 120 mono and 40 Dual desk furniture to one community.

The district has 9 circuits with 99 Junior High Schools, 111 kindergarten and 110 primary schools. Out of the 99 JHSs in the district, 72 of them are public with 27 being private. There are 518 teachers teaching in the 72 JHSs in the district according to 2021 data from the district education directorate. The nine circuits are Apam, Adaa- Ngyiresi, Ankamu, Mumford, Dawurampong, Eshiem, Mprumem, Odina – Oguaa and Tarkwa (Gomoa West Composite Budget, 2018-2021).

The educational challenges facing the district bother on school improvement. Despite the fact that education has been made a priority in the district, the composite budget for 2018-2021 has highlighted numerous challenges facing education delivery in the district. These challenges in addition to poor performance in a number of the schools in the district informed the selection of Gomoa West district as one of the sites for this study.

3.5 Population

A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that is the main focus of a scientific query. A research population is a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics. It is for the benefit of the population that researches are done (Hassan, 2020). Korb (2012) defined population as the group of people that the researcher wants to draw conclusions about once the research is completed. To Fraenkel and Wallen (2003), population refers to the group of interest to the researcher or the group to whom the researcher would like to generalize the results of the study. The population is the entire set of relevant units or cases or individuals that fit a certain

specification. It could be households, nurses, traders, farmers, parents, students etc. (Puopiel, 2014).

Education stakeholders in the Gomoa West and Central districts were the target population of this study. In the context of this study, education stakeholders refer to Education Directorates, Parents Associations (PA), School Management Committees (SMC), and Schools. Key members within these units of the population: School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) and Planning officers from the Education Directorates; PA Chairpersons from Parent Associations; SMC Chairpersons from School Management Committees; Headteachers and teachers from schools, were the individuals from whom data was gathered. They were chosen as the population of the study because their roles in education delivery in every school in the Gomoa West and Central districts is crucial and hence the need to study their participation in school improvement in public Junior High Schools. The table below provides a better description of the sizes of the members of the population of the study:

Table 3.1: Population distribution for the selected districts

Population	Gomoa Central	Gomoa West	Total
Teachers	342	518	860
SISOs	5	9	14
SMC Chairpersons	38	72	110
PA Chairpersons	38	72	110
Planning Officers	1	1	2
Total	**424**	**672**	**1096**

Source: Gomoa Central and West Education Directorates statistics (2022)

Table 3.1 indicates that the total population for the study is 1098. The number of SISOs in each district is equivalent to the number of circuits in each of the two districts. Thus, there were 5 and 9 circuits in Gomoa Central and Gomoa West districts respectively. Also, the

figure for SMC/PA chairpersons is equivalent to the number of public JHSs in each district. Thus, there are 38 and 72 JHSs in Gomoa Central and Gomoa West respectively.

3.6 Sample size and sampling procedures

Hassan (2020) held that due to the large sizes of populations, researchers often cannot test every individual in the population because it is too expensive and time-consuming. This is the reason why researchers rely on samples from the population. Hassan simply defined a sample as a subset of the population. Kenton (2022) defined a sample as a smaller, manageable version of a larger group. It is a subset containing the characteristics of a larger population. Sampling, according to Trochim (2020) is the process of selecting units (e.g., people, organizations) from a population of interest so that by studying the sample, results can be fairly generalized back to the population from which they were chosen. Seidu (2012) also defined sampling as the process by which a sample is selected from the population.

Basically, purposive sampling, quota sampling, census sampling, and simple random sampling techniques were employed in sampling respondents for the study. Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the two districts and respondents for the qualitative data. Quota sampling was employed in determining the number of schools to be included in the study from each of the districts. Census sampling was employed in sampling 14 circuits, 30 headteachers, 14 SISOs, 30 SMC Chairpersons and 30 PA Chairpersons. Simple random sampling was employed in sampling schools and teachers.

Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that qualitative researchers use to recruit participants who can provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under

investigation. It is highly subjective and determined by the qualitative researcher generating the qualifying criteria each participant must meet to be considered for the study (Statisticssolutions, 2020). While purposive sampling is often used when one's goal is to include participants who represent a broad range of perspectives, purposive sampling may also be used when a researcher wishes to include only people who meet very narrow or specific criteria (Nagae & Dancy, 2010). In addition, Rukmana (2014) defined quota sampling as a method of non-probability sampling where the samples are selected based on the probability proportionate to the distribution of a variable in the population. He added that quota sampling method is used so that the proportion of samples for each category will have the same proportion assumed to exist in the population. Shah (2021) defined census sampling as a study of every unit, everyone or everything, in a population. It is known as a complete enumeration, which means a complete count. Hayes (2023) defined simple random sample as a subset of a statistical population in which each member of the subset has an equal probability of being chosen. For him, a simple random sample is meant to be an unbiased representation of a group.

In all 2 districts, 30 schools were involved in the study. The two districts were purposively sampled. The thirty (30) schools were selected through quota and simple random sampling techniques. The choice of 30 schools is in line with the position of Sarantakos (1997) that, with a population of less than 1000, 10 percent of that population is representative. Meanwhile, the proportion of 30 in 110 school population in the two districts in terms of percentage is 27.2 which is even above the threshold of 10 percent suggested by Sarantakos. Furthermore, because the two districts did not have equal number of schools – District 1 (72 schools); District 2 (38 schools) giving the total of 110 schools for the two districts, quota

sampling had to be employed in order to ensure that the number of schools sampled in each district represented the same proportion of the schools in the total population of schools in the two districts.

In district 1, 20 JHSs were sampled from the 72 JHSs because the proportion of 72 JHSs in the total of 110 JHSs in the two districts is approximately 20 schools which is equivalent to 65.5 percent of the population of JHSs in the two districts. In district 2, 10 JHSs were sampled from 38 JHSs in the district because the proportion of 38 JHSs in the total of 110 JHSs in the two districts is approximately 10 schools which is equivalent to 34.5 percent of the population of JHSs in the two districts. In selecting individual schools for the study, the researcher had to make a further decision on how many schools to sample from each of the fourteen circuits. Table 3.2 illustrates the sampling of schools from the various circuits in the two districts.

Table 3.2: Sampling of schools by circuits

Circuit	District 1 Sch. Sampled	District 2 Sch. Sampled
Circuit 1	2	2
Circuit 2	2	2
Circuit 3	2	2
Circuit 4	2	2
Circuit 5	2	2
Circuit 6	2	
Circuit 7	2	
Circuit 8	3	
Circuit 9	3	

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

By mathematical calculations and as indicated in Table 3.2, 2 schools were sampled from 12 of the circuits whereas 3 schools were also sampled from each of the 2 remaining circuits. Thus, in district 1, with a total of 9 circuits, 2 schools were sampled from each of the first 7

circuits with 3 schools sampled each from the eighth and ninth circuits. In district 2, 2 schools were sampled from each of the five circuits.

When the decision on how many schools to be sampled from a circuit had been made as illustrated in Table 3.2, simple random sampling technique was employed using the lottery method to select the exact schools from the circuits. In doing this, numbers were assigned to each of the schools in every circuit. The numbers were written on pieces of paper and mixed in a bowl. One of the papers was randomly picked and the number on it written down. The paper was then placed back in the bowl and mixed again. The process continued until the required number of schools was selected for the specific circuit. Through this process, 30 schools were randomly sampled for the study out of the 110 schools in the two districts.

Furthermore, census sampling was employed in using the 14 SISOs since all the 14 circuits in the two selected districts were accessed in the study. In addition, since every JHS has only one SMC chairperson and one PA chairperson, all the 30 SMC chairpersons and 30 PA chairpersons were selected by census for the study giving a total of 60. Also, census sampling was employed in sampling all the 30 headteachers in schools within the selected circuits since every school had only one headteacher whose input is very crucial in this study. Teachers were sampled by simple random sampling technique. The list of teachers in each school was obtained from the district offices. The researcher went to each school with the list and in each school assigned numbers to each teacher's name on the list. Through the lottery method, 6 teachers were randomly selected in addition to the headteacher to give a total of 7 teachers in each school. The sampling distribution of respondents is illustrated in Table 3.3 below:

Table 3.3: Respondents' sampling distribution

Population	Number	District 1 Sample	District 2 Sample	Total
Teachers	860	140	70	210
SISOs	14	9	5	14
SMC	110	20	10	30
PA	110	20	10	30
Planning Officers	2	1	1	2
Total	**1,096**	**190**	**96**	**286**

Fieldwork (2023)

According to Table 3.3, 140 teachers, 9 SISOs, 20 SMC chairpersons, 20 PA chairpersons, and 1 planning officer were sampled giving a total sample size of 190 for district 1. Also, 70 teachers, 5 SISOs, 10 SMC chairpersons, 10 PA chairpersons, and 1 planning officer were sampled giving a total sample size of 96 for district 2. Thus, a sample size of 286 was employed in the entire study. Out of the 286 total sample, 284 (189 from district 1 and 95 from district 2) were sampled for quantitative data. The choice of 286 as the sample size for this study was based on the sampling table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) which determined 285 as the required sample size for a population of 1100. Meanwhile the total population for this study as indicated in Table 3.3 is 1096 which is below Krejcie and Morgan's 1100. This means the selection of 286 as the total sample size and 284 as sample size for quantitative data were all representative judging from Krejcie and Morgan's table. The 2 planning officers were not included in the quantitative sample because the scale was developed to measure collaboration among the schools' local stakeholders in terms of school improvement planning. Meanwhile, the planning officers were not considered as local or immediate stakeholders of the schools. This explains why the sample size for the quantitative data is 284 though the total sample size for the study is 286. Furthermore, 28 respondents were

sampled purposively for qualitative data. The 28 were all drawn from the 286 total sample for the study. Thus, the 2 planning offers who were not included in the quantitative sample were however included in the qualitative sample. Thus, all 28 respondents for qualitative data were involved in the quantitative data collection except the 2 planning officers. In all 5 headteachers, 10 teachers, 5 SISOs, 3 SMC chairpersons, 3 PA chairpersons and 2 planning officers were sampled for interviews. According to InterQ Research (2020) the ideal sample size in qualitative studies usually falls within 10 to 30. In line with this, the selection of 28 participants who were interviewed in this study is acceptable.

From the discussions above, it can be deduced that probability sampling techniques were employed in selecting sample for quantitative data while non probability sampling was employed in sampling respondents for the qualitative data. This is in line with the view of Johnson (2014) that, in mixed method research, the researcher selects quantitative sample using quantitative sampling technique and qualitative sample using qualitative sampling technique.

3.7 Instrumentation

A research instrument is a tool used to obtain, measure, and analyze data from subjects around a research topic (Editage Insights, 2020). Questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides were employed as the main instruments in the study. The quantitative data were gathered through closed-ended questionnaires and the qualitative data through semi-structured interview guides. In gathering qualitative data to answer the research questions, separate instruments were developed for specific categories of respondents. The items for each category of respondents were focused on issues that each category of respondents were

expected to provide data on in line with the demands of each research question. The two instruments are discussed below:

a. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists of a set of questions or other types of prompts that aims to collect information from a respondent (Bhat, 2020). Twenty item questionnaire was prepared for 210 teachers, 14 SISOs, 30 PA Chairpersons, and 30 SMC Chairpersons. Thus, questionnaires were given to 284 participants. It was only the 2 Planning Officers who were not given questionnaire. The respondents for quantitative data were chosen on the basis of their direct roles in the management of schools at the local level. Since the questionnaire was a scale measuring stakeholder collaboration in planning at the school level, planning officers were not considered as active stakeholders of the schools in terms of school level planning, and hence the decision to exclude them in the quantitative data. The questionnaires focused on objective 6 since that alone required quantitative data. The items for the questionnaires were based on the basic tenets of the two models of collaborative planning theory – theory of Collective Impact and the Collegial Model of stakeholder involvement as well as the 'correlates of effective schools' of Lezotte (2010). A four-point Likert scale questionnaire was designed for all stakeholders. Sarantakos (1997) stated that Likert scale type of questionnaires which are usually applicable to interval scale can also produce continuous data. This explains why the Likert scale type of questionnaires was adopted as the suitable instrument to produce the needed data in this study. Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement to statements meant to determine their level of collaboration with other stakeholders in school improvement

planning. Scores from these questionnaires were used to determine the level of collaboration among stakeholders in schools.

7. **Semi-structured interview guides**

A semi-structured interview guide is a list of questions and topics that need to be covered during the conversation, usually not in a particular order (Cohen, & Crabtree, 2006). It is a meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions. The interviewer may prepare a list of questions but does not necessarily ask them all, or touch on them in any particular order, using them instead to guide the conversation. The semi-structured interview format encourages two-way communication. Both the interviewer and the candidate can ask questions, which allows for a comprehensive discussion of pertinent topics. It also provides a clear set of instructions for interviewers and can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data (Doyle, 2022). Zohrabi (2013) held that the most preferred type of interview in mixed method is the semi-structured interview guide approach. This type of interview is flexible and allows the interviewee to provide more information than the other ones. This form of interview is neither too rigid nor too open. It is a moderate form in which a great amount of data can be elicited from the interviewee. Semi-structured interviews were adopted because in semi-structured interview, the researcher usually confines the discussion to the relevant topic and rarely permits digression (Seidu, 2012). Qualitative data from 5 Headteachers, 10 Teachers, 5 SISOs, 2 Planning Officers, 3 PA Chairpersons, and 3 SMC Chairpersons were gathered through semi-structured interviews. In all, 28 individual interviews were conducted in the study. The interviews focused on issues in objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

3.8 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

Validation of instruments refers to the researcher's efforts to ensure that the data collection instruments are reliable and valid (Seidu, 2012). He defined reliability as the extent to which a research instrument produces consistent results when administered under similar conditions. Validity measures the extent to which the research procedures serve the uses for which they were intended (Seidu, 2012). McMillan and Schumacher (2006) conceptualized reliability and validity as trustworthiness, rigor and quality in qualitative paradigm. They said reliability and validity can be achieved by eliminating bias and increasing the researcher's truthfulness to the data he gathers. They suggested among others that qualitative researchers can ensure validity and reliability through participant review by asking participants to review researcher's synthesis of interviews for accuracy. They also added that the use of tape recorders and videotapes in qualitative data collection ensures accurate presentation of data and for that matter validity and reliability. To ensure trustworthiness of the qualitative data, a number of steps were taken by the researcher to ensure this: (1) experts in educational leadership edited the questions to avoid ambiguity (2) the interview guides were pilot-tested. In the course of data collection, the researcher pursued the goal of trustworthiness by controlling researcher bias. The researcher had post-interview discussions (Respondents' Validation) with some of the participants to ensure that the transcribed data generally reflected the views of the respondents. In doing this, the researcher sampled portions of the transcribed data and recounted them to a selected number of the interviewees for their confirmation of the authenticity of the transcript.

Face and content validity of the questionnaires were established. An instrument has face validity if it seeks to measure what it is expected to measure. For example, a questionnaire aimed at studying school improvement has face validity if its questions refer to school improvement (Sarantakos, 1997). To ensure face validity, colleague students of educational leadership were contacted to edit the items to ascertain the appropriateness of the items to the chosen field (School Improvement). The next step was to establish the content validity of the instruments. A measure is supposed to have content validity if it covers all possible aspects of the research topic (Sarantakos, 1997). Content validity was established after the supervisors had gone through the items.

Internal consistency estimate approach was used to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire. In estimating the coefficient alpha, the SPSS version 25 was employed to produce the Cronbach's alpha, which was expected to be above 0.70 as a rule of thumb to indicate that the questionnaire was internally consistent and for that matter reliable. Furthermore, normality of the data was established through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of normality conducted for the two data sets (stakeholder collaboration and academic achievement) to determine the normality of the sample distribution in the population. The results of the internal consistency estimate and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test are presented in Table 3.4 and Table 3.5 respectively.

Table 3.4: Reliability and scale statistics

Alpha	Mean	Variance	SD	N of items
0.89	61.30	52.23	7.23	20

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Table 3.4 presents the results of the reliability test conducted during the pre-test, to determine the internal consistency of the 20 item scale developed to measure stakeholder collaboration in planning. The test produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 with 61.30 mean, 52.23 variance and 7.23 standard deviation from the scores of the 30 participants who answered the 20 items. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 indicated that the inter-item correlations were good thereby making the 20 item questionnaire, a reliable scale for measuring stakeholder collaboration in planning (20 items; $\alpha = .89$). This is in line with Fraenkel and Wallen (1996), and Ghazali (2008) who determined the ranges of 0.70 to 0.99, and 0.60 upwards respectively as acceptable reliability values or alpha in pre-test. In view of this, there was no need to revise any of the 20 items since 0.89 obtained fell with the ranges of Fraenkel and Wallen, and Ghazali.

Table 3.5: Normality test for collaboration and academic achievement data

Variable	Kolmogorov-S		
	Statistic(W)	df	Sig.
Stakeholder Collaboration	0.121	284	0.093
Academic Achievement	0.146	284	0.077

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test conducted showed a normal distribution for the two data sets. Stakeholder Collaboration: W(284)=0.121, P=0.093,P>0.05; Academic Achievement: W(284)=0.146, P=0.077, P>0.05. This means the two data sets were well distributed within

the population meaning that the results from the data can be generalized to the entire population within the two districts.

3.9 Pre-testing of instruments

Pre-testing simply means, testing the validity, reliability, practicability and sensitivity of the tool before it is used for actual data collection (MBA Knowledge Base, 2021). It is the only way to be assured that, items on a questionnaire or interview guide are unambiguous and for that matter they can be administered to the target sample. In this sense, the pre-test questionnaire and interview guides were administered to a selected small group of respondents.

Pre-testing of instruments took place from 23rd June to 29th June, 2022. Four (4) schools in Awutu Senya West and Gomoa East were purposively selected for the pre-test. A sample of 30 was purposively and randomly selected for the pre-test. Twenty (20) teachers, five from each of the 4 schools were randomly selected for the pre-test. In each school, the names in the attendance register for the day were recorded on pieces of paper and through a lottery method, five of them were randomly selected. Two schools were selected from each of the two districts. Two (2) School Improvement Support Officers (SISOs) were sampled. One Planning Officer at one of the education directorates was sampled for interview. The SMC chairpersons and Parents' Association (PA) chairpersons for the four schools were purposively selected. Thus, 20 teachers, 2 SISOs, 4 SMC chairpersons and 4 PA chairpersons were sampled for the pre-test of the questionnaire. Thus, all but the planning officer were given questionnaire. This means 30 questionnaires were administered to participants. In all, a sample of 31 was selected for the pretest. Participants did not express difficulty in

understanding the items on the questionnaire except item (d) in the biographical data which read “Time spent at post”. It sounded ambiguous to some participants as they had intended to write hours they do in school for a day. In view of this, item (d) was revised to read “ Number of years spent at post”. Out of the 31 participants, six of them were sampled for the pre-test of the interview guides. Thus, 1 headteacher, 1 teacher, 1 SISO, 1 SMC Chairperson, 1 PA Chairperson, and 1 Planning Officer, were employed in the pre-test of the interview guides. Apart from the interview for the headteacher, all interviews for the pretest were conducted within thirty minutes. Interview for the headteacher lasted for one hour twenty six minutes. In view of this the interview items for headteachers were reduced from twenty seven (27) items to nineteen (19) items. The questions were understandable for all interviewees and so they were not revised.

The decision to employ 31 participants in the pre-test was influenced by Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) who held that a representative pre-test sample should fall within a range of 5% - 10% of the target sample. Also, Perneger, Courvoisier, Hudelson, and Gayet-Ageron (2015) recommended that generally, 30 participants are enough for a pre-test. Meanwhile, the current study has a sample size of 286, in which case 31 participants for the pre-test in this study is equivalent to 10.8% of the target sample (286) which is even above the threshold of Gall, Gall and Borg. This means the selection of 31 participants for the pre-test was in line with acceptable practice and therefore contributed to the reliability of the instruments.

3.10 Measurement of variables

Two variables were measured in the study. They were stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement. Whilst stakeholder collaboration was an independent variable,

academic achievement was a dependent variable. Data on academic achievement was accessed from BECE performance of schools over a specified number of years (e. g. 2 years). Averages of yearly overall percentage pass for 2019 and 2020 were used to represent an aggregated academic achievement of students in the selected schools. Stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning was measured with a Likert scale form of questionnaire designed in the light of the basic tenets of the concept of collaboration. The questionnaire was designed to determine the level of collaboration of the stakeholders in schools. The aggregated Means of the scores specific to each school were related to academic achievement in a statistical analysis using SPSS version 25.

3.11 Data collection procedures

Data collection was preceded by efforts to gain access to the district education directorates and their schools. Application letters for permission to the districts were sent enclosed with the introductory letter from the Department of Educational Administration and Management. The permission letter from the district directorates enabled the researcher to gather data from the directorates and the schools. Having received the permission to conduct the study in the districts, data collection actually began with questionnaire administration in schools. A consent form was inserted into the questionnaire for respondents to indicate their consent before answering the questions. To get the consent of the interviewees, a document titled 'Pre-interview briefing' was developed for the interviewees. In the document was stated the purpose of the study, use of audio recording during the interview and assurance of confidentiality to the interviewees. Participants were made to read this document before the interview and after reading it each of them consented to the requirements for the interview.

Data were gathered in a single phase as required by the embedded mixed method design adopted for this study. However, questionnaire administration was done first followed by the interviews. The telephone numbers of headteachers in the selected schools were collected from the District Education Directorates. The researcher called each headteacher to arrange for a suitable day for the questionnaire administration. Upon agreement, the researcher visited schools with permission letters from the District Education Directorates and the Department of Educational Administration and Management. Schools with seven teachers were sampled by census because 7 teachers were needed from each school. In the situation where the teachers were more than seven, the lottery method was used to select 6 of the teachers randomly in addition to the headteacher. Upon arriving in the school, the researcher requested the staff list and assigned numbers to them. The researcher then wrote the numbers on papers, folded them and placed them in a container. The container was shaken after which one of the folded papers was picked and the number written on it noted down, then the paper was placed back in the container. This cycle of selection continued till the sixth person was chosen. Such teachers were contacted immediately with the help of the headteacher after which the questionnaires were distributed to them. In most of the schools, especially the schools that the researcher could reach before 1:00 pm, all the teachers were present and so return rate was 100 percent. In schools where some teachers were absent but have been selected randomly for the study, the researcher had to leave their questionnaires behind to be collected later.

While the researcher waited for teachers to answer their questionnaires, telephone numbers of SMC and PA Chairpersons were collected from the headteachers. Calls were immediately placed to them to inform them about the research in the school and to seek their consent to

be part of the study. All of them agreed to be part of the study. A number of them agreed to come to the schools to answer the questions immediately which they did. Some were busy at the time and so the researcher visited them at their homes, shops and various work places to answer the questionnaires after questionnaires in the schools had been collected. On some occasions, the researcher administered the questionnaires to the SMC and PA Chairpersons after which questionnaires given to teachers were collected on the same day. Some of the SMC and PA chairpersons (9 of them) could not be accessed on the day of questionnaire administration in the schools, and so arrangements were made later with them for their questionnaires to be answered on telephone as the researcher ticked their choices for them.

In addition, after questionnaire and interview data from teachers and questionnaire data from SMC and PA Chairpersons had been completed, data collection from SISOs began. They were the only category of respondents whose data collection, both quantitative and qualitative, were completed on same day. In district 1, data collection (both questionnaire and interviews) was fixed on a workshop day. Having discussed the data collection exercise with the Deputy Director, Supervision (DD Supervision), questionnaires were released to the DD supervision to be distributed to the nine SISOs. Three of the SISOs who were selected for interviews were invited by the DD Supervision to the interview room in turns. The questionnaires were collected by the DD Supervision from all the nine SISOs and submitted to the researcher. In district 2, there was no workshop around the period of data collection so the five SISOs had to be invited to the directorate for the exercise through the assistance of the DD Supervision. The administration of questionnaires and interviews of district 2 SISOs also took place on the same day. All 5 SISOs were given questionnaires to answer. Two of them were selected purposively for the interviews.

Interviews in the 5 selected schools were conducted after questionnaire administration in the schools had been completed. In each of the five selected schools, the headteacher and two teachers were interviewed. Headteachers interview came first followed by the two teachers on individual basis. Interviews for the 3 SMC and 3 PA Chairpersons were the last set of interviews to be conducted. In terms of duration, headteachers' interviews lasted longer than all other interviews. Averagely, headteachers interviews lasted for about 50 minutes with all other interviews averagely lasting for about 30 minutes. These durations are in line with best practices as most interviews are conducted within a duration of 30 minutes to one hour (InterQ Research ,2020). Furthermore, all interviews were audio recorded having sought the permission of the respondents. This is in line with the suggestion of Berkowitz (2020) that with the permission of participants, interviews may be audio recorded. Additionally, Cohen and Crabtree (2006) stated that it is generally best to tape-record interviews and later transcribe these tapes for analysis.

By way of procedure, location for the interview was determined through the assistance of the interviewees. The researcher ensured that there was minimal distraction and noise. When things were set, the researcher handed over the 'Pre-interview briefing' to the interviewee as a way of seeking his or her consent regarding the requirements for the interview. When the interviewee was done reading the document and did not object to any portion of the document, the interview started. Having switched the tape recorder on, the researcher greeted the participant and welcomed him or her to the session. As a semi-structured interview, there was room for clarification and follow-up questions. When items were exhausted, the researcher thanked the participant for his/her time and patience and brought the exercise to

an end. The audio recorder was then turned off and the audio saved with an appropriate file name for easy identification.

3.12 Data analysis procedures

As the chosen design required, the researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures. This is in line with the view of Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) that educational research should be a mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 25. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was employed as a statistical tool to test hypotheses in the study. In all, two hypotheses were tested. According to Cronk (2018) the Pearson correlation coefficient determines the strength of the linear relationship between two variables. He said, to run this test, both variables should be measured on interval or ratio scale and that both variables should also be normally distributed. Cronk said further that correlation coefficient is usually between –1.0 and +1.0. Again, coefficients close to 0.0 represent a weak relationship. Coefficients close to 1.0 or –1.0 represent a strong relationship. He stated that generally, correlations with an absolute value greater than 0.7 are considered strong. Correlations with an absolute value less than 0.3 are considered weak. Correlations with an absolute value between 0.3 and 0.7 are considered moderate. Positive correlations indicate that as one variable gets larger, the other variable also gets larger. Negative correlations indicate that as one variable gets larger, the other variable gets smaller. A significant correlation indicates a reliable relationship, but not necessarily a strong correlation.

In addition, Sarantakos (1997) stated that interval measurement allows a researcher to determine whether two values are the same or different, determine the degree of difference by considering whether one variable is greater or smaller than the other. Sarantakos observed further that ratio level measurement allows the researcher to make statements about proportions and ratios and to relate one value to the other. He said, both interval and ratio measurements are usually employed in relation to continuous data. Meanwhile, stakeholder collaboration and academic achievement are two variables that can produce continuous data which can be measured on interval or ratio scales. Sarantakos also added that Likert scale type of questionnaires which are usually applicable to interval scale can also produce continuous data. It is on the basis of these that Pearson correlation coefficient was chosen as the suitable statistical tool in this study.

Furthermore, thematic analysis was adopted as the procedure for analyzing qualitative data. Transcription of interviews was done concurrently with the interviews. This was done on the basis of the position of Miles and Huberman (1994) that data analysis may begin informally during interviews or observations and continue during transcription, when recurring themes, patterns, and categories become evident. Before transcription, the researcher listened to the audios to ascertain their audibility. Transcription was done manually. It took about one hour to transcribe a ten minutes audio. After transcription, three key things were done namely coding, categorizing and development of themes. Gibbs (2007) defined coding as a way of indexing or categorizing a text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it. Saldana (2015) also defined coding as the simple operation of identifying segments of meaning in a data and labeling them with a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative or salient attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data. Saldana's

definition of coding was employed in this study. This is similar to 'inductive coding' mentioned by Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019). They identified two types of coding - inductive coding and deductive coding. In inductive coding, researchers develop codes from the data by using phrases or terms used by the participants themselves, rather than using theoretical vocabulary of the researcher. This keeps the codes close to the data, mirroring what is actually in them, rather than the ideas and prior understandings of the researcher. Deductive coding, on the other hand, is a way of developing theoretical concepts or themes from a data based on existing literature. In deductive coding, a pre-defined list of codes is created as a coding frame before the coding is started (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013). This approach helps to focus the coding on those issues that are known to be important in the existing literature and it is often related to theory testing or theory refinement.

Since this study was not focused on testing a theory, the inductive coding approach became very plausible to be adopted in this study since the inductive coding approach involves a possibility of theory development rather than theory testing (Gehman, Glaser, Eisenhardt, Gioia, Langley & Corley, 2018). Moreover, though Medelyan (2020) considered inductive coding as being an iterative process and taking a longer time than deductive coding, she added that it presents a complete and more unbiased outlook of the themes throughout the data.

In addition, the codes were derived after a careful reading of the transcript, where the salient ideas in each response were captured as codes. This is also in line with the suggestion of Miles and Huberman (1994) that once written records are available, analysis involves the coding of data and the identification of salient points or structures. Categorization was done after the coding. Categorization is concerned with the creation of an idea that captures the basic issue in a set of codes. Categorization was done by determining the connections

between the codes. Similar codes were categorized to generate the themes which are presented in this report. The development of themes constituted the conceptualization of the key ideas expressed in the transcribed data. As the embedded design required, the two data sets were not strictly converged but rather quantitative data were embedded in the qualitative data to supplement the qualitative data. This is in line with the position of Almalki (2016) that embedded design is not to converge two different data sets collected to answer the same question. He said, researchers using an embedded design can keep the two sets of results separate in their reports or even report them in separate papers. Moreover, the quantitative data which was embedded focused on only one objective (Objective 6) and this also coheres with the view of Hanson et al. (2005) that embedded design data are used to answer different research questions within a study.

3.13 Ethical considerations

The term ethics refers to questions of right and wrong (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). When researchers think about ethics, they ask themselves if it is right to conduct a particular study or carry out certain procedures. Ethical standards in research require that research projects must not be conducted in a manner that violates rights of the participants and the population in general. A researchers' quest to produce knowledge does not justify any means at all in producing the knowledge. Thus, research projects are usually governed by rules and regulations. No matter how robust the findings of a research project are, they would not be considered credible unless there is enough evidence that the study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards. Shamoo and Resnik (2015) stated that, there are several reasons why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. They said, adherence to

ethical norms in research: (1) promotes the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error (2) promotes the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness (3) ensures that researchers can be held accountable to the public (4) builds public support for research. People are more likely to fund a research project if they can trust the quality and integrity of research (5) promotes a variety of other important moral and social values, such as social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, compliance with the law, and public health and safety.

Some general ethical principles to observe in research as outlined by Shamoo and Resnik (2015) are honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness, respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, responsible publication, responsible mentoring, respect for colleagues, social responsibility, non-discrimination, competence, legality, animal care, and human subjects' protection. In this research ethical principles such as: informed consent, confidentiality, objectivity, honesty and integrity, and respect for intellectual property were adhered to. The above listed five ethical principles are briefly discussed below:

a. Informed consent.

Informed consent is one of the means by which a patient's right to autonomy is protected (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2021). It is an ethical and legal requirement for research involving human participants. It is the process where a participant is informed about all aspects of the research, which are important for the participant to make a decision and after studying all aspects of the trial the participant voluntarily confirms his or her willingness to participate in a particular clinical trial and significance of the research for advancement of medical knowledge and social welfare. Generally, informed consent is thought to be in terms of the

documents signed and dated by participants, setting forth the purpose, benefits, risks and other study information necessary to allow the participants to make an informed and voluntary decision to participate in the clinical study (Nijhawan, Janodia, Muddukrishna, Bhat, Bairy, Udupa, 2013). The fundamental principle underlying informed consent in research is that participants must not be coerced or deceived to participate in research. Individuals reserve the right to be part of any research project or not, a decision which the researcher has no control over. Informed consent could be perceived as the pillar on which all the ethical requirements rest. It must however be emphasized that specific requirements for informed consent may differ depending on the kind of research. For example, the requirements for informed consent in medical research will be different from that of social science research.

In this research, the requirement of informed consent was respected. In meeting this requirement, access was officially sought from District Directors of Education and Headteachers with an introductory letter from the Department of Educational Administration and Management, UEW. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and how they stood to benefit from the study in the long run. Questionnaires contained a portion where respondents had to indicate their consent to participate in the study. Interviewees were given a document titled 'Pre-Interview Briefing' to read to agree to certain terms before the interviews.

b. Confidentiality

Synnove (2015) considers confidentiality to mean that information is restricted to those authorized to have access to it. He added that, the strictness of confidentiality normally

increases with the degree of sensitivity of the information, and with the degree of vulnerability of the research subject. Shamoo and Resnik (2015) were of the view that the need to respect anything that has been provided in confidence is the basis of confidentiality in research. Issues of confidentiality also bother on participants' right to privacy. This explains the view of Synnove that in essence, confidentiality is an obligation for the researcher and a right for the research subject. Fouka and Mantzorou (2021) emphasizing the seriousness of confidentiality went further to suggest that all aims, instruments and methodology must be discussed with the prospective subjects and the research workers prior to the investigation. This, for them, will inform the participants on the limit of the information they can give out. Synnove observed further that breach of confidentiality undermines the trust and credibility enjoyed by the researcher, and in a wider perspective will make it difficult to engage in research in the future. As a means to ensure confidentiality, researchers should ensure that no one (except sometimes research assistants) has access to the collected data and whenever possible, the names of the subjects should be removed from all data collection forms. All subjects should be assured that any data collected about them will be held in confidence. The names of individual subjects should never be used in any publications that describe the research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

In meeting the confidentiality requirement, the researcher avoided the use of personal names of respondents and direct reference to institutions employed in the study. Therefore, codenames were used as a form of pseudonyms for participants during the analysis. For example, the codename HT 1-SCH 1 referred to 'Headteacher 1 School 1. The same pattern was adopted to create codenames for all the five headteachers. Furthermore, the codename T1-SCH 1 referred to 'Teacher 1 School 1'. This pattern was adopted to create codenames

for all the ten teachers selected from the five schools. In addition, SS-1 referred to SISO 1, and once again, this pattern was adopted to create codenames for the five selected SISOs. PO-1 and PO-2 referred to 'Planning Officer 1 and Planning Officer 2' respectively. Also, SMC 1-SCH 2 and SMC 2- SCH 3 referred to 'SMC Chairperson 1 in School 2 and SMC Chairperson 2 in School 3' respectively. PA 1- SCH 2 and PA 2 SCH 5 referred to Parents' Association Chairperson 1 in School 2 and Parents' Association Chairperson 2 in School 5. An assurance was given to the respondents that the researcher was aware of the implications of breaching confidentiality requirement. The researcher exhibited maximum respect of their right to give or refuse information. Data has been presented in such a way that, no portion of it can be traced to any school or specific individual.

c. Objectivity

Shamoo and Resnik (2015) observed that, in ensuring objectivity in research, the researcher should aim to avoid bias in any aspect of the research, including design, data analysis, interpretation, and peer review. He said a researcher meeting objectivity standard should never recommend as a peer reviewer someone he or she knows, or has worked with and that a researcher should ensure that no groups are inadvertently excluded from the research. Objectivity requires that a researcher discloses any personal interests that may affect the research. In ensuring objectivity in this study, the researcher did not impose his views and expectations on the process and the findings. The researcher presented findings as they were discovered but not twisted to suit his personal interests and expectations. Selection of respondents for the study was based on fair principles to ensure that the principle of inclusion was not based on tribe, religion, financial background, physical appearance etc.

d. Honesty and integrity

Honesty and integrity as ethical standards in research mean that a researcher needs to report his or her research honestly especially regarding aspects such as methods, data, results, and whether aspects of the study have already been published (Shamoo & Resnik, 2015). They added that, the researcher should not make up any data or do anything which could be construed as trying to mislead anyone. In meeting honesty and integrity requirement in this study, the researcher restricted himself to only data produced on the field in the data analysis section. Efforts were made to avoid deliberate omission of data which conflicted with the researcher's opinions, assumptions, expectations and world views. The researcher strictly adhered to all assurances given to respondents and did not influence people unethically to be part of the research.

e. Respect for intellectual property

Respect for intellectual property requires that researchers acknowledge people whose works and ideas have been used in the work. Researchers in this regard are not expected to present people's ideas as though they belonged to them. Shamoo and Resnik (2015) similarly said, researchers in meeting this requirement should never plagiarise, or copy other people's work and try to pass it off as theirs. They advised researchers to always ask for permission before using other people's tools or methods, unpublished data or results. They said researchers need to respect copyrights and patents in the whole research process. Efforts were made by the researcher to respect intellectual property in this study. The researcher avoided plagiarism by acknowledging all materials cited in the study.

1.14 Chapter summary

This chapter (Chapter Three) centred on the methodological issues relating to the study. All decisions that were made on the field and the justifications for them, have been provided in this chapter. Beginning with research approach, mixed methods approach was emphasized as the best approach for the study. This led to the adoption of embedded mixed method approach as the design for the study. Having described the site and subject characteristics, the population, sample size and sample procedures were discussed. This was followed with discussions on instrumentation, validity, reliability, trustworthiness and pretesting of instruments. After these, measurement of variables for the quantitative aspect was described. The last issues considered in this chapter were data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study in accordance to the research questions of the study. It is structured into six parts dictated by the research questions – Nature of school improvement planning and implementation, Effectiveness of school improvement programmes, Reasons for public school ineffectiveness, Making Schools Effective, Constraints to effective collaboration, and stakeholder collaboration and academic achievement. The first five themes being qualitative in nature have been discussed with sub-themes which emerged from the data. The sixth theme presents quantitative analysis of the sixth research question. The results have also been discussed in the light of related studies. The results have also been discussed generally in the light of the thesis of the study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*.

4.1 Nature of school improvement planning and implementation

The data presented in this section seeks to provide answers to the research question one: How do public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts engage in school improvement planning and implementation? The data is focused on the school improvement practices of the selected public JHSs in terms of their planning and implementation.

4.1.1 School level planning

The data has shown two levels of planning – 'school level planning' and 'district level planning'. These are presented separately. The sub-themes which emerged under school level planning were headteacher autonomy in planning, core areas in school level planning, steps in school level planning, use of planning guide in school level planning and preparation of the SPIP. Each of these is discussed below.

4.1.2 Headteacher autonomy in planning

Planning is basically a decision-making process and that requires some level of autonomy on the side of those who plan. This makes it difficult to assess any form of planning without assessing the level of autonomy possessed by the planners. Autonomy therefore became an important issue because it influenced the quality of the plan. Headteachers in schools accessed generally did not have full autonomy to plan for the schools. While some headteachers were emphatic on non-existence of autonomy in their planning duties, others said they were partially autonomous. Those who claimed they were not autonomous did so on the basis that they always had to consult their superiors before they made major decisions about the school. With regard to the non-existence of autonomy in some of the schools, HT 5- SCH 5 had this to say:

> I am not autonomous because every decision I make with other stakeholders is guided by the rules and regulations of Ghana Education Service. Usually, I need to take into consideration what the government says about what we can do and what we cannot do as headteachers. If I always have to consult my immediate superior at the GES office in every major decision I make and sometimes even smaller ones, then where is my autonomy (HT 5- SCH 5).

HT 3- SCH 3 also shared a similar view:

> I do not have full autonomy to make decisions. There are a number of stakeholders that I need to consult for their approval on certain decisions. My school is a unit school, so I usually consult the church and since we are also under government, I do consult the directorate for permission. If I do not get permission from these people, I do not think I have the power to initiate any major programme (HT 3- SCH 3).

Despite the position above, there were headteachers who felt they were partially autonomous. HT 4- SCH 4 had this to say: "I can also plan locally but if there is the need for me to involve the office then they should be notified" (HT 4- SCH 4). This headteacher believed that she was not autonomous though she has the opportunity to engage in local planning in the school where she sometimes enjoyed some form of autonomy. This notwithstanding, headteacher autonomy was generally found to be inadequate in the schools accessed as a number of the headteachers did not have full autonomy in planning to improve the schools. Meanwhile, Agi (2017) had observed that, for school improvement planning to achieve the desired goals, there was the need for governments to allow significant autonomy to reside in schools to enable school leaders initiate school improvement plans. Agi's position seemed to have suggested that, autonomy was enough for schools to come up with good plans but this may not always be the case. This is because, Van Der Voort and Wood (2014) had identified autonomy in South African schools with regard to school improvement planning but they observed contrary that their schools did not come up with good school improvement plans. So, autonomy was needed for effective school improvement planning but it was not the sole determinant of good school improvement planning. School level planning needed more than autonomy to be good.

4.1.3 Core areas in school level planning

To know how schools engaged in school improvement planning and implementation, it became necessary to explore the core areas of planning in the schools. The 'core areas' refer to the aspects of the schools where resources are committed to for improvement. Thus, when Headteachers obtained the permission to plan, they certainly had to target certain key areas of the school to direct resources through the planning. In relation to this, HT 2- SCH 2 said: "In our planning, we normally pay attention to core areas of our duties. We focus planning on enrolment drive, sports, school management, culture, minor repairs and TLMs" (HT 2- SCH 2). HT 3- SCH 3 also added: "In planning we, direct attention to teaching materials and textbooks (HT 3- SCH 3). SS-1 described accountability as a core area of planning. He said:

> Accountability of teachers is not left out in planning in our schools because even the SMCs and the chiefs are now demanding accountability from the teachers. They are thinking of asking the students to appraise teachers so that such reports will be factored into discussions at SPAM (SS-1).

Other core areas of planning were expressed by HT 5- SCH 5:

> Our planning here usually focusses on academic work, co-curricular activities, infrastructure and discipline. Our enrolment has increased over the years and so we need more classrooms to cater for the increasing numbers. Discipline is also a problem in this community and that is exhibited in the behaviour of the students in our school. Due to this, we spend time in our planning to devise means of maintaining discipline in the school (HT 5- SCH 5).

The texts above point to enrolment drive, sports, school management, culture, minor repairs, teaching and learning resources, academic work, discipline, co-curricula activities, and teacher accountability as the key areas that schools accessed focused school improvement planning on. These specific areas can be categorized into academic, extra-curricular activities, character formation and infrastructure. However, headteachers did not have the permission to allocate resources to major infrastructure development in the schools. This

means schools were at the mercy of government's financial readiness in providing infrastructure in the schools.

The core areas of school improvement planning identified in the study exhibited partial coherence with the recommendations of Adelman and Taylor (2005). They had recommended five core areas that every school improvement planning should focus on. Three of their recommendations resonate with the findings of this study. They stated, among others that, every school improvement guide should (1) delineate the content of an enabling or learning supports component (2) incorporate standards and accountability indicators for each area of learning supports content (3) include an emphasis on redefining and reframing roles and functions and redesigning infrastructure to ensure learning supports are attended to as a primary and essential component of school improvement. Their report concluded that, addressing barriers to learning and teaching must be made an essential and high-level focus in every school improvement planning. Moreover, this current study also found among others that schools in the accessed districts focused their school improvement planning on teaching and learning resources, academic work, discipline, teacher accountability and infrastructure. On the other hand, the findings did not cohere with the position of Arnold (2017) that effective school improvement planning should not be devoid of a thorough analysis of school data from school self-evaluation. He indicated that such data should always include attendance, students' behaviour, outcomes of statutory assessments, examination and test results for all pupils and then for groups of pupils. It was found in this study, that school improvement planning was not preceded by a thorough school self-evaluation. This means school improvement planning faced the danger of overlooking essential ingredients such as outlined by Arnold.

4.1.4 Steps in school level planning

This section is focused on determining whether schools followed systematic process in developing their school improvement plans. This has provided ample data on how schools planned. Headteachers as leaders in local school improvement planning shared their views on the steps they followed in developing school improvement plans. HT 2- SCH 2 had this to say:

> Our planning begins with a meeting of teachers to provide inputs or determine the areas to be covered by the plan. The inputs will then be submitted to me as the headteacher. When I receive their inputs, I discuss them with my deputies and reorganize them. We normally consider our environment and our immediate challenges, and based on them we plan accordingly (HT 2- SCH 2).

HT 5- SCH 5, once again shared a similar view:

> I usually start with consultation with the key stakeholders like SMC, PA and the SISO. I seek their inputs on what I intend doing before I finally call a meeting. After consulting them, we come together in a meeting to discuss and plan especially with the SMC and the PA and we take concrete decision on whatever we want to do (HT 5- SCH 5).

HT 3- SCH 3 also had this to add:

> When I want to develop any plan, I firstly meet my management, thus, my deputy and the staff secretary to discuss issues I have considered for planning. After discussions with my management, the ideas would be polished for further discussions at a staff meeting so that we share the vision with them. If the items are major items and we cannot take a decision at our level as staff, then we invite the PA chair and brief him on what we intend to do. He will then inform the PA executives. However, if there is the need to call all the parents then we do that. If after meeting the parents there is the need for us to put it in writing to our district office, we do that. I don't conclude the planning at my level with teachers. It is taken further. If they have any amendment, they also bring it on board (HT 3- SCH 3).

The texts above indicate that schools followed similar procedures in planning despite the few differences identified. In school 2, planning usually unfolded with a meeting of teachers to

determine key areas to focus plan on. Teacher inputs were then submitted to management, i.e., headteacher and her deputies for re-organisation of the items. The re-organisation entailed discussions on the items of the teachers so that the best could be selected for consideration. In selecting items for planning, emphasis was laid on the needs of the school. In school 5, the planning process began with consultation with key stakeholders such as SMC, PA and the SISO. After consultations, a meeting with either SMC chair, PA chair and SISO or the entire Parents' Association, was organized for the actual planning to start. In school 3, planning began with a meeting of management to determine items for the planning. After the management meeting, the various items were tabled for further discussions at a staff meeting. Results from the staff meeting were then presented to the PA executives in a meeting with the headteacher. A general PA meeting could be called for a general discussion on the items. It is after this that final permission could be sought from the office, before the plan could be put into action.

Furthermore, from the submissions of the headteachers, a six-step model of school-level planning has been developed. The steps are: (1) Need assessment (2) Preliminary consideration of planning items by teachers (3) Re-organisation of planning items by management (4) Consultation with stakeholders on planning items (5) Actual planning by stakeholders (6) Official permission to execute plan. Some key characteristics of this model are that, it is based on needs of the schools, it is oriented towards collaboration, and it is linear. As a linear model of planning, it has a beginning and an end with no opportunity for linking the end to the beginning so that a cyclical planning could be created. Nevertheless, it is a sound addition to the body of knowledge on school level-planning for improvement.

Furthermore, the six-step model of school level planning developed from the data is different structurally from Government of Somoa's (2005) four- step process of school improvement planning. Nevertheless, three of the elements in the current model (need assessment, preliminary consideration of planning items by teachers, and consultation with stakeholders on planning items) cohered with two elements of Government of Samoa's model of school improvement planning (determination of achievable priorities, and completion of a written school improvement plan). When schools in the accessed districts made need assessments and listed items for planning, it could be interpreted in the light of 'determination of achievable priorities' as in Government of Samoa's model. Irrespective of this partial similarity with Government of Samoa's model, a critical evaluation of this current model in the light of Government of Samoa's model, exposed a number of weaknesses of the current model. The current model is silent on essential elements of planning such as setting of realistic targets for each priority area and determination of strategies to achieve the targets. These are pivotal in Government of Samoa's model but missing in the current model calling for the need for a review which will encompass the elements of both models. This new model is hereby presented as a six-step model of school level planning: (1) Determination of achievable priorities (Need assessment, Preliminary consideration of planning items by teachers, Re-organisation of planning items by management) (2) Consultation with stakeholders on planning items (3) Setting of realistic targets for each priority area (4) Development of strategies (5) Actual planning by stakeholders (6) Official permission to execute plan.

In addition, one key characteristic of this new model of school level planning is the element of stakeholder collaboration. The inclusion of this element in the model found support in the

position of Thompson (2018) when he emphasized the importance of broader stakeholder consultation in school improvement planning. Thompson argued that comprehensive stakeholder involvement is the first fundamental of effective school improvement planning and that it is only through comprehensive stakeholder involvement that a school can undertake a responsive and context-sensitive prioritization of needs. Similarly, Mekango (2013) had argued that shared responsibility and decision making were the cornerstones of successful planning.

4.1.5 Use of planning guide in school level planning

The data in this section is meant to ascertain whether planning in schools and the district directorate were done based on an official planning document (Planning Guide) meant to serve as a guide on how to plan and the kind of planning to be done in schools in the districts. This enabled the researcher to get a better understanding of how schools planned in terms of the source of their planning inputs or planning items. It was generally obvious from responses that the SPIP was the general planning guide for schools in the two districts accessed. This can be ascertained in the following texts:

> Yes, we have been given some planning guide in the form of the SPIP, so we use that to plan for the school. It helps us plan for the school during the year. It specifies areas that we should follow or concentrate on. So, we select those areas that will be appropriate for our school (HT 4- SCH 4).

This was added by SS-4:

> School improvement planning in our schools is basically about the SPIP (School Performance Improvement Plan). In the school setting, headteachers are familiar with it. They have been taken through the preparation of SPIP and they prepare this to run the school for the year under review. Everything they do in the school is in the SPIP. The SPIP is their guide or what they look through to run the school. In my circuit, headteachers have been taken through the preparation of the SPIP and they know that whatever they do must

> correspond to what they have written in the SPIP. They don't go outside the SPIP in doing their work (SS-4).

From these responses, it can be deduced that, two major planning guides influenced planning in schools and at the district level. As a planning guide, the SPIP provided a policy direction on key areas to focus school- level planning on. Thus, the SPIP did not amount to a document on planning expertise for schools. The SPIP only determined the scope within which school-level planning could take place. Thus, the SPIP outlined what school-level planning could cover within a specified year. It means any planning in the school for school improvement should not depart from what was stipulated in the SPIP. From the responses, the SPIP was released to schools yearly but it was meant to be implemented on termly basis and so specific items were allocated for certain terms. The SPIP constituted the vision of the district for schools within a particular year.

The reliance on the SPIP as the main planning guide was striking due to the nature of the SPIP and what it was meant to do and therefore alluded to a situation encountered by Adelman and Taylor (2005). Using a three-component model for school improvement planning (Instructional component; learning supports component; and management component) as a lens to analyze the breadth and depth of planning guides developed by two school districts in Los Angeles, they found that the planning guidance for schools often did not adequately focus on the need for schools to play a significant role in addressing barriers to learning and teaching. A similar situation was found in the accessed schools since the SPIP placed a number of limitations on schools with regard to what they can do to improve. This is a sign of planning defect, and relating this to the thesis of this study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to*

approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort', it could be a contributing factor to poor academic performance in some of the schools.

4.1.6 Preparation of the SPIP

Knowledge about the preparation of the SPIP will inform readers on the quality of the planning done in schools in the districts. In other words, the researcher sought to assess the quality of school-level planning in terms of how schools prepared the SPIP. Ample data were provided on the preparation of the SPIP by respondents. SS-4, one of the SISOs had this to say:

> The preparation of the SPIP in recent times is quite complex as compared to the previous ones. The schools engage other stakeholders like the parents and the SMC. Before they submit it to the Finance and Administration unit at the office, they will have to bring to me for scrutiny. I will only append my signature to it when I find that the items are all achievable (SS-4).

Similarly, SS-5 commented:

> … but at the normal circumstance am supposed to sign the SPIP, then counter-signed by the SMC Chair. This is what the rules in the headmasters' code say, and this is also the right thing to be done. I have to go through the SPIP and make sure all the entries reflect whatever that is required and this thing must be done in the presence of the teachers (SS-5).

PO-1 also observed:

> The SPIP is mainly done by the Finance and Administration officer and the Budget Officer. They always develop the SPIP with the Headteachers. They usually call a meeting here with the heads and give them the template and take them through development of the SPIP. After collecting the template, they will have to go back and prepare the SPIP with the necessary stakeholders. They will be invited a second time in a workshop at the office to examine the SPIP prepared by each of them. The costing of the items will be carefully scrutinized before approval. The costs may be reviewed if found to be too high. If a headteacher does something outside the approved SPIP, he or she may have to finance it from his or her personal resources because the SPIP comes with its own money, that is the capitation grant or the GALOP fund (PO-1).

PO-2 also added to the preparation of the SPIP:

> …. So, when it is done, these items are put together. And when it comes to the district office, we have a schedule officer who is at the Finance and Administration Department. The schedule officer will have to go through the vetting of the SPIP which is the main planning document the schools usually submit to the directorate (PO-2).

Like all forms of planning in schools as evidenced in this study, the preparation of the SPIP involved a number of stakeholders. Headteachers led in the preparation by receiving the SPIP template from the district. Key stakeholders involved in the preparation of the SPIP at the school level were teachers, SISOs, parents' association, and the SMC. Headteachers and teachers actually designed the SPIP and presented it to the enumerated stakeholders for scrutiny and first approval at the school level. In preparing the SPIP, headteachers and their teachers determined the items or aspects of the school that resources should be committed to. Teachers had the liberty to select from a predetermined list of items received from the office. Headteachers and teachers were not permitted to select items outside the official items. The Capitation Grant and the GALOP fund which were meant to finance the SPIP were meant for only items on the SPIP template received from the district. Any headteacher who decided to insert extraneous item must be ready to finance that from sources other than the Capitation Grant and the GALOP fund. Each of the items on the list from the district reflected the policy direction of the district for the schools. This was also a means of establishing harmony and coordination in the activities of schools and the districts.

After its preparation, the stakeholders had to authenticate the document by appending their signatures to it before its submission to the district for final approval. The document would

be ready for submission to the office (Finance and Administration Department) only after the SISO had scrutinized and signed it as the last assessor at the school level.

The SPIP would only be submitted to the office on invitation by the Finance and Administration officer and the Budget Officer. Before this invitation, the headteachers, in a workshop should have been taken through training on the preparation of the SPIP. It was at this training that headteachers were given the SPIP template. When the headteachers were invited a second time to the office, each headteacher was expected to come with a prepared SPIP approved by the SISO and other relevant stakeholders. At this meeting, the schedule officer at the Finance and Administration Department advised headteachers on the costing of the items on the SPIP for adjustment where necessary. By this, the schedule officer got all SPIP documents vetted. It was after vetting and approval by the schedule officer, Finance and Administration Officer, and the Budget Officer, that the SPIP would become a working document for individual schools.

From the analysis above, it is obvious that preparation of the SPIP was the major platform for school level planning. In the accessed schools, its preparation was collaborative as all relevant stakeholders were involved. The data is, however, silent on the extent of the stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the SPIP. Given the finding on the existence of collaboration in the preparation of the SPIP, it could be taken on the face value as a denial of the thesis of this study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*. This denial will however not be a stronger one because though, planning is presented as collaborative, academic achievement in most

of the schools were found to be low. This makes the acclaimed collaboration questionable. This is because the focal theory of this study: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be improved when school improvement planning and implementation is pursued as a collaborative local effort*, means that, when planning is truly collaborative, academic achievement should improve. Thus, this study presents a situation where planning is presented as collaborative to some extent but academic achievement is still low. This picture was confirmed by the finding of this study in research question six (quantitative data) where correlational analysis produced an inverse relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement. This contradiction has moved the discourse to a higher level to delve into the possible causes for such a situation. Data from other sections of this study in this same chapter have indicated that the very reasons which have made schools ineffective in the two districts could be the same reasons accounting for performance challenges in the districts which have given rise to this inverse relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement.

4.1.7 District level planning

Planning at the district level has implications on school level planning. This made it necessary to explore how school improvement planning was done at the district level. Though the two levels of planning were different in style or structure, they were connected in a number of ways as they were all meant to develop education in the two districts accessed. The data below provide adequate description of district level planning in the two districts. PO-1 said:

> Our plan usually reflects how the director wants the district to go within the confines of the national policy. From the national policy, we derive our

> variables for planning and once we are done, we make it available to the schools. We receive the ADEOP from national. From the ADEOP we develop the SPIP template for the schools. What the headteachers develop in the SPIP will not be different from what the district wants them to do (PO-1).

PO-2 also commented:

> At the district level we have the ADEOP (Annual District Education Operational Plan) which we have the action plan also fused into it. The action plan is the locally initiated plan of the district as the rest are all national plans. The action plan gives the district specifics but we have to take a cue from all these national plans that I mentioned so that we will be able to meet the national goals. The inputs of the district in terms of improving schools are actually found in the district's action plan. Normally, with the action plan we have the schedule officers and activity coordinators following the action plan to get it implemented. The ADEOP and the GALOP are some of the guides that we use in planning for the district. The GALOP normally looks at the quality aspect of education. The GALOP concentrates on the quality but not management and other administrative issues. The ADEOP is normally planned for three years and within these three years we do a review. The ADEOP is a national planning document so we get it done in collaboration with the district assembly, then we push it to the regional level, then the region also sends it to the national. We have activity metrics where we have to select from. At the district level, the ADEOP gives us the opportunity to get specific district and school needs to be fused into the action plan (PO-2).

It is clear from the data that districts did not develop single plans. Three major types of plan were identified – the ADEOP (Annual District Education Operational Plan), the GALOP (Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project) and the District Action Plan. Variables in the action plan were usually derived from the activity metrics in the ADEOP and also the GALOP to establish a connection between the three plans and to also enable districts achieve the national educational goals which are transmitted through the ADEOP and supported by the GALOP. The Action Plan was conceptualized as a locally initiated plan of the district which gave district specifics meant to achieve national educational goals. This means districts relied on two planning guides, the ADEOP and the GALOP to develop their

action plan. The ADEOP was a three-year plan which was implemented in three tranches in three years but reviewed yearly. The GALOP was usually focused on quality.

It can further be deduced from the data that, the districts were not fully independent in planning. The variables of planning were nationally determined. Such variables were designed by the Ministry of Education and handed over to the districts through the regional education directorate. However, before the districts received their ADEOP template, they were usually given training on the template to enable the districts develop good plans. Once again, the challenge of limited autonomy in planning identified in school level planning showed itself at the district level planning as well. The ADEOP and GALOP templates placed a number of restrictions on districts with regard to the extent to which they could go in terms of allocation of resources in the districts. This explains why Agi (2017) held that, for school improvement planning to achieve the desired goals for schools, there was the need for governments to allow significant autonomy to reside in schools to enable school leaders initiate school improvement plans. By extension, education directorates also needed some maximum level of autonomy to embark on planning specific to the needs of the schools in their jurisdiction.

4.1.8 Core areas of district level planning

In this section, the emphasis was on the targets of district level planning. Thus, the data focused on crucial areas that districts directed attention to during planning and committed resources to. In relation to this, PO-2 said:

> Basically, we have infrastructure, capacity workshop for the teachers and the GES staff. We also look at enrolment drives to improve enrolment. We look at staffing, that is, getting the right teachers and a good number of teachers for

> the district. Then again provision of teaching and learning materials. These are the key areas that we look at (PO-2).

PO-1 once again held that:

> Mainly we look at how to train teachers. Planning also covers how documents in the district will be processed. Thus, how do we ensure that they are paid early. After everything we have to indicate who will be responsible for that action. Disbursement of capitation grant is also important in our planning here. Monitoring is also part of what we usually plan on (PO-1).

The data above indicate infrastructure, capacity workshop for teachers and GES staff, enrolment drives, staffing, provision of teaching and learning materials, administrative procedures, disbursement of capitation grant and monitoring as some of the core areas that the districts focused their school improvement planning on. These variables of planning were usually derived from the activity metrics in the ADEOP and the GALOP as well as specific school needs as identified by the districts. From these core areas or planning variables, it can be said that planning in the districts were focused on school improvement since these areas are all integral components of school improvement. It means, in terms of planning, the districts are doing their best to get their schools improved.

4.1.9 Steps in district level planning

This section dealt with the procedures followed at the district in getting their plans in shape. This was also meant to assess the quality of their planning in terms of how systematic it was. Outlining the steps, PO-1 had this to say:

> Normally, through SPAM, we identify problems in the district. When the problem is identified, then we look at how to tackle that. We begin the planning proper by developing objectives which will help us know the outcomes to be expected when the plan is implemented. We also look at the resources we will use to go into that action that we intend to take and also who will be responsible for that activity (PO-1).

PO-2 also observed:

> The process begins with stakeholder engagement usually involving the district assembly, chiefs, the union leaders, teachers, parents, old students, and students. With the support from EMIS or the planning and statistics unit, we present the state of education delivery in the district. The district director of education leads in this exercise. Through this the stakeholders see our challenges and where we have improved compared to the previous years. At such forums, we discuss how to address some of the challenges and so everyone brings his or her knowledge or experiences on board. When the challenges are identified at the stakeholder engagement forum, we come to the office here and engage technical ideas. For example, the activity coordinators and the district assembly get in touch and get the plan in shape in a document. Then, the plan goes through DEOC (District Education Oversight Committee) which is chaired by the DCE or the District Coordinating Director. We also present it to the chief's representative, religious bodies' representative, and others for their inputs. Where they think there should be a review or adjustment, they say it. It comes back, we also review it and send it to region (PO-2).

From the responses of the two planning officers, two models of district level planning steps could be identified. In the first model derived from District 1, district level planning began with identification of problems. This represents a diagnostic stage in the planning process. This was usually achieved through SPAM (School Performance Appraisal Meeting) and units reports. Thus, the SPAM was used to identify school level problems. In addition to this, individual units at the districts also submitted their inputs with regard to problems to be addressed at their units. With the problems identified, objectives were set to reflect the problems. This is the stage where outcomes were determined. The third stage is the consideration of resources to achieve the objectives. The fourth stage is the assignment of duties. This is the stage where respective units or departments were tasked to oversee the implementation of outlined activities. This stage reflects the accountability component in the planning process. Thus, duties were assigned so that people could account for the success or failure of the plans. This is good because it served as an internal control element in the

planning process to achieve some level of effectiveness in the entire planning process. The fifth stage is the plan organisation. This is the stage where the plan was actually drafted as a document for implementation. At the district level, this responsibility was carried out by the planning, monitoring and evaluation unit at the directorate. The planning officer played active role at this stage as he provided all the technical support to put the final plan in shape.

As derived from the data, a five-step model of district level planning can be ascertained as the first model – (1) Problem identification or diagnosis (2) Setting of objectives (3) Resources or logistics (4) Assignment of duties (5) Plan organisation. Once again, this model is linear in nature and does not provide opportunity for evaluation. This, not withstanding, provides evidence of systematic school improvement planning at the district level.

Furthermore, a second district level model of planning steps was derived from the data in District 2. In district 2, planning began with problem identification through a district level stakeholder engagement. With inputs from the stakeholder engagement, the initial plan was developed by planning experts at the district. The third stage is the submission of the initial plan to DEOC (District Education Oversight Committee) for review. The fourth stage is the submission of the drafted plan to Region for approval. This second district level planning model, is a four-step planning model hereby presented as – (1) Problem identification or diagnosis (2) Plan development (3) Plan review (4) Plan approval.

In addition, these two planning models can be combined to produce a seven-step district level planning model – (1) Problem identification or diagnosis (2) Setting of objectives (3) Resources or logistics (4) Assignment of duties (5) Plan organisation/development (6) Plan review (7) Plan approval. This model is more comprehensive than the two individual models

derived from the districts. Also, when the two models are combined into a single model as given above, the limitations of each of them are addressed to a higher extent. Thus, emphasis will therefore not be placed on the two individual models but rather, the seven-step model addresses the short falls of the two. Nevertheless, this seven-step model is also structurally linear and does not allow evaluation. It ends with the approval of the plan leaving out implementation and evaluation which could make the planning process cyclical. It must be noted that, the plan review in this model is not a review of implemented plan but a review of a developing plan yet to be adopted.

Furthermore, this seven-step planning model appears structurally different from the school level planning model derived in this study. Thus, each of the models contains elements specific to its operation. However, the two models have some relevant similarities like emphasis on school problems and collaboration. Irrespective of their differences, they provide comprehensive approaches to planning at the school and district levels.

4.1.10 Factoring school needs into district level planning

District and school levels planning were all focused on improving schools in the two districts. This explains why a connection has been established between the two levels of planning in the two districts. Inasmuch as the districts have influence on school level planning, so is the school having influence on the district level planning as districts have obligation to factor school needs into their plan. The aim of this section was to explore how districts factored school needs into their planning as a quality measure on their planning at the district. PO-2 commented:

> The SPIP is usually prepared with the needs of the schools in view. When the SPIP is submitted to us at the district, we know that some of the needs of the schools have been captured. The SPIP and the SPAM are the key areas that the schools get the opportunities to identify specific needs and make the district aware of them which influence our planning accordingly (PO-2).

PO-1 also added:

> From the inspections that we do, we get the problems confronting the schools and we factor them into our planning. When we discover a major problem which needs huge amount of money to solve, we go to the DCE who is the head of the District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC) and discuss that with him and see the way forward (PO-1).

As indicated earlier, there was a clear relationship between district and school levels of planning especially, in terms of focus on school needs. From the data, school needs were identified by the districts through inspections, SPIP and SPAM. When the districts identified the school needs, they factored them into the preparation of the ADEOP and their action plan. It is also clear from the data, that school level planning was perceived as an extension of district level planning. This is evidenced in the statement: "insofar as schools tackle them, we can say that, that is how we factor specific school needs into our planning because the planning we do here and the ones done in our schools are related" (PO-1). Thus, when schools identify their needs and factor them into their SPIP, which needed approval from the district, the district, seeing school level planning as an extension of its own planning can argue that, that is one way of they (district) factoring school needs into their planning and addressing them. Also, through the periodic inspection of the district, the Planning Unit was able to gather data on school needs. They factored such needs into their planning and sent it back to the schools for them to also factor them into the preparation of the SPIP. Thus, planning in the two districts reflects both bottom-up and top-down approaches to planning.

Furthermore, insofar as schools initiated the planning taking note of their needs and stating them in the SPIP for onward submission to the district for approval, the bottom-up approach is affirmed. Furthermore, the district influenced school level planning through the SPIP which stipulated the confines of the school level planning which must always be in line with the district's action plan. This dimension also represented a top-down approach to planning. This situation fits into the observation of Van Der Voort and Wood (2016) that there was the possibility of a bottom-up approach to school improvement planning in the context of collaboration. They said, unless each school developed its school improvement plan based on its specific needs and handed it to the district office for intervention, the district office cannot assist schools to make qualitative improvements. This position is supported by Sister (2004) that, in order for schools to succeed in the implementation process, planning by the district needed to be influenced by the needs at school level. This planning relationship identified between schools and the districts is in line with Westraad (2011) that once the school level improvement was submitted to the school's circuit manager, it could be integrated into a circuit improvement plan. Westraad's suggestion is a reflection of what happened in the two districts with regard to school improvement planning.

4.1.11 Collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation

Since collaboration is the underpinning theory of the study, it became necessary to explore the nature of collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation in the two districts. This is a critical issue because, the nature of collaboration in their planning and implementation, in terms of the thesis of this study, will determine whether schools were in the position to improve their performance. Mention has already been made briefly of collaboration in earlier discussions, but in this section, a comprehensive look is taken at it

also in relation to the thesis and the focal theory of the study. Collaboration was explored as it took place in school level planning and implementation as well as district level planning and implementation. It has been presented under one theme covering issues in both school level and district level planning due to a number of overlapping issues. SS-2 expressed her view on collaboration in the following words:

> We have made the local stakeholders aware that the school belongs to them so in planning for the school, they need to be part. Anytime there is an important issue or decision to make about the school, the headteacher invites the office by writing, and normally, since I am the SISO for the school, the directorate will delegate me to represent. When we meet, we ask the executives to give account of whatever they have done. Now they do everything by themselves and they have more trust in their own members than the teachers. If it is about a project in the school, they will supervise and give account. And if their own member presents an account to them, they like it more than the teachers, and so there is some form of cordiality among them (SS-2).

The picture of collaboration created in the text above is quite paradoxical. It was noted that collaboration among stakeholders at the school level has been enabled due to accountability as rendered by parents because parents trusted accountability originating among them than teachers. This is not a positive picture of collaboration because trust is needed among stakeholders to foster collaboration. Similarly, Haissam (2023) considered trust and respect among stakeholders as essential elements for successful collaboration. He held that, without trust among stakeholders, each may find faults with each other's inputs. The data also indicated some level of collaboration between schools and the directorate in terms of planning. At the school level, the SISO usually represented district interest in school level planning. PO-2 further observed:

> …. the district education office is always in link with the district assembly in terms of support and other things. Before the district assembly provides any support, our unit will have to authenticate it by providing an information concerning that school so anything that has not been captured concerning the

> school can also not be supported by the district assembly. The district assembly cannot go to the school for anything unless this unit provides them the information. We go to the field to look at what is happening. So, I see some level of collaboration between the planning unit of the district and the individual schools (PO-2).

The submission above indicates some level of collaboration between the directorate and the district assembly in terms of planning and implementation. The directorate collaborated with the district assembly in order to secure logistics for implementation of their plans. The planning unit at the education directorate usually related to the district assembly through sharing of information, having gathered such information from the schools. On the basis of such information, the district assembly's support was released to schools. This means, there was some form of coordination and cooperation between the directorate and the district assembly and since coordination and cooperation are all key variables in the concept of collaboration, some level of collaboration could be inferred. Adding to this, PO-1 stated:

> I have to get the problem from the teachers or from BECE analysis, so in this case I will contact the exams officer. When they bring their inputs, I discuss with the SISOs and the headteachers before we come and sit down and look at the way forward. We also fall on parents' inputs but I do not personally meet with the parents. I usually do so through the Community Participation Coordinator (CPC). He has been doing most of the consultation with parents for us. He usually gets direct contacts with the parents and we depend on him for information about PTA and SMC. The CPC also sometimes attends staff meetings of some of the schools and he brings us information (PO-1).

This response presents some form of collaboration in planning and implementation at the district level. The Planning Officer, after identifying a problem engaged in a number of collaborative activities before getting the plan in shape. As he received inputs from other units, he engaged in multiple levels of discussion with different stakeholders such as SISOs, parents, teachers, and headteachers, to enable him develop the plan. Though he did not

personally meet with parents for discussions, he did so through his agent at the community level, the Community Participation Coordinator (CPC). So, through the activities of the CPC, the district achieved some form of collaboration with the stakeholders at the school level in school improvement planning. Thus, dialogue and consultations were presented as essential tools for collaboration in school improvement planning in the districts. This collaboration between schools and the district had always been crucial as Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011) pointed out that the role of the district office in supporting schools is indisputable, and that officials at the district level are pivotal in capacity-building at school level. Bantwini and Diko (2011) added that schools cannot redesign themselves and that districts play an important function in establishing the conditions for long-term improvements at schools. More light was thrown on collaboration in planning by SMC 1- SCH 2:

> Mostly, we are able to take whatever decision we need to take amidst all initial disagreements. One thing is that, the teachers respect us and we also respect them so our arguments do not escalate into acrimonies. In terms of collaboration, I will say, we are doing our best as human beings (SMC 1- SCH 2).

PA 2- SCH 5 also added:

> When there is the need for us to take a decision about something, sometimes I call her and we discuss it. The strategy we use is that, most of the times I discuss issues with the headteacher and sometimes the teachers informally before we take it to the entire PTA. So, at the meeting, we try to convince the parents because I know that my people can sometimes be difficult. But we manage them well (PA 2- SCH 5).

The data above indicate that, in terms of school level planning, there were diversified opinions on the existence of collaboration among stakeholders in planning. There may be some level of collaboration but it is was weak. This notwithstanding, dialogue is re-echoed as a major tool of collaboration among stakeholders at the school level. Also, mutual respect

was also identified as one of the factors fueling collaboration among stakeholders at the school level. Thus, key features of collaboration in school and district level planning as identified in this study were dialogue, mutual respect, sharing of information, coordination, cooperation, and accountability. Some of these elements form part of Basson and Mestry (2019) position that effective collaboration in schools should be based on mutual trust, teamwork, joint decision-making, open communication and cooperation to achieve school goals.

Additionally, the submissions above indicate some form of collaboration in planning at the school and district levels. However, situating this within previous findings on collaboration and relating this also to the thesis and focal theory of the study, care must be taken in making pronouncement about the nature of collaboration in planning especially at the school level. Generally, collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation can be assessed as feeble in the schools because it lacked key ingredients for collaboration as indicated in the theoretical framework of this study. The two theories on collaboration – theory of collective impact by Kania and Kramer (2011) and collegial model of stakeholder involvement by Bush (2003) emphasized common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, shared decision-making, shared values as some of the key ingredients for effective collaboration. However, these variables cannot be easily associated with the collaborative practices of schools in relation to school improvement planning and implementation in schools studied. It is on the basis of this, that, collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation was considered weak. This is because, planning and implementation in schools were generally characterized by consultations but consultation alone is not enough to make collaboration effective. Given

this description of collaboration in schools in the districts, the thesis of the study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*, could stand affirmed to some extent. Thus, this weak nature of collaboration in school improvement planning in the districts' schools could be among the contributing factors to poor academic performance in schools within in the districts accessed.

4.1.12 Implementation of school improvement plans

Two major themes emerged from data on implementation of school improvement plans in the two districts. The themes are – school level implementation and district level implementation. A number of codes were derived to form these themes. For example, the theme "school level implementation" was derived from codes such as role of implementors in planning, steps in school level implementation, stakeholder commitment to implementation and school level implementation strategies. Also, the theme, district level implementation, was derived from codes such as steps in district level implementation, implementation plan and implementation strategies. The two major themes are presented below:

4.1.13 School level implementation

The emphasis in this section was to explore how schools implemented their school improvement plans or programmes in terms of the roles stakeholders played and their level of commitment, the steps they followed and how systematic it was and whether implementation was based on strategies. Knowing this will inform readers on the quality of

implementation of school improvement plans in the schools accessed. In relation to these, HT 2- SCH 2 commented:

> Implementers of school improvement plans take active part in the planning process. I cannot do the planning alone, I am not even permitted to do that. I plan with my teachers, SISO, SMC and PTA and it is these same people that we implement plans with. They play active role in both planning and implementation (HT 2- SCH 2).

The data above indicate that school level implementation was done by active players in the planning process. This is a positive sign of implementation since implementers usually succeed when they implement plans they can call their own. The implementers (mostly teachers, SISOs, SMC, and PA) were given opportunity to make inputs into the plan which facilitates implementation of the plan at the school level. The inputs of teachers in particular usually came in the form of committee proposals which were factored into the plan. This finding finds support in Odei-Tettey (2021) who had emphasized that the habit of playing down the implementation stage in the planning process is the reason why a number of public policies have failed. He noted that this usually happened when implementers are excluded from the planning process.

Furthermore, the data showed steps followed in implementing plans in schools. Schools did not follow similar steps in implementing school improvement plans. However, from the individual steps followed in schools, a general implementation process can be derived for schools to adopt. The following responses highlight the steps in school level implementation:

> We also have various committees that we work with in the school so after relaying the vision of the district director to them and bringing ours in addition, we look at the various committees and those who will work on each of the plan given. When it is about academics, we have an academic committee, so we give it to them, when it is about the health of the students, we have the SHEP (School Health Education Programme) committee, so we give it to them. We

> give the schedule to the committee but as time goes on the school management will be monitoring it and they will be giving us updates (HT 3- SCH 3).

Similarly, HT 1- SCH 1 stated:

> Teachers are put into committees to implement our plans. We have the Academic Committee, SHEP Coordinators, Sanitation Officers, Project and Maintenance Officers. Any plan that comes under these areas such people will see to the implementation and report back to me. In ensuring successful implementation of our plans, I embark on monitoring and evaluation of how the plan is being implemented (HT 1- SCH 1).

Furthermore, HT 4- SCH 4 added:

> With every plan, we have a facilitator who will ensure that a plan given to a committee is implemented. These facilitators are the leaders of the committees and they are answerable to the success or failure of the plan implemented by the committee. Because of that we get those people involved especially the teachers and if there is the need for any form of resource for them to use then we make sure that they have been provided so that they will do effective implementation (HT 4- SCH 4).

From the responses above a general implementation procedure can be derived. As indicated already, schools did not follow similar pattern of implementation of their school improvement plans. However, generally, implementation followed the following steps: (1) formation of committees (2) appointment of facilitators (3) resourcing of committees (4) coaching and monitoring. This gives a four-step model of implementation of school improvement plans. Examples of implementation committees identified were SHEP Committee, Sanitation Committee, Academic Committee, Project and Maintenance committee. For accountability purposes, facilitators are appointed as leaders of committees to oversee a committee's implementation activities. Since resources are needed to implement plans, committees were resourced with the available resources to commence implementation. In the course of implementation, headteachers provided coaching and supervisory services to the members of the implementation committees to ensure a successful implementation.

One remarkable observation from the data is that, implementation of school improvement plans did not follow strict implementation routine as it appeared quite informal and that the four-step implementation model derived is a product of combined implementation efforts in schools accessed but not as a universal practice followed in all schools.

This model is different from the model of Jackson, Fixsen, and Ward (2018) (usable practices; implementation teams; implementation drivers; implementation stages; and improvement cycles), but they are not without any similarity. Their five-component model offered five crucial lessons for implementation of school improvement programmes. First, implementation presupposes an identification and adoption of a specific practice or a tested implementation framework which would guide every step in the overall implementation process. This is missing in the implementation practices identified in schools accessed as schools did not implement plans based on implementation frameworks. Second, implementation of school improvement programmes should not be done without a proper formation of an implementation team who are knowledgeable in whatever implementation framework adopted for the whole exercise. This is partially similar to the implementation practice identified in schools accessed through the formation of implementation committees. Three, every implementation exercise should possess internal functions that could keep the whole exercise alive. With regard to this, appointment of facilitators, resourcing of committees, coaching and monitoring which formed part of the implementation practices in schools accessed could be interpreted as implementation drivers mentioned by Jackson et al. The fourth and the fifth can be stated together. Thus, when adequate preparation is made, the actual implementation will have to begin and as this is done, evaluation would have to take place to assess the whole process to determine level of adherence to the goals set initially.

These last elements are also missing in the implementation practices of schools accessed. This means schools in the districts accessed need to formalize their implementation practices to really benefit from them.

Furthermore, implementation usually becomes successful when stakeholders are committed to the implementation. Moreover, since school improvement plans are developed by stakeholders, their commitment to its implementation is very crucial. It is not surprising that 'stakeholder commitment to implementation' emerged as a code. Key stakeholders at the school level included teachers, PA, SMC and SISO. Headteachers assessed the level of commitment of these stakeholders to their school improvement plans. The following responses provide information on stakeholder commitment to implementation of school improvement plans in schools:

> Teachers and SISOs are doing well in terms of their commitment. The commitment level of the SMC Chairperson is low. He is usually interested in signing of documents. But when it comes to the execution of the plan, you will call and call without any response. I will rate the involvement or commitment of my PTA and SMC at 45 percent. It is on two or three occasions that the SMC and PTA chairmen have sat in our locally initiated planning (HT 2- SCH 2).

HT 1- SCH 1 also commented:

> The PTA Chairman is always with us but not the SMC Chairman. I will say some of the stakeholders are showing commitment while others are not. Sometimes, when we go to the chiefs for assistance, they turn us down. The assembly member is not committed to the affairs of the school (HT 1- SCH 1).

SMC 2-SCH 3 observed further:

> I will say my teachers are doing very well when it comes to implementation of plans just that my people, I mean, the parents find it difficult to understand them. For me because of my work, time is a problem, but I still try my best to make some time for the school. But I must say that most of the work is done by the teachers, and especially the headmistress is doing very well. She consults me most of the times on what is going on with our plans and I provide some guidance. We are still talking to the parents to show more commitment

> to their children's education and the programmes of the school. They think everything to be done in the school is government's responsibility (SMC 2-SCH 3).

The responses above present diversified opinions on stakeholder commitment to implementation of school improvement plans in schools accessed. Key stakeholders whose commitments were assessed at the school level included teachers, PA, SMC and SISO. Other respondents included assembly members, chiefs, and churches in their assessments though these stakeholders were not included in this study. Teachers and SISOs were unanimously considered as active and committed to implementation of school improvement plans. Opinions were divided on the commitment of SMC chairpersons and PA chairpersons. However, comparatively, PA chairpersons were showing more commitment to implementation of school improvement plans than SMC chairpersons. In fact, commitment levels of SMC and PA chairpersons were averagely low. Parents' commitment was found to be woefully inadequate. The main reasons which accounted for the low stakeholder commitment to implementation of school improvement plans were lack of time and poor understanding of government's role in education on the side of parents. This low stakeholder commitment especially among parents, to implementation of school improvement plans may best be explained by the observations of Thompson (2018). For him, the success of any planning initiative is dependent on the degree to which the planning process can create a sense of commonality among stakeholders to produce the collaboration necessary for success. He added that, ensuring that all stakeholders feel that their inputs are equally valued and valid is critical to such an outcome. He was of the view that, stakeholders usually interpret the extent of their consultation as a basis for how they are valued and this affects their commitment to the planning and implementation process. Judging from these assertions

of Thompson, it could be posited that, the nature of stakeholder engagement in the districts accessed could be a contributing factor to the low commitment aside lack of time and poor understanding of government's role in education on the side of parents identified in this study as reasons for the low commitment of parents in particular.

Furthermore, the study of Mekango (2013) in Ethiopia made a similar finding when he discovered that the contribution of stakeholders for effective implementation of school improvement programme was not adequate. He found that the provision of technical support by Woreda education office, cluster supervisors, PTA and Kebele Education and Training Board members were not adequate to support the implementation of school improvement programme. He highlighted further that, because of the weak stakeholder roles in the implementation of school improvement programme, not much achievements had been made with regard to the implementation of the school improvement programme. This suggests that parents as key stakeholders in Africa need to step up their efforts in education delivery if schools are to improve to a desirable level.

Another code that emerged from the data was 'school level implementation strategies'. It is focused on strategies employed by stakeholders of the schools in getting their school improvement plans implemented. Since teachers emerged as the primary implementers of school improvement plans, data on this code was provided primarily by headteachers since they happened to be in charge of school level implementation. In relation to this, HT 2- SCH 2 had this to say:

> My strategies for implementation are scale of preference and motivation. We do not have resources to implement all that we set out to do. We therefore have to settle on the pressing needs. In terms of motivation, I provide refreshment during executive meetings to the stakeholders during PLC and the preparation of the SPIP. I have realized that, because of the motivation, teachers show

> much commitment when it comes to implementation of our plans (HT 2- SCH 2).

HT 5- SCH 5 also had this to say: "Everybody has a role to play and teachers usually respond positively when they are assigned tasks to perform regarding plans we have all made. My strategy is inclusion and it is working" (HT 5- SCH 5). Furthermore, this respondent expressed his strategy in the following words:

> The strategies are monitoring and supervision and the use of staff responsibility chart. Through the Staff responsibility chart, a teacher gets to know what he or she is supposed to do. It is through that chart that we are able to implement our plans (HT 1- SCH 1).

From the responses above, a number of implementation strategies have been identified as being employed in schools accessed. The strategies employed by headteachers included scale of preference, motivation, inclusion, monitoring and supervision, and responsibility chart. Because of inadequacy of funds, some headteachers implemented plans that responded to pressing needs (scale of preference). Headteachers believed, motivation led to stakeholder commitment to implementation. Inclusion strategy also brought a number of teachers on board to help in implementation of plans. As implementers were monitored and supervised, implementation errors were reduced leading to successful implementation. Through staff responsibility chart, teachers as primary implementers were constantly reminded of their responsibilities in the implementation of plans in the schools. These strategies appear quite informal though they are expected to be an integral part of school improvement plans developed by schools in the accessed districts. As indicated in the document of Government of Samoa (2005), implementation strategies are to be determined during the planning stage, specifically at the third stage of their planning model. Yet, the implementation strategies

highlighted by respondents in this study appear to be afterthought or personal ad-hoc measures by headteachers to get their plans implemented and so were not structured. Meanwhile implementation strategies need to be more structured.

4.1.14 District level implementation

As indicated already, the second of the two themes derived from data on implementation of school improvement plans is 'district level implementation'. The data at this section is focused on the steps followed in district level implementation, and also to ascertain whether respondents recognized a difference between implementation plan and implementation strategies and whether they employed these effectively in their implementation practices. This will highlight the quality of district level implementation and how that is helping to improve students' performance in the districts. With regard to the steps followed in implementing plans, PO-1 had this to say:

> During planning, we ensure that all items are costed by the Budget Officer. When funds are made available to us, we release them to the implementing units to begin the implementation straightaway and report to us on challenges they are facing and then we all see how we can address that. Most of the implementations are done in the schools and so they have to bring us report. But on our level here in the district, the implementing unit will be given whatever money is available for that particular action so that they start (PO-1).

PO-2 also stated:

> In terms of implementation, the key stakeholders or the activity coordinators see to that. The various activity coordinators meet at their various units to get their specific activities in place. The various units are tasked to implement part of the plan related to them. We have four units which are the Human Resource unit, Administration and Finance unit, Supervision and Inspectorate Unit, as well as the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation unit. For example, if it is about inadequate teachers in the schools, it falls under HR because the HR declares vacancies to get the required teachers into the schools. If it is about infrastructure, we have to look for support from the district assembly and other NGOs or corporate bodies. When we receive the funding coming from

> Government, we go straight to implement the plan. If it is from the MP's common fund, and it is for furniture, we release the money for that purpose (PO-2).

The data above indicate that the districts followed a simple routine in implementing their plans as most of the plans in the districts were implemented at the school level by teachers and SMC. At the district level, plans were implemented by individual units at the directorates. The first thing they did to implement their action plans was to resource these units so that implementation could begin straightaway and then report to the appropriate authority on implementation challenges. In implementing plans on infrastructure, funds were usually sought from the district assembly, NGOs and other corporate bodies. So, in terms of implementation steps at the district level, they were not presented as rigorous as they appeared straightforward and simple.

Despite the fact that rigorous steps were not followed in implementing plans at the district level, their implementations were never without implementation plans. In relation to this, a PO-1 said:

> I will say our implementation plan is hidden in our timelines. In my action plan, I have the output and the objectives and then the responsible unit or the person who is supposed to take up that activity. These form the plan for the implementation because no plan can be successfully implemented without timelines, objectives and outputs. These serve as a guide to us during implementation so that we do not lose track (PO-1).

To these, an addition was made:

> … then we have the time frame, we also have the expected output, then we have the units to implement all these. We have the resources required because basically we cannot have anything done without identifying the resources required and the unit that has been tasked to get it done. So that gives you the implementation structure (PO-2).

In district 1, timelines, output, objectives and implementing units embodied the implementation plan associated with school improvement planning in the district. These four variables were determined at the planning stage for purposes of implementation. Similarly in district 2, time frame, expected outputs, implementing units and resources required embodied the implementation plan. Thus, at the district level, much attention was paid to implementation at the planning stage as there were planning components focused primarily on implementation of the plan. Closely associated to implementation plan is the issue of implementation strategies. This is because, implementation plan may not be a guarantee of successful implementation unless there are implementation strategies to get the plan implemented. PO-1 further observed:

> We do not really have any specific strategy that I can pinpoint. But all the same, if there is a strategy at all, it is simply about looking for money to implement our plans. Sometimes, we fall on the district assembly and other donors for financial support. With the implementation plan that we have, all we need is to get the funds and we will implement it successfully. Our implementation plan can also be our strategy for implementation (PO-1).

PO-2 also indicated further:

> I do not really see much difference between the implementation plan and the strategies. Because for us, once we develop the implementation structure which is also the implementation plan in our case, our strategies are contained in there. If there are available resources, the plan will certainly be implemented unless maybe some unexpected challenge beyond our control meets us on the way (PO-2).

It is clear from the data that respondents did not see a difference between implementation plan and implementation strategies. For them, implementation plan is the same as implementation strategies. Therefore, after designing an implementation plan at the planning stage, the only strategy that could be thought of is getting funds for implementation of the plan. Respondents' inability to see a difference between implementation plan and

implementation strategy is not surprising because other writers also appear to be arguing along similar lines. For example, Asana (2022) stated that an implementation plan outlines the steps a team should take when accomplishing a shared goal or objective. The writer indicated that the implementation plan combines strategy, process, and action needed to implement a project, and will include all parts of the project from scope to budget and beyond. University of Washington (2022) also defined implementation strategy as the actions taken to enhance adoption, implementation, and sustainability of evidence-based interventions. With these definitions, then implementation plan includes implementation strategies. This understanding is different from perceiving implementation plan as being the same as implementation strategy as was the case in this study. The researcher recognized a difference between implementation plan and implementation strategy. The latter is a subset of the former.

4.1.15 Summary of how schools plan and implement school improvement programmes

As indicated already, research question one focused on how public schools in the two districts planned and implemented school improvement programmes. Comprehensive data have been provided on this subject in the preceding paragraphs. In this section, a synopsis of the data in relation to this subject is given to provide clear and direct answer to the research question one: How do public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts engage in school improvement planning and implementation?

From the data above, headteachers played key roles in school improvement planning and implementation. However, they did not possess the needed autonomy to plan. They could initiate planning but they did not have full control on what to plan and implement. Also, the

needed collaboration among stakeholders in planning and implementation was weak. Furthermore, school improvement planning in schools was restricted to key areas such as enrolment drive, co-curricular activities such as sports and culture, minor repairs, TLMs, and discipline. School improvement planning and implementation were also not preceded by a thorough school self-evaluation.

Additionally, schools did not follow similar procedures or steps in planning and implementation. Generally, school improvement planning followed a six-step process involving: need assessment, preliminary consideration of planning items by teachers, re-organisation of planning items by management, consultation with stakeholders on planning items, actual planning by stakeholders and official permission to execute plan. These steps were not followed strictly by schools. Also, implementation steps in schools generally involved formation of committees, appointment of facilitators, resourcing of committees, coaching and monitoring. Furthermore, implementation did not follow strict implementation routine as it appeared quite informal and that the four-step implementation model derived is a product of combined implementation efforts in schools accessed but not as a universal practice followed in all schools.

Moreover, planning in public schools studied missed certain essential elements of planning such as setting of realistic targets for each priority area and determination of strategies to achieve the targets. Also, apart from the SPIP template, schools did not follow any planning guide in planning. In the same way, implementation was also not based on implementation frameworks. The preparation of the SPIP was the major planning occasion in schools and the preparation of the SPIP involved a number of stakeholders such as teachers, SISOs, parents'

association, and the SMC. The commitment of these stakeholders to implementation of school improvement programmes was generally low due to lack of time. Finally, implementation in schools was not based on robust implementation strategies since strategies adopted were not structured but appeared to be afterthought or ad-hoc measures taken by headteachers to get their plans implemented.

4.2 Effectiveness of school improvement programmes

Data in this section are meant to answer the research question two: How effective are the school improvement programmes of public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts? This research question focused on the effectiveness of school improvement programmes run in schools in the two districts. The level of effectiveness of the school improvement programmes, once ascertained, will indicate how collaborative school improvement planning can generate quality school improvement programmes. This will subsequently lead to improved academic achievement. This is the position maintained in the thesis of this study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*. This means, collaborative school improvement planning and implementation at the local level will improve students' performance. Three major themes emerged – nature of school improvement programmes, effectiveness of school improvement programmes, and challenges of school improvement programmes. The three themes are presented below.

4.2.1 Nature of school improvement programmes

This theme is simply focused on specific school improvement programmes implemented in schools in the two districts. The emphasis was on their nature in terms of whether they were temporary programmes or well-established programmes determined by the schools or the districts for implementation. The nature of the school improvement programmes also underscores their quality which is a basis for their effectiveness. In relation to this, HT 2-SCH 2 commented:

> We organize Mathematics and Science quizzes and reading competitions among the sections in the JHS. Sometimes we organize them on inter-class basis or inter-schools. They have also introduced reading and radio programmes. We now have radio programmes as lessons in the classrooms. We have been provided with radios (HT 2- SCH 2).

Similarly, T3-SCH 2 added:

> We organize both cluster-based and school-based INSET, where teachers who are good in specific topics are given the opportunity to help their colleague teachers with difficulties in such topics. We normally do it through the PLC (Professional Learning Community) on Wednesdays. We can introduce bigger programmes but because of funds, we have to rely on the quizzes and any other one within our means (T3-SCH 2).

Furthermore, HT 1- SCH 1 observed:

> In this school, we have instituted morning classes and reading project without a fee. We use the reading project to improve their reading habits and also prepare them for circuits and district reading competitions. We also conduct mid-term examinations aside the usual class tests that we do. These are special programmes that have been implemented (HT 1- SCH 1).

SS-1 also stated:

> At the JHS level, the directorate has assembled a group of examiners to go to schools once a while to help the BECE candidates in terms of where they have challenges. They give them past questions and help them to solve them. They have also been speaking to the teachers to make good use of the instructional hours and apply appropriate pedagogy in teaching. Some schools also engage in after school classes, may be some 30 minutes after the closing time (SS-1).

From the data above, school improvement programmes targeted both students and teachers. Generally, students related programmes implemented in schools to improve performance included Quizzes, Debates, Reading Projects, Radio Lessons, Remedial Teaching, Mid-Term Tests, Extra Classes and Candidates' Support Programme. In relation to teachers, PLC (Professional Learning Community) was the only programme identified. The Quizzes were organized for all subjects in some schools while others focused the quizzes on only Mathematics and Science. The quizzes were organized on different levels involving classes, sections, and schools. Debates were either organized internally in schools or among schools within a circuit or a district. The reading projects were meant to improve reading habits of students and to prepare them for reading competitions in the districts. Schools have been provided with radios so that students can listen to radio lessons at specified periods in the classrooms. The remedial teaching usually targeted weaker students. Extra classes were organized usually in the morning for free due to government policy frowning on collection of monies from students. The Candidates' Support Programme was used to provide technical assistance to BECE candidates on how to answer questions and prepare adequately for the exams. PLC for teachers was either cluster-based or school-based and took the form of an Inservice Training (INSET) organized on Wednesdays. Through PLCs, teachers with requisite knowledge in specific subjects were given the opportunity to teach their colleagues with the aim of enhancing teacher performance in the districts.

It can be deduced that, schools in the accessed districts were not embarking on bigger school improvement programmes and the reason is lack of funds. In fact, the so-called "programmes" implemented appeared more to be "interventions" than programmes as programmes are more structured and systematically implemented and evaluated from time

to time for review. Unlike the Boston's School Improvement Programme which was more structured to be implemented in schools in Boston (Adelman and Taylor, 2005), the two districts accessed did not have well-structured school improvement programmes for their schools. However, upon a critical look at the programmes or interventions in the schools accessed, they can be described as focused on instructional delivery and teacher development, two elements which are key in Boston's School Improvement Programme. In Boston's School Improvement Programme, Principals and teachers were charged to introduce children to literacy education to be followed with numeracy. In order to achieve success in the programme, the district provided the needed support in terms of staff development and resources to make instruction more effective. Schools in the two districts have not been given district- based school improvement programmes and neither have their locally initiated programmes received financial support from the district directorates.

In addition, Boston's School Improvement Programme was fundamentally a district assessment and accountability system with six essentials (Adelman and Taylor, 2005). Two of the essentials have some form of indirect relationship with some of the programmes run in schools within the districts accessed (Essentials 1 and 3). Programmes such as Quizzes, Debates, Reading Projects, Radio Lessons, Remedial Teaching, Mid-Term Tests, Extra Classes and Candidates' Support Programme can be related to the essential 1 of Boston's School Improvement Programme (Use effective instructional practices and create a collaborative school climate to improve student learning). If these programmes receive financial support from stakeholders, they can help improve instructional delivery and performance in the schools. Essential 3 of Boston's School Improvement Programme (Invest in professional development to improve instruction), has a link with the PLC which is a

professional development component of programmes run in schools within the accessed districts. Though school improvement programmes in schools within the accessed districts were not district-based and well structured, they nevertheless have the same objective as other well-structured school improvement programmes which is the improvement of students' performance.

4.2.2 Effectiveness of school improvement programmes

Having identified specific school improvement programmes implemented in the accessed districts, the next crucial thing to ascertain was their effectiveness from the perspectives of the implementers and other stakeholders. The school improvement programmes were generally described as effective by respondents despite some few examples of dissenting views on their level of effectiveness. Underneath the data are the basis of the claim of effectiveness of the programmes. HT 1- SCH 1, in highlighting this had this to say:

> We have ended up yielding something better. Last year for instance, we placed first in the Circuit Mathematics and Science quiz. In this term, our students put up an impressive performance during the reading festival which was organized up to the inter-district level. A pupil from this school was selected to be part of the district team, an indication that at least the reading exercises are yielding good results. With the BECE, the children are doing well, and most of them are placed in High Schools. I believe, some of these initiatives are contributing factors to such achievements. On a scale of 100%, I will rate the effectiveness of the programmes at 80 percent (HT 1- SCH 1).

The data above reflect the perspectives on the school improvement programmes implemented in the two districts. As indicated already, school improvement programmes in the schools were perceived generally as effective. The basis for such a claim were found in (1) performance or placement of students in contests (Quizzes, debates and reading competitions), (2) placement of students in SHS resulting from good BECE performance, (3)

enhanced teacher performance through PLC, and (4) Enhanced academic performance of students. Respondents considered school improvement programmes as effective because some of the schools have their students placing well in district academic competitions. For them, the quality of the programmes especially, reading projects and intra- school quizzes prepared the students adequately to perform well at the circuit and district levels. Students being placed in Senior High Schools was indicative of the effectiveness of their school improvement programmes especially the extra classes and Candidates' Support programme. These and other programmes improved the general performance of students which reflected in the performance at the BECE. For them, had their programmes been ineffective, it would have reflected in their BECE performance. However, this position is quite critical as BECE performance in the two districts is generally not encouraging. Moreover, the claim of enhanced teacher performance through PLC is contradictory to the study of Dampson (2021) which concluded that teachers and headteachers in some Ghanaian basic schools lacked knowledge and pedagogical skills about PLCs.

Additionally, the data above cohere with the philosophical assumption of the Systemic School Improvement model that, educational outcomes at school level would improve if teachers were effective and the teaching and learning environments were supported by effective school organisation and community involvement. This can be a basis of programme effectiveness. Thus, school improvement programmes can be described as effective when teachers are effective and work in a supportive teaching and learning environment. This notwithstanding, the description of the school improvement programmes in the schools by respondents as effective may be relative especially if they are evaluated within the context of the five expected outcomes of the systemic school improvement model – (1) improved

support and monitoring of schools by districts (2) increased community involvement (3) improved functionality of schools as organizations (4) increased teacher competence and performance (5) increased learning and educational outcomes.

From the data, enough evidence was not provided on the basis of the programmes that they have improved support and monitoring of schools by districts, improved community involvement, improved school functionality as organisation, increased teacher competence and performance, and increased learning and educational outcomes. Maybe, since some students got placement into senior high schools, improvement in learning outcomes could be verified to some extent. Nevertheless, the claim of effectiveness of school improvement programmes in schools within the two districts still remains at the level of subjective opinions of the respondents but not facts fully supported by verifiable data since that did not appear in their submissions. If the school improvement programmes in the accessed districts cannot be judged as effective, then, the thesis of this study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*, could be affirmed on this basis. Thus, ineffectiveness of schools mentioned in the thesis could arise from implementation of ineffective school improvement programmes as is being portrayed in this study.

Furthermore, there were dissenting views on the level of effectiveness of the school improvement programmes. To some, the programmes were not fully effective because of implementation challenges of the programmes. These challenges were emphasized to the

extent that, they have become a sub-theme in this section of the analysis. The challenges of school improvement programmes are presented below.

4.2.3 Challenges of school improvement programmes

Effectiveness of school improvement programmes cannot be discussed in isolation. It must be done within the context of the challenges surrounding the implementation of the programmes. This is because, the challenges associated with the implementation of school improvement programmes highly impact on the effectiveness of the programmes. Three main challenges of school improvement programmes were identified in the data namely, (1) delay in implementation due to lack of funds; (2) unsupportive government policies and (3) poor patronage of programmes. Each of these challenges is discussed below:

a. Delay in implementation due to lack of funds

Data on this sub-theme sought to highlight lack of funds as a factor delaying successful implementation of school improvement programmes in schools accessed. PO-1 had this to say:

> It is very difficult to meet our timelines due to lack of funds for implementation of our programmes. We always rely on the little fund we have but it does not get us anywhere in the implementation. Due to this phenomenon, implementation of most of our programmes is delayed especially when we do not have the funds to pre-finance. Schools are not getting the expected results from the school improvement programmes implemented because the money does not come early for proper implementation (PO-1).

The data above indicate that stakeholders at the school level were finding it difficult to implement school improvement programmes intended to improve students' performance due to lack of funds which usually led to delays in implementation. When a plan or programme

is delayed, its effectiveness would be compromised and this was the case in the two districts accessed. Teachers might perceive their programmes as effective, but a challenge such as this will certainly affect the effectiveness of the programme. So, their claim that their school improvement programmes were effective must be viewed within this context implying that school improvement programmes in the two districts were feeble, but not necessarily in terms of their nature, but rather their associated challenges.

b. Unsupportive government policies

The data at this section is focused on certain policies of government hampering efforts of stakeholders in implementing their school improvement programmes successfully. HT 3-SCH 3 also had this to say:

> We introduced remedial classes in the morning but we were asked by our superiors to stop since that one involved collection of money to motivate the teachers. Though some teachers wanted to do it for free, we were asked to stop. This usually affects the intended effect of the programmes we implement. We are not allowed to do what we think will help the students (HT 3- SCH 3).

Similarly, T9-SCH 5 observed:

> The things that can improve the performance of the students have been taken out of the system. Due to this, students are now relaxed and they do not learn with urgency. For instance, examination which used to motivate students to learn is taken out. The system is politicized and queries are issued here and there and so everyone is careful. Our intentions are not supported by certain policies of the government (T9-SCH 5).

Furthermore, SS-1 commented:

> Headteachers have the liberty to initiate programmes at their own levels. But it depends on how the programme will look like and the cost involved. At the moment what we frown upon is the levying of students by headteachers to implement certain programmes. If they can look for other sources to finance their locally initiated programmes, that will be ok (SS-1).

The data above indicate that headteachers were finding it difficult to make their school improvement programmes effective due to unsupportive government policies in schools such as prohibition on collection of monies and elimination of end of term examinations. These unsupportive policies have made headteachers less autonomous. Meanwhile, for school improvement programmes to be effective, they need to be operated in an autonomous environment. However, headteachers were not autonomous in initiating actions that will ensure successful implementation of their school improvement programmes. They found it difficult to raise funds to support the implementation of their school improvement programmes due to government's prohibition on collection of monies from students. Due to this, headteachers hardly implemented school improvement programmes in the way they had intended. This obviously has implications for the effectiveness of the programmes.

c. Poor patronage of programmes

The data under this sub-theme addresses the level of seriousness that students attached to the school improvement programmes in their schools. This is because, for school improvement programmes to be effective, students need to patronize them. However, students' patronage of some of the programmes was found to be poor. HT 1- SCH 1 observed:

> …we face challenges with regard to parents and pupils' response to some of our programmes. Students' patronage of our early morning classes is very poor. They do not come early, and the parents also do not support us in this regard. As teachers, we always report to school early, but the students prefer to stay in the house and come to school at a time they want (HT 1- SCH 1).

The data above indicate that students' patronage of early morning classes was poor. It was perceived that parents' unsupportive behaviours have made it so. Parents' lack of concern for students' regularity and punctuality to school comes to the fore here. Meanwhile, the

Systemic School Improvement model included 'increased community involvement' in its expected outcomes which is one of the yardsticks for measuring programme effectiveness. Thus, parents could not become more involved and supportive of the schools' programmes and that could impact negatively on their effectiveness. Aside the five expected outcomes of the model, the Systemic School Improvement model was also developed around seven key variables – (1) stakeholder mobilization (2) planning and organisation (3) teacher performance (4) parent involvement (5) district support (6) teacher competence (7) research, monitoring and evaluation. If parents were unsupportive of the school improvement programmes, then it means stakeholder mobilization for making the programmes effective was also a challenge. In addition, there were no evidence that the school improvement programmes contained a research and evaluation component which would sustain its effectiveness. Thus, the Systemic School Improvement model has exposed the weaknesses of the school improvement programmes implemented in the two districts accessed.

4.3 Reasons for public school ineffectiveness

Data under this theme seek to answer the research question three: What reasons account for ineffectiveness in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts? The focus was to explore the reasons accounting for the phenomenon of public school ineffectiveness especially in the two accessed districts. The purpose here is to further assemble data to either deny or confirm the thesis of this study that: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*. The seriousness of the

challenges will add up to the body of arguments raised in the discussions either to confirm or deny the thesis of this study.

Furthermore, reasons for ineffective public schools emphasize the reality of ineffectiveness in public schools. Outputs of a number of public schools in Ghana and especially the schools in the two accessed districts have exposed the reality of ineffectiveness in the schools. The major theme derived from the data in this section is "Reasons for public school ineffectiveness". Under this theme are a number of sub-themes highlighting the specific reasons for ineffectiveness in public schools in the two districts. These sub-themes highlight the reality of public school ineffectiveness in the accessed districts. The sub-themes are: (1) inadequate government funding, (2) inadequate infrastructure, (3) inadequate teaching and learning resources, (4) low computer literacy, (5) unsatisfactory teacher performance, (6) unsupportive school environment, (7) problem of school dropout, (8) insecurity in schools, (9) poor teacher motivation, and (10) unsupportive behaviours of parents. These sub-themes are presented below.

4.3.1 Inadequate government funding

Inadequate government funding emerged as one of the reasons emphasizing school ineffectiveness in the accessed schools in the two districts. This section is focused on discussing inadequate government funding as one of the reasons making schools in the two districts ineffective. This challenge, by extension has an impact on the kind of planning done in schools and its resultant school improvement programmes. Thus, when schools do not have enough funds, school improvement planning could be ineffective and so will the

programmes that will arise out of that. This will also affect students' academic performance.

HT 3- SCH 3 observed:

> Government funding is woefully inadequate and it is always not paid on time. When we receive the capitation grant for the first term, that of the second and the third terms will come in the following year, so it is always in arrears. About two terms are in arrears now. We are seriously constrained financially. We have purchased a lot of things on credit that we do not have money to pay (HT 3- SCH 3).

T10-SCH 5 also added:

> The school is actually suffering when it comes to funding. We need tables, chairs, and additional classrooms. Our school building is not conducive for effective teaching and learning. There are leakages here and there. On a sunny day, the heat becomes unbearable. Our school block needs a serious renovation (T10-SCH 5).

The data above indicate that the Capitation Grant which is the primary source of funding in Junior High Schools in Ghana is woefully inadequate and irregular. The Capitation Grant was always in arrears and this has deprived a number schools of the needed facilities for effective teaching and learning. This situation has paved the way for the schools to be ineffective because schools need money to implement their school improvement programmes. This explains the finding made earlier in research question two that school improvement programmes in the accessed schools were not effective. In a situation where funds are described as "woefully inadequate", it will be difficult for schools to be effective. Uzochukwu (2020) and Meador (2020) made similar observations when they identified inadequate government funding as one of the challenges plaguing schools in Africa and across the globe. This is not a challenge specific to Ghana. Chen (2022) gave an indication of funding challenge in education in the United States. He observed that in the United States, funding challenge in schools could come in the form of budget cuts which have actually

created huge problems for most public schools in recent years. In the case of Ghana, funding challenge comes in the form of inadequate Capitation Grant. This finding on inadequate funding as a reason for school ineffectiveness in the accessed districts is a confirmation of the thesis of this study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*. The thesis described the schools in the accessed districts as ineffective on the basis of uncollaborative school improvement planning. However, with respect to this finding, the uncollaborative planning which is assumed in the thesis as the general cause of school ineffectiveness or poor academic performance, is also caused by a number of factors among which is inadequate government funding. In fact, all the reasons for school ineffectiveness identified in this study amount also to reasons for uncollaborative school improvement planning which is the main cause of poor academic performance in the districts accessed. Closely associated with the issue of funding, is infrastructure which is presented below.

4.3.2 Inadequate infrastructure

Infrastructure is closely connected to funding of education. Where we have inadequate funding, infrastructure is also likely to be inadequate. Infrastructure was found to be inadequate in schools accessed and that possibly was a contributing factor to poor academic performance in the districts accessed thereby making the schools ineffective. The data below emphasize this finding:

> We have a very big problem with infrastructure. We have a large enrolment but the classrooms are not enough. The rooms have no doors and windows and so outsiders easily jump into the classrooms after school to do their own thing. We do not have enough desks but even the few desks we have are also broken which need repairs. We also do not have ICT and science laboratories. Our

> canteen is not in good shape posing a hygienic threat to our students. As we speak, we are not connected to power. We also do not have a staff common room (HT 5- SCH 5).
>
> HT 4- SCH 4 also added:
>
> We have an ICT lab but we do not have a single computer in it. The ICT teachers have no option than using their personal laptops to teach. We have a lot of cracks in the walls of our classrooms which is not safe for students and teachers. The toilet facility is very bad. Our urinal is bad. Windows and doors are all not in good shape and are not safe. When it rains, the roofs just rip off (HT 4- SCH 4).

The data above exposed the infrastructure deficit in some of the Junior High Schools in the two accessed districts. Such a deficit also explains why it will be erroneous to ascribe a notion of effectiveness to schools operating under such conditions. Thus, some Junior High Schools in the two accessed districts were ineffective on the basis of their infrastructure deficit. A number of schools did not have essential facilities like ICT laboratories, science laboratories, adequate classroom blocks, desks, and toilet facilities. Classroom blocks and desks did not commensurate with numerical strength of some schools. Some of the schools have challenges with power supply to the schools.

Moreover, some schools with ICT laboratories also did not have computers. A number of facilities such as classroom blocks, toilet facilities, and urinals were not in good shape in some schools. Some classroom blocks have cracks in the walls as well as stones on the roof to hold the iron sheets down to prevent them ripped off in the case of a storm. Because of lack of space in the classrooms, a school had to make the students write exams in an open space under trees. “The students write their examinations in the open space specifically under trees because we cannot arrange them in the classroom due to lack of space” (Teacher 1, School 2). This is a perfect example of the “school under trees” syndrome in Ghana. In

relation to the finding on infrastructure deficit in schools, Meador (2020) and Mboweni (2014) considered poor school facilities as a contributing factor to students' absenteeism which in the long run makes schools ineffective. Similarly, the Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan- ESMTDP (2028-2021) identified poor infrastructure as one of the key challenges of Ghanaian basic schools. Also, Uzochukwu (2020) identified poor infrastructure as one of the challenges plaguing schools in Africa. The finding of poor infrastructure in the Junior High Schools accessed is not surprising as is a common problem in Ghana, but it must be rigorously addressed since it contributes immensely to school effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Closely associated with infrastructure is the issue of teaching and learning resources which is discussed below.

4.3.3 Inadequate Teaching and Learning Resources

This section is focused on explaining how inadequate teaching and learning resources constituted a reason for describing schools in the accessed districts as ineffective. Thus, teaching and learning resources were found to be inadequate in the accessed schools. The impact of this was felt in the delivery of teachers as well as the learning of students.

In relation to this theme, T8-SCH 4 said: "Teaching and learning resources are also inadequate. We do not have textbooks for the new curriculum. The teachers purchase their own books to teach the students to support the implementation of the new curriculum" (T8-SCH 4). T5-SCH 3 also stated: "We do not have teachers' notebooks, scheme of work, lesson notes, and curriculum books. It is making teaching and learning very difficult for us" (T5-SCH 3).

Furthermore, it is clear from the data above that some Junior High Schools in the two accessed districts did not have adequate teaching and learning resources and this has implications for their effectiveness as schools. Meanwhile, teaching and learning resources are one of the foundational issues in school effectiveness. Their unavailability or even inadequacy is enough reason for schools to become ineffective. Some Junior High Schools in the two accessed districts were faced with the problem of inadequate textbooks, lack of science laboratories, teachers' notebooks for scheme of work, lesson notes and curriculum books. The teaching of science has become abstract due to unavailability of science laboratories in some Junior High Schools in the accessed districts. This situation is among the reasons why some Junior High Schools in the accessed districts were ineffective in the sense of not producing the best results in the BECE. The ESMTDP (2018–2021) had made a similar observation that, in Ghana, textbook–student ratios have declined substantially since 2011/12, reaching 0.5 in 2016/17 for mathematics, and textbook production is often delayed. Additionally, Acquaah and Kwenin (2021) found in Mfantseman Municipality in Ghana that school buildings, furniture, science equipment, textbooks, exercise books, and other teaching and learning materials in Junior high schools were inadequate and the few resources available were also in a sorry state. This means the problem of inadequate teaching and learning resources is not a challenge in the two accessed districts alone but its nearby districts and Ghana by extension. Closely associated with the sub-theme, 'inadequate teaching and learning resources' is the theme, 'unsupportive school environment'. This is because teaching and learning resources are part of what is needed in a school to make its environment supportive of effective teaching and learning. The sub-theme, 'unsupportive school environment' is presented below.

4.3.4 Unsupportive school environment

The discussion in this section is meant to argue out the ineffectiveness of the accessed schools in terms of how unsupportive their environments were to effective teaching and learning. Evidence from respondents' data show that, some Junior High Schools in the two accessed districts have unsupportive school environments. The data below have emphasized this:

> The school's environment is not supportive of effective teaching and learning. We lack facilities like library, ICT and Science laboratories. Due to the lack of computers, the teaching of computing is very difficult. Because our classrooms are inadequate, we are forced to keep about eighty students in a classroom. Our compound is not fenced and this paves way for a lot of intrusions during instructional hours. There are no wardrobes and shelves in the classrooms. The children keep their bags on their laps or on the floor. A safe place for keeping Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) is a challenge here. Ventilation is also a problem due to the sizes of the windows and the height of the roofing from the floor which is very short. Meanwhile, there are no fans. The school is sited close to a market and that creates problems for us. Teaching and learning on Fridays is usually not effective because the school field is usually used as funeral ground. The noise sometimes becomes unbearable. The students are usually absent minded when the music is played on Fridays during funerals as they peep through windows to observe (T10-SCH 5).

Similarly, T8-SCH 4 shared:

> We face a lot of distractions from religious activities around the school. There is a cemetery around so on Fridays when people come around to dig the grave, they disturb us a lot. All these things do not support teaching and learning. They have made the school a path way. I will rate it 40% in terms of how supportive our school environment is to teaching and learning (T8-SCH 4).

The data above emphasize the unsupportive nature of the environments of some of the Junior High Schools in the accessed districts. The unsupportive nature exhibited itself in three forms – distractions from human activities, distractions from activities of nature, and resource

constraints. With regard to distractions from human activities, the data showed that noisy atmosphere around schools created a lot of distractions which disturbed effective teaching and learning in the accessed Junior High Schools. The noise in some schools was created by nearby market, funerals on school fields on Fridays, noise from ambulances, burials and church services near school premises. Pedestrians' behaviours in some schools took the attention of the students away from the classroom. These usually affected students' concentration in class and made teaching and learning very difficult for teachers on Fridays in particular.

In addition, the second form of the unsupportive nature of the school environment exhibited itself in distractions from activities of nature. Lessons were sometimes distracted by floods in the classrooms and leaking ceilings in some schools. "When it rains, classes will have to stop because the ceilings will be leaking and sometimes the classrooms get flooded" (T5-SCH 3). The third form of the unsupportive nature of the school environments expressed itself in resource constraints. For example, unavailability of library made teaching and learning difficult. School compounds were not fenced thereby paving the way for community youth to come into the school environment to create confusion. Also, due to inadequacy of classroom blocks and desks, sometimes about eighty (80) students were seated in a classroom with two or three students on a desk. Some schools, had no wardrobes for safe keeping of books and other teaching and learning resources in the classrooms. In some schools, students did not have a place in the classroom to keep their bags during lessons. Schools did not have projectors which could aid audio visual lessons in subjects that required that. Some teachers expressed their desire to use projector to teach certain topics but they did not have them. Ventilation was also a problem in some schools because of the style of their classroom

blocks. Some of the windows were too small. Some classrooms were full of heat either because there were no ceilings or the roofs were close to the ground.

This picture of school environment as depicted by the data has certainly made it difficult for teachers to embark on effective teaching in such environments. This is among the reasons why some Junior High Schools in the two accessed districts were described as ineffective. This is because, students cannot learn in such distractive environments and so would teachers not be able to teach effectively in such distractive environments. In relation to the finding of unsupportive school environment, Meador (2020) found among others that overcrowding classrooms was a challenge in a number of South African schools. In fact, the picture of the academic environment in schools in the accessed districts did not measure up to the standards for effective school as given by Lezotte (2001). Lezotte argued that, every effective school must have an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere, which is free from the threat of physical harm. He said, the school climate in an effective school is not oppressive and is conducive for teaching and learning. The data showed that school environments in the accessed districts were not orderly and some exhibited threat of physical harm. For example, some schools were not fenced, there were cases of intrusion, floods in the classrooms etc. It is on the basis of these that schools in the two accessed districts have been described as ineffective. If the schools are ineffective on the basis of these, then the thesis of the study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*, is affirmed by the data. The unsupportive nature of the school environment which has made the schools ineffective, could be as a result of uncollaborative school improvement planning identified also in this study. Closely associated with

'unsupportive school environment' is the sub-theme, 'insecurity in schools' which is presented below:

4.3.5 Insecurity in schools

Effective schools usually operate in safe environments. This means if a school's environment is not safe, the school can be described as ineffective because effective teaching and learning cannot take place in an unsafe school environment. Some schools in the accessed districts were operating in unsafe environments. Thus, insecurity was found as a challenge in some of the schools in the accessed districts. T9-SCH 5 commented: "School security is nothing to write home about here. We have had incidents where people from the community came to attack students during school hours as a form of revenge" (T9-SCH 5). Furthermore, T3-SCH 2 indicated:

> The security in the school is very porous. The coconut farm over there is the hideout for the wee-smokers in the community and look at its closeness to the school. This poses a serious threat to both teachers and students (T3-SCH 2).

T7-SCH 4 also had this to say:

> We have encountered threats from some of the community members. We were threatened when we complained about heavy-duty vehicles that carried sand which passed through our compound. There have been occasions where we found rituals to have been performed in the classrooms. Such incidents usually disrupted classes for sometimes before things got to normalcy. Thieves broke into the headteacher's office and took a lot of things away (T7-SCH 4).

The picture of insecurity in some of the schools presented by the data is an indictment on the effectiveness of such schools. It is an evidence that such schools were ineffective because effective teaching and learning cannot take place in an unsafe environment. In these schools, insecurity manifested in schools being surrounded by settlements, activities of weed smokers in nearby locations, threats and attacks on teachers, theft cases in schools, intruders in school

premises, and rituals in classrooms. All these practices made the school premises unsafe for effective teaching and learning in the accessed schools. On the basis of these, some JHSs in the accessed districts were found ineffective with insecurity in such schools being one of the reasons.

The finding on insecurity in the schools coheres with the position of Onwuasoanya, Yakubu and Ismail (2021) that education system in Nigeria continued to suffer from insecurity. They noted kidnappings of students, killing of students and teachers in ethnic clashes and all forms of terrorism as cases of insecurity in schools. This obviously is different from the form of insecurity identified in schools in the accessed districts but they all have impact on the effectiveness of the schools. From the definition of school insecurity by Onwuasoanya et al., as a situation where by the school, students, pupils and teachers are open to attack, danger, treat or lack of protection, some of the schools accessed can be described as insecure since their environment exposed the students to danger or threat and the students also lacked protection in school premises. Uzochukwu (2020) made a similar finding when he identified insecurity in schools as one of the challenges facing a number of basic schools in Africa. Also, Roborife and Phasha (2010) found school insecurity as a challenge in a number of South African schools. On the basis of these a number of the schools in the accessed districts have also been described as ineffective.

4.3.6 Low computer literacy

In recent times, computer literacy is among the key determinants of school effectiveness. Thus, low computer literacy is among the reasons for classifying a school as ineffective. This sub-theme emphasized problem of low computer literacy identified in some Junior High

Schools in the accessed districts. Such a finding has contributed to the discourse on public school ineffectiveness in the accessed districts. T4-SCH 2 had this to say:

> The computers we have here are not working. Teachers are forced to teach such practical lessons by concentrating only on theory. When it comes to the parts of the computers, we are able to get the old ones to show to the students but as to the practicality of it like typing, moving the cursor etc., it becomes a difficult task to teach the children. This is why we are not doing well in terms of computer literacy (T4-SCH 2).

T1-SCH 1 also added:

> Am not satisfied with the level of computer literacy among the students. A number of the students have smart phones but they are finding it difficult to apply their knowledge in smart phone usage during ICT lessons. In terms of computer literacy, I will rate it 30% here which is a total failure. We have just a single computer for all the students, so you can imagine the pressure (T1-SCH 1).

The data above have portrayed low computer literacy as one of the challenges plaguing JHSs in the accessed districts. This problem manifested itself in two forms- school-related factor and students-related factor. In relation to schools, the problem had to do with unavailability of functional computers and projectors which has made the teaching of ICT very difficult. T10-SCH 5 observed: "… not to talk of a projector, which will help in projecting things for the children to visualize" (T10-SCH 5). Due to this, students did not have hands-on experiences and that affected their computer literacy. This situation has made the teaching of ICT very theoretical in a number of JHSs in the accessed districts and that was a contributing factor to the low computer literacy in the schools. The students-related factor, bothered on the failure of students to transfer knowledge gained in their usage of other ICT tools such as smart phones to the ICT lessons. Some teachers perceived students as not being serious with ICT as a subject and that explained why students were not good in the subject. As has been indicated already, a school with low computer literacy will find it difficult to be

truly effective as the world has gone technological in all aspects. It is on the basis of this that JHSs in the accessed districts were described as ineffective in this study.

Once again, Uzochukwu (2020) identified poor computer literacy as one of the challenges facing schools in Africa. Uzochukwu admitted that African countries like Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Ethiopia, Congo, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Mali, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Zambia, Gabon, Zimbabwe have made some efforts in secondary schools in particular by installing computers to facilitate students' learning. This notwithstanding, these countries faced the challenge of getting qualified instructors for students. Furthermore, the finding on poor computer literacy agrees with the finding of UNESCO (2021) that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the great majority of students had no access to computers and internet, while about 4 – 5 out of 10 students in Northern Africa also lacked access. More specifically, 199 million students were without internet during the 2020 Covid-19 crisis. Moreover, 25 million students in Northern Africa had no internet access to support teaching and learning during the height of school closures during the 2020 COVID-19 crisis (UNESCO, 2021). ICT tools and Internet were least frequently provided as just 12% and 4% of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, respectively, but to none in Northern Africa were provided support in ICT and internet. The situation of computer literacy has not improved much as evidenced in this study which is a contributing factor to the ineffectiveness of the schools.

4.3.7 Unsatisfactory teacher performance

Teacher performance is a crucial factor in school effectiveness because, given that, all factors for a school's effectiveness are in the positive, it would take the efforts of the teachers to make achievement of good results a reality. The resources cannot work on their own.

Meanwhile, the data displayed examples of unsatisfactory teacher performance in some schools. These teachers may not be in the majority, but nevertheless, they contributed to ineffectiveness of at least the schools in which they taught. This position is confirmed in the following submissions:

> The commitment of some of the teachers is low. They want to see me around before they do the right thing but my schedule does not permit me to be present at all times. My mind is always not at peace when am out of the school. To some, it is the pressure that keeps them on their toes. Some of them think they are doing the children a favour by teaching them. They have forgotten that it is their responsibility and they are paid for that (HT 2- SCH 2).

SS-5 also added:

> There are instances where teachers go to school or class but do not really teach. On one of my unannounced visits to a particular school, I found a teacher whatsapping. When I asked why, the teacher said he has given them work. This is unacceptable. If you have given them work, that does not mean you should go on Whatsapp. You need to check whether they are cheating or not (SS-5).

SMC 1- SCH 2 further stated:

> Some of the teachers are lazy. They do not give homework to the students. That is one problem I have with some of them. Some of the enlightened parents have been complaining to me because they know what goes on in the private schools. In the private schools, students always come home with assignments and that usually keep them busy. Most of the students found loitering around in the nights are public school students (SMC 1- SCH 2).

The data above emphasize the problem of unsatisfactory teacher performance in some schools. Some teachers exhibited unprofessional behaviours in the classrooms by wasting instructional time to talk about irrelevant matters and sometimes insult students for no reason. Some teachers also exhibited irresponsible behaviour by avoiding their duties in the absence of their superiors. Some teachers Whatsapped in class instead of teaching. These unprofessional behaviours exposed their lack of commitment which is an evidence of their unsatisfactory performance in their schools. These behaviours fit into Meador (2018)'s

benchmarks for a bad teacher which included lack of classroom management, lack of content knowledge, lack of organizational skills, lack of professionalism, poor communication skills, and lack of commitment. Also, Kodero, Misigo, Owino, and Simiyu (2011)'s study in Kenya on salient characteristics of trained ineffective teachers in secondary schools found wastage of students' time as one of the characteristics of a trained or certified ineffective teacher. According to Lezotte (2010), teachers in effective schools allocate a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential curriculum areas. Using Lezotte's position as a measure, some of the schools in the accessed districts qualified to be described as ineffective.

Furthermore, some of the data focused on the instructional practices of teachers. SS-3 commented:

> Some teachers teach abstractly without using appropriate TLMs. The reason for this could come from either the government's inability to provide the needed resources or lack of advance preparation and effective supervision of the teachers. Some teachers still prefer the teacher- centred approach and they end up spoon-feeding the students (SS-3).

This response emphasized a pedagogical challenge in some of the schools. Some teachers taught abstractly without using appropriate teaching and learning resources. In relation to the use of teaching and learning resources, a number of the teachers have not been innovative thinking that their long service was a guarantee for teaching effectively without teaching and learning resources. Moreover, the student-centred approach which is recommended in the New Curriculum was abandoned by some teachers as they still preferred the teacher-centred approach which is perceived by many as old fashioned. This pedagogical defect is an indictment on the performance of some teachers in the accessed districts which consequently added up to the body of arguments advanced to emphasize the reality of public school ineffectiveness in the two districts. In relation to the above finding, Kodero et al. (2011),

made a similar finding when they identified poor mastery of subject matter and teaching skills as some of the characteristics of trained ineffective teachers. So, the pedagogical defect identified reflects the existence of trained ineffective teachers in the two districts accessed, and whose activities have rendered their schools ineffective.

In addition, SS-3 said:

> Our performance expectation for schools is 40% pass in the BECE. I do not think 40% pass is a low expectation for our schools, because at the basic level, getting 40% is not easy. Another issue is that, we are having challenges with Creative Arts and Physical Education (P. E). Most of our teachers handling these subjects are not trained in these areas. To get competent teachers to handle these subjects is quite difficult here (SS-3).

The data above indicate that some teachers underperformed because they lacked requisite knowledge in subjects such as Physical Education (P E) and Creative Arts. This was so because they did not receive adequate training in such subjects. Also, the unsatisfactory performance of teachers could result from low performance expectation from teachers. Forty percent (40%) pass in the BECE was the pass mark for schools. This is a low performance expectation which does not psychologically encourage hard work from teachers. This unsatisfactory performance of some teachers in relation to these subjects added to the problem of ineffectiveness in such schools.

In sum, the problem of unsatisfactory teacher performance exhibited itself in a number of ways, including exhibition of unprofessional behaviours in the classrooms, waste of instructional time, avoidance of duties in the absence of superiors, lack of requisite knowledge in some subjects, low performance expectation for schools, and pedagogical defect. The pedagogical defect manifested itself in terms of abstract teaching, lack of innovation in teaching, and reliance on teacher-centred approach. These variables

highlighted the problem of unsatisfactory teacher performance in some of the schools in the accessed districts.

On the basis of these, public school ineffectiveness is viewed as a phenomenon in the two districts with unsatisfactory teacher performance as one of the reasons for such a situation. The findings on unsatisfactory teacher performance can be enlightened by the observations of Khosa (2013) in the Systemic School Improvement Model. According to the model, teacher performance was influenced by a wide range of factors which included teachers' characteristics (knowledge, skills, ethos and motivation), learners' characteristics and features of the classroom and the school (Khosa, 2013). Teacher performance as a component was concerned with the classroom environment and sought to ensure that teachers: (1) were aware of the teaching goals that they needed to pursue; (2) embraced their role in the learning process; (3) focused teaching on learning outcomes; (4) had access to efficient curriculum delivery systems and resources for achieving the teaching goals; and (5) were excited about teaching. Using these standards as a measure for teacher performance in the two districts, and given the findings made, it is justifiable to describe some of the schools as ineffective on the basis of the identified unsatisfactory teacher performance in some of the Junior High Schools. However, the argument can be taken beyond the dimension of the teachers in terms of their ineffectiveness from the perspectives of Meador (2018). Meador argued that teacher ineffectiveness should not always be perceived as originating from teacher related factors alone. Berry (2010) explained this by saying that, teacher working conditions can also determine teacher effectiveness. This means a school's ineffectiveness can be caused by its own characteristics in terms of the existing conditions in the school. If teachers do not have the required resources to teach and generally work under poor conditions, as identified in

this study, it would be unfair to expect the best from them. This means, the finding on unsatisfactory teacher performance should be stressed with caution.

4.3.8 Poor teacher motivation

Many believe that motivation influences performance. Any school that intends to remain effective through outstanding performance of its teachers must endeavour to motivate them extrinsically. The extrinsic motivation being referred to here could come from the government and the school management. This study found that teacher motivation in schools within the accessed districts was poor. Perhaps this could be a contributing factor to the unsatisfactory teacher performance found in this study. It is therefore established in this study based on the finding on poor teacher motivation that, it was a contributing factor to the phenomenon of ineffectiveness in JHSs accessed in this study. The following data highlight this finding:

> Teacher motivation is very low. There is nothing to motivate us as teachers apart from our salary, which is even discouraging. All avenues of generating funds to motivate teachers have been banned. Some of the fund generated from examination fees was set aside for teacher motivation but that has been cancelled. I am working because I am intrinsically motivated, but certainly not all teachers will deliver when they are not motivated (T10-SCH 5).

From the data above, teacher motivation in the schools accessed was poor. Neither the government nor the community motivated teachers. Even marking allowance from examination fees which used to provide some form of motivation to teachers has been banned, and so were other sources of motivation. From the data, the poor motivation has affected the performance of some of the teachers in the districts. Teachers therefore indicated that their only source of motivation was intrinsic. Because teacher motivation was related to teacher performance, poor teacher motivation found in schools in the accessed districts was

understood as one of the reasons for ineffectiveness in JHSs in the districts. This finding agrees with Meador (2018) that lack of teacher commitment results from lack of motivation and for that matter such teachers never arrive early or stay late in school, do not challenge their students and are often behind on grading. Furthermore, the finding on poor teacher motivation is justified by the position of Kinutai and Zachariah (2012) that the quality of classroom delivery depended largely on the knowledge, preparation and motivation of the teacher. This explains the inclusion of poor teacher motivation in the reasons for public school ineffectiveness in the accessed districts.

4.3.9 Unsupportive behaviours of parents

In recent times, parents hold pivotal positions in Junior High Schools in Ghana. Decision making is primarily controlled by parents. They only have to collaborate or support teachers in the education process. When this duty is effectively discharged, a school can achieve good results and thereby become effective. This means, schools need the support of parents to be effective. Some parents in Junior High Schools in the accessed districts were not supportive to the schools. The unsupportive behaviours had adverse effects on the activities of the schools thereby reducing their level of effectiveness. The data below present the unsupportive behaviours of parents. T2-SCH 1 shared:

> The behaviours of the parents are unsupportive of our work here. When we call for PA meetings, they do not attend in their numbers. They like to find fault on resident teachers but not in terms of providing for the academic needs of their wards to facilitate our work. Parents and other family members sometimes come to the school to abuse teachers who punish their wards (T2-SCH 1).

T7-SCH 4 also observed:

> Sometimes the behaviours of the parents demotivate us. Some parents can just walk to the school at any time and demand that his or her ward be

> released to him or her because he wants to go somewhere with him or her. We usually have no option than to heed to their demands because if we refuse, they will verbally abuse us (T7-SCH 4).

From the data above, it is obvious some parents in the accessed schools were unsupportive to the schools and that contributed to the ineffectiveness of such schools. Parents' unsupportive behaviours stretched across low attendance at PA meetings, failure to provide academic needs of students, hostile attitudes towards teachers and distraction of lessons. These behaviours did not foster collaborative education in the accessed schools thereby making the schools ineffective. In relation to these, Basson and Mestry (2019) found the phenomenon of parents absenting themselves at meetings and training sessions organized for them as a factor hampering the schools' collaboration with their stakeholders. They discovered that busy schedules of parents and their inadequate knowledge about their roles and responsibilities regarding school governance and management affected parents' level of collaboration with the schools and created difficulties during implementation of school improvement programmes.

4.3.10 The problem of school dropout

School dropout is usually not a problem in effective schools. In effective schools, the school system is structured in such a way that students are retained in schools. The occurrence of school dropout in a school is a sign of a failing school. If schools in the two accessed districts have cases of school dropout, then they amount to an evidence of ineffectiveness in such schools. The data pointed to existence of the phenomenon of school dropout in some schools in the accessed districts. This presented such schools as ineffective as their systems have

failed to retain their students because high retention rate is a crucial characteristic of an effective school. T3-SCH 2 highlighted:

> For three consecutive years, we have been getting cases of teenage pregnancy here in all the three classes at the JHS level. At times we have two to three girls in a particular class getting pregnant. And as we speak, we have two pregnant teenagers in each of the levels aside the three girls at home who have given birth already. It is really affecting academic work in the school (T3-SCH 2).

PA 1-SCH 2 also had this to say:

> This is one of my worries as a PA chairperson. Some of our girls and boys dropout of school. The girls usually dropout of school due to pregnancy. Poverty level here is very high and so the young guys in the community take advantage of the conditions of the girls and impregnate them. For the boys, it is just about peer pressure. They follow friends to drink and sometimes smoke and end up dropping out of school. In fact, smoking is gradually becoming a serious problem among the youth in this community and it is contributing to dropout in our school (PA 1-SCH 2).

T7-SCH 4 shared further:

> The girls usually drop out of school due to family breakdown. Students from broken homes are usually not properly catered for. This leads the girls in particular to engage in early sex. This explains why dropout is quite high here. For example, by the time a class of 80 students complete, they will be left with about 70 students (T7-SCH 4).

The responses above presented school dropout as a problem in some of the schools accessed. Both boys and girls dropped out of schools with different reasons. In the case of girls, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and family breakdown were the dominant reasons accounting for dropout. In the case of boys, peer pressure and smoking were the dominant reasons. The school may not have control over some of these factors, but nevertheless, the impact of these factors showing up in the dropout rate in these schools make the schools ineffective because they were not able to achieve their goal with regard to the students who dropped out of

school. That amounted to failure on the part of the schools thereby establishing school dropout as one of the reasons of public school ineffectiveness in the accessed districts.

This finding is in conformity with the findings of Imoro (2009) when he found dropout rates at JHSs level to be higher than the rates at primary schools in the Asutifi district in Ghana. Generally, he found that the dropout rates for girls was higher than that for boys. This is sharply contrasted with the finding of Abreh et al. (2021) that boys were more likely to drop out of school compared to girls in Ghana. They found further that, generally, dropout rate was low and that poorer children were at a higher risk of dropping out of school compared to their richer counterparts. With regard to the causes of dropout at the JHS level, Imoro found among others that poverty, teenage pregnancy, peer influence, and broken home were among the dominant factors. This means the situation of dropout as experienced by Imoro way back in 2009 has not improved much and needs much attention especially at the JHS level.

4.4 Making Schools Effective (Performance Improvement Strategies)

Data in this section were meant to answer the research question four: How can public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts be made more effective in their performance? The data constitute a set of strategies that can be adopted by underperforming schools to improve their performance. Thus, when these strategies are adopted within a collaborative environment, schools will become effective. This is the point where data in this section can be situated within the thesis of this study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*. It can therefore be argued that

schools in the accessed districts have become ineffective because of their failure to adopt some of these strategies for improving students' academic performance.

Furthermore, the strategies for improving performance in schools as identified in this study have been categorized into four sub-themes with each sub-theme comprising a number of elements which constitute the actual strategies to be adopted by schools. The first sub-theme – School-Focused Strategies, comprise higher expectation, effective use of resources, school infrastructure and learning resources, and discipline. The second sub-theme – Teacher Focused Strategies, comprise teacher accountability and performance contract, productive staffing, conditions of service and motivation, performance targets, and professional learning community (PLC). The third sub-theme – Instruction-Focused Strategies, comprise students-centred approach, remediation activities, students' placement and transition and instructional supervision. The fourth sub-theme – Community-Focused Strategies, comprise parental involvement and stakeholder collaboration. From these four sub-themes, a model of school improvement which is in line with the theoretical stance of this study has been proposed. The four sub-themes are presented below.

4.4.1 School- Focused Strategies

The school as an institution forms a separate entity different from its individual components. Though other strategies were focused on other components of the school, the school as a plant needs special attention. When the school as a plant is carefully improved, it paves the way for other components to also improve. So, the 'School-Focused Strategies' focus on the aspects of the school that need to be improved to create a congenial atmosphere for effective teaching and learning. These strategies are fundamental to the entire improvement strategies

outlined in this study. As mentioned already, the 'School-Focused Strategies' are made up of higher expectation, effective use of resources, school infrastructure and learning resources, and discipline. These were proposed as individual strategies that need to be employed to make the school plant actually a learning place. Because each of these codes represents a specific strategy for improvement, they are presented individually as sub-themes under the main theme 'School-Focused Strategies'.

a. Higher Expectation

This strategy proposes that there should be a higher expectation for teachers and students in Junior High Schools in the two accessed districts. The expectation from teachers will come from the district and the community, whereas students' expectation will come from teachers. Thus, when higher expectations are placed on the two key actors in the school (teachers and students), the school will be on the path to improvement. The data below emphasize this theme:

> We are creating higher expectation for teachers through the local SPAM, circuit SPAM and district SPAM. Because of accountability at SPAM, expectation is high for teachers. With regard to the students, I usually use the need for them to get better SHS placement as a way of creating higher expectation for them through the BECE. The students know that we expect them to perform better and top in the district analysis. The district has also placed an expectation on us and we need to live up to that task (HT 2- SCH 2).

T3-SCH 2 also added his voice to this issue:

> I demonstrate my expectation for students by giving them attention. I do this by monitoring their progress and sometimes even visit their homes to understand their situation. This will be an invisible force on them to work hard to excel. Our reaction to them when they score lower marks in assessments indicates to them that we have higher expectation for them. If all schools adopt this strategy, I believe things will improve in our schools because we have seen some good outcome from this in this school (T3-SCH 2).

The responses above proposed 'higher expectation' as a strategy for making schools effective. It also showed how the higher expectation can be created in a school. The data showed further that, to make schools effective, there should be higher expectation for both teachers and students in the school. The data presented School Performance Appraisal Meeting (SPAM) and district performance expectation as means of creating higher expectation for teachers in schools. The SPAM could be organized on local, circuit or district levels to make teachers account for their performance and thereby place a higher expectation on them. With regard to students, the higher expectation can be created by teachers through frequent emphasis on passing BECE, special attention to students' work, and strong teacher reaction to students' performance. Thus, when teachers emphasize on the need to pass the BECE for placement in good Senior High Schools, when teachers devote time for students' affairs and demonstrate their approval or disapproval of their performance, students would sense teachers' higher expectation for them and learn harder. The need for higher expectation in schools had been emphasized by Lezotte (2010) in his "correlates of effective schools". He said, in effective schools, there is a climate of high expectations in which the staff believe and demonstrate that all students can obtain mastery of the school's essential curriculum. The staff in the effective school also believe that they have the capability to help all students obtain that mastery. Mizerny (2019) also noted that high expectations for all students mean that educators expect students to reach their full potential as they help them achieve these goals. She emphasized the teachers' absolute belief in the capability of the students and how they stand in better position to help them. For her, higher expectation for students should not be a mere rhetoric but must be demonstrated through teachers' behaviour. On her part, Amaro (2022) stated that having high expectations does not mean punishing students when they do

not perform. For her, high expectations for students meant encouraging all students to do their best and not accepting less from a student one knows can perform better. These opinions are to some extent similar to the findings of this study as all of them are focused on improving students' academic achievement and thereby making schools more effective.

b. Effective use of resources

The availability of resources is not a guarantee of good performance or achievement in a school. When resources are not put to good use, no better result will be achieved. Effective use of resources was perceived as a strategy that can improve performance in a school. This is true because schools operate through their resources, both human and material. The following data support this stance: "We do not lack science apparatus and so during science demonstrations, our students are usually comfortable. Our performance in science started improving when we got the equipment and we are using them effectively" (T3-SCH 2). T10-SCH 5 also observed:

> Even though there is a problem with resources, we are managing the one at our disposal to come out with good results. We are resource constrained because of our numbers but I know that if we get them things will change in terms of our performance. If we had a well-resourced library, science and ICT laboratories, we could achieve outstanding performance in a number of our students. All that our superiors need to do is to resource us, and the rest will follow. This notwithstanding, we are managing with the available resources to get the best outcome (T10-SCH 5).

It can be gathered from the data above that, resources need to be provided to schools to facilitate effective teaching for better academic performance. Schools need resources such as libraries, science and ICT laboratories etc. to function effectively. Moreover, some teachers exhibited optimism that, given the provision of resources and their effective use by them, students' academic performance or achievement would improve. This observation

established 'effective use of resources' as one of the 'School-Focused Strategies' for making schools effective. Bušljeta (2013) had emphasized the relevance of effective use of educational resources in improving students' achievement. She noted that whether or not teaching and learning resources will achieve their purpose depends on their correct use within the educational process. In view of this she suggested that, to improve students' performance through teaching and learning resources, there is the need to clearly define the conditions and methods of utilising teaching and learning resources in the teaching and learning process. Closely associated with the sub-theme, 'effective use of resources' is the sub-theme, 'school infrastructure'. It is briefly presented below.

c. School infrastructure and learning resources

Data relating to this sub-theme suggest that provision of school infrastructure and learning resources is a strategy to improve academic performance or achievement in Junior High Schools. It has already been submitted that availability of resources does not guarantee good performance or achievement in a school unless it is accompanied with effective use of such resources. Yet, respondents held a view that, provision of infrastructure such as good classroom blocks, desks and teaching and learning resources like textbooks, will make teaching and learning effective. This means school leaders should first devise a strategy to develop infrastructure in the school. It is only in getting the infrastructure and other resources in place that their effective use becomes a crucial matter to focus on. Respondents shared their views on this issue:

> I can talk of a number of strategies, but what is key in our case is renovation of classrooms and provision of desks for the children. Without classrooms and desks, we cannot be here. The first strategy should be about plans to improve infrastructure in the school. Provision of infrastructure is beyond us as headteachers but it does not rule out the fact that the relevant authority

> responsible for that should make plans for that because for me it is the first strategy for making every school effective. The first impression visitors form of schools usually comes from the infrastructure of the school (HT 3- SCH 3).

T8-SCH 4 also said:

> The best strategy to improve academic performance is to have good infrastructure and serene environment for effective teaching and learning. If we are not disturbed when it rains, if every child is comfortably seated on a desk and we have our TLMs and textbooks securely locked in a room, teaching and learning will be effective (T8-SCH 4).

From the responses above, provision of school infrastructure and learning resources is established as a 'School-Focused Strategy' to make Junior High Schools effective. School authorities should pay special attention to improvement of school infrastructure such as classroom blocks, desks and provision of other teaching and learning resources to set schools on the path to improvement. This finding is justified by the study of Mgimba and Mwila (2022) which revealed that students' performance in rural public secondary schools in Iringa District was unsatisfactory due to inadequate school infrastructure such as libraries, laboratories, classrooms, dormitories, and instructional materials. They concluded that school infrastructure is very essential to develop and provide quality education, which leads to growth and excellence. In addition, Adelman and Taylor (2005) after an in-depth analysis of two major school districts' school improvement guides in Los Angeles and having identified their challenges recommended among others that, guidelines for school improvement planning should include an emphasis on redesigning infrastructure to ensure learning supports are attended to as a primary and essential component of school improvement.

d. Discipline

There is a general perception that good academic performance does not thrive in an undisciplined environment. This means schools need to establish a culture of discipline for students, teachers, parents and all stakeholders to foster effective teaching and learning. This exactly was the finding in this section. For academic performance to improve in Junior High Schools in the accessed districts, a culture of discipline should be established in schools. The following data establish this position:

> I will ensure discipline on the side of both parents and pupils. There will be measures to check the disciplinary attitudes of students and intruders who instigate some of the students to misbehave. We need to make both parents and students aware of the essence of education. It will reposition their minds to support the school in teaching and learning (T2-SCH 1).

T7-SCH 4 had this to say:

> I will use awards and counselling to shape their behaviour so that they will realize the value of education and change their behaviour because education goes with attitude and discipline. Without discipline and good attitude, you cannot go far even if you are academically strong (T7-SCH 4).

It can be deduced from the data above that discipline is a pre-condition for effective teaching and learning. Moreover, discipline for a school should extend to students, teachers and parents. The data also indicated that discipline manifested in dressing and even head cuts can influence students' academic life. From the data, discipline can be maintained in a school through activities such as awards and counselling. On the basis of this premise, discipline was found in this study as one of the crucial strategies to be employed by a school to achieve better academic results. By saying this, discipline is understood as a strategy for making Junior High Schools effective and also as one of the 'School-Focused Strategies.

A number of studies find a link between discipline and students' academic performance (Meador, 2020; Adeniyi & Adedotun, 2019; & Ofori, Tordzro, Asamoah, & Achiaa, 2018). Meador (2020) explained that all disciplinary issues disrupt the flow of a class and take valuable class time away for all students involved. He said, each time a student is sent to the principal's office it takes away from learning time. This interruption in learning, for him, increases in cases where suspension is warranted. In view of these, Meador (2020) stated categorically that students' indiscipline constitutes continual disruptions which can limit a school's effectiveness. Adeniyi and Adedotun (2019) and Ofori et al. (2018) also found a link between indiscipline and academic performance. For example, Adeniyi and Adedotun found a significant relationship between indiscipline and academic activities of students. Ofori et al. on their part found that the effects of indiscipline on academic performance included; students' inability to concentrate in class, loss of materials taught due to absenteeism and increase in rate of school dropout. At least there is a clear case made in the finding of Ofori et al. that students' indiscipline can lead to students' absenteeism. This provides adequate support for the position of Meador that students' indiscipline limits school effectiveness. This provides a solid foundation for the finding of this study which identifies discipline as a strategy for making schools effective. Thus, for schools to be effective, they should minimize indiscipline.

4.4.2 Teacher-Focused Strategies

It will be difficult for a school to be effective if a well-thought-out plan or strategy is not laid out for the teachers. Teachers are the implementers of school improvement programmes and so any improvement strategy should focus on them. The 'Teacher-Focused-Strategies' are suggested approaches to school improvement focused on making teachers effective in

schools. It is believed, that when teachers are effective, schools will also be effective. The theme, 'Teacher-Focused Strategies' is the second sub-theme in this section which was derived from codes such as teacher accountability and performance contract, productive staffing, conditions of service, teacher motivation, performance targets, and professional learning community (PLC). These codes represent individual steps to be adopted by schools in making teachers more effective in schools. Each of these individual strategies are presented below.

a. Teacher accountability and performance contract

The basis of this strategy is that, for teachers to deliver, they should be made more accountable. Being more accountable means teachers having enough grounds to demonstrate that they are achieving the goals for which they have been employed to teach in schools. The government or the employer has his own way of determining that. Performance contract is sometimes adopted by the employer as a strict accountability measure from teachers. Respondents believed that, teachers can be made more effective if they are held accountable through performance contract. HT 5- SCH 5 said:

> If a teacher knows that, at the end of the month the number of days he has worked will determine how much he is going to be paid, he will be up to task. Strict teacher accountability measures will put the teachers on task (HT 5-SCH 5).

SS-3 added:

> Performance contract in terms of linking our salaries to performance, should not be one shot. There should be some benchmarks. If a teacher is not able to achieve his target for the next five years, the license of that teacher could be withdrawn. The contract should be for a particular period of time but not on monthly basis. But that notwithstanding, we know that performance goes with a whole lot of factors. The teacher is faced with a lot of challenges so if other stakeholders are not performing their roles as expected, they should not put all

> the blame on teachers. Until these challenges are adequately addressed you cannot blame a teacher that he is underperforming (SS-3).

Furthermore, SS-1 mentioned:

> Performance contract will be good for improving academic performance in our schools. However, before implementing that, other factors must be considered because you cannot compare a teacher who teaches in a rural area to a teacher who teachers in a city. There are some factors at the rural area which impact on the performance of the teacher and the students. If the government will pay teachers based on their performance, then he must consider the environment of the teacher and the resources given to the teacher to work. These must then be used to develop a scale of payment for the teachers in order to bring fairness. Should all the factors be in place for its implementation, performance contract will go a very long way to help. It will eradicate some of the lapses in the system like teachers not being punctual to school, not making use of the instructional hours, and not using appropriate methodology to teach (SS-1).

Respondents perceived performance contract as an accountability measure for teachers. Some said performance contract will reduce lazy attitudes among teachers as sanctions are involved. The data showed that performance contract well implemented will eradicate some of the lapses in the system like teachers not being punctual to school, not making good use of the instructional hours and not using appropriate methodology to teach. With regard to appropriate methodology, Ferentinou (2022) recommended that, to improve academic performance in schools, teachers need to be assisted to focus on improving their teaching methods.

Furthermore, a number of views were expressed on the implementation of performance contract. First, it should be implemented in the way that teachers' salaries will be tied to their output. Second, for it to be fairly implemented, there should be a span of time for teachers to meet their targets before sanctions are applied. Third, performance contract should not be implemented in isolation as stakeholders need to provide available resources and create a

congenial atmosphere for teachers to deliver. This will bring the fairness so that teachers are not unreasonably burdened with an unfair accountability measure through performance contract. Fourth, performance contract should also take note of differences in the contexts of teachers' work because schools are sited at different locations with discrepancies in access to infrastructure. All these impact on teacher performance and so must be considered before framing up a performance contract. Generally, performance contract was perceived as a good 'Teacher-Focused Strategy' that can help in making Junior High Schools effective but must be implemented with care. In a similar manner, Eight Cities (2018) emphasized that performance contracts should establish consistent, equitable, and effective oversight for each school's mission. Emphasizing the importance of performance contract, Eight Cities mentioned that a formal performance contract makes the goals and standards for a school clear and actionable. This means the watchword for implementation of performance contract is fairness.

b. Productive Staffing

The quality of teachers in a school certainly influences the kind of results achieved in the school. A school with adequate resources and intelligent students can still produce poor results if the school is filled with incompetent and lazy teachers. This means in developing strategies to make schools effective, staffing should be one of the priorities. Countries have different policies regarding staffing in schools. Some of these staffing policies impact negatively on school effectiveness. Staffing needs to be productive to help in making schools effective. Productive staffing, therefore, is any staffing policy that yields good results in schools and contributes to school effectiveness. Productive staffing emerged as one of the

'Teacher-Focused Strategies'. Respondents believed that when staffing in Junior High Schools is done well, academic achievement will improve. HT 2- SCH 2 had this to say:

> If I had my own way, I would have opted for teachers from college to teach in my school. Those who did not get the traditional college training as teachers give me problems. To improve the system, headteachers should be involved in the recruitment of teachers. New teachers to be posted into our schools could be made to have an internship in our schools to observe them and then recommend them for posting. But we will be here and teachers will be posted to us without our involvement in the process. This is not helping (HT 2- SCH 2).

HT 4- SCH 4 also commented:

> A number of factors should be considered before recruiting teachers. Morality needs to be stressed in the recruitment process. Secondly, competence should also be considered before teachers are recruited. Recruitment of teachers should be based on real vacancies in schools with regard to subject areas. Sometimes they post teachers to our schools when we do not actually need them. A mathematics teacher could be posted to a school when they do not need a mathematics teacher but rather a Fante teacher. Making headteachers major stakeholders in recruitment and posting of teachers could eliminate a problem like this. We are in the school and we know the quality of teachers we want so if we are part of the team that recruits and posts, it will help (HT 4- SCH 4).

Some respondents believed that, best staffing practice should adopt a number of measures in order to make Junior High Schools effective. First, teachers from the traditional colleges of education should be recruited to teach as most of them tend to be committed to their work. Second, teachers should be required to do some period of internship in the intended school to justify their suitability for posting into the school. And most importantly, headteachers should play key role in determining the suitability of teachers for posting into their schools. Third, suitability should be premised on effectiveness and morality of teachers. Fourth, recruitment should be strictly based on real vacancies in schools in terms of subject areas so that redundant teachers are not posted to schools while vacancies exist in other subject

areas. In adopting these measures to recruit teachers for Junior High Schools, staffing will be considered as productive which will make schools effective. It is on the basis of this that 'Productive Staffing' was considered as one of the 'Teacher-Focused Strategies' for making Junior High Schools effective.

The issue of staffing is closely associated with teacher qualifications since what makes staffing productive is the element of requisite qualification. This is corroborated by the finding of UNESCO (2021) which has established a link between the minimum proficiency level and teacher qualification stating that Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest proportions of teachers with minimum required qualifications to teach. In 2019, just 65% of primary and 51% of secondary teachers were trained to the required level. While all primary teachers had the minimum required qualifications in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, and Mauritius, only 37% had minimum qualifications in Equatorial Guinea, 27% in Sao Tome and Principe, and 15% in Madagascar. Western Africa is the subregion where the challenge is more acute, while in Northern Africa almost 90% of primary school teachers have minimum qualifications. Compared to the world average, the quality challenge faced by Sub-Saharan African countries is vast (UNESCO, 2021). In view of this, UNESCO recommended that countries need teachers with the qualifications to provide education of high quality to children and youth. This means, for schools to improve in the accessed districts and in Ghana, staffing practices need to be revised to ensure that the right people are put in the classroom to teach. It is in doing this that improvement can be realized.

c. Conditions of service and motivation

A number of strategies have been outlined targeting teachers but their success also depends on a number of factors among which is the conditions of service and motivation of teachers. Thus, in considering strategies for making schools effective through teachers, conditions of service of teachers must not be left out and teachers should also be motivated. It appeared that teacher motivation was closely associated with their conditions of service. Thus, conditions of service of teachers should also entail motivation packages for teachers. Teachers will be in the position to deliver if their conditions of service are better and are motivated. In view of this, respondents considered improvement in the 'conditions of service' of teachers as one of the best strategies for making Junior High Schools effective. The following data emphasize conditions of service as a strategy: HT 2- SCH 2 noted:

> Teachers should be given accommodation paid by the SMC. Some teachers commute from distant places and usually use that as an excuse to be late. All these contribute to inefficiencies in the system. If a teacher is given an accommodation closer to the school, he will have no excuse to be late and this will enhance his performance (HT 2- SCH 2).

HT 5- SCH 5 added:

> When teachers compare their salaries with others in different institutions, they decide to leave the profession and this is making us lose quality teachers. When I relate my salary to the current economic hardships, I feel discouraged even as a headteacher and I think teachers also feel the same. Teachers do not have much allowances and even the few that we have are only on paper but not in our pockets. All these demoralize teachers. Increase teachers' salaries and see whether they will not work. Treat us well and we will deliver (HT 5- SCH 5).

Furthermore, SS-2 stated:

> I will institute a reward scheme for facilitators as a strategy to improve performance in the schools. If a teacher performs creditably well, I will motivate that teacher from my own resources. It may not be anything so big, but it will motivate the teacher since it is coming from his or her superior

> because he will feel, I appreciate his work. I can give them credit, pen or exercise book (SS-2).

Respondents held a position that, when teachers' conditions of service are improved and are motivated, they would have no excuse not to deliver. Salaries and accommodation of teachers came up as prominent among the conditions of service of teachers. Reward scheme was also mentioned as motivation package to urge teachers to give off their best. It was believed that, when teachers are paid good salaries, given free accommodation, and rewarded in the school, they will deliver. This position established 'conditions of service and motivation' as one of the 'Teacher-Focused Strategies' meant for making Junior High Schools effective. On the contrary, Enwezor (2020)'s study which investigated conditions of service as correlate of teachers' job performance in primary schools in Onitsha South local government area of Anambra state, Nigeria, contradicts the finding of this current study. Enwezor found that, salary and promotion as conditions of service do not correlate with teachers' job performance. She concluded that, higher salary and promotion of teachers in primary schools can satisfy them but may not improve pupils' academic achievement nor motivate teachers to put in more efforts in return to compensation for higher salaries. Enwezor came up with this finding through a quantitative analysis but the current study came up with its finding qualitatively. Perhaps the methodological difference could account for the contradiction or the different contexts within which both studies were conducted could account for that. Similarly, the study of Hasbay and Altindag (2018) found, among others, that wage or salary factor did not show any effect that directly increased teacher performance.

d. Performance Targets

Performance targets, in this context are documented expectations from teachers to enhance their performance. It is presented in this section as a performance improvement strategy meaning that, schools should set targets for teachers in terms of their performance in order for them to improve students' performance in general. It emerged from the data that, when the practice of setting performance targets by teachers in Junior High Schools is strictly enforced, teachers' performance will be enhanced and the effect will be realized in students' academic achievement. HT 3- SCH 3 observed:

> One strategy is setting of targets for teachers. We set targets for each teacher in the school at the beginning of the term that by the time the students progress to the next level, their performance should have improved to a certain level. Normally we focus on English, Mathematics and Science. At the end of the term if we realize that a teacher could not meet his or her target, we meet the teacher and look at the way forward. Since we started this, we are seeing the results in students' performance, so I think it is a good thing that all schools must pay attention to (HT 3- SCH 3).

SS-1 shared a similar view:

> I will meet my teachers personally and each will set his own targets for me and I will monitor the progress of the targets or the contract and give feedback to the teacher. When I do this, teachers will realize that they are being monitored in terms of their performance and so they will sit up. As SISOs we must get involved in the setting of performance targets by teachers. I believe that will go a long way to improve students' performance (SS-1).

Respondents believed that, when teachers are made to set their own performance targets and monitored to work towards their achievement, teacher performance will improve. This coheres with the position of Whitewood (2022) that, performance target can enable teachers demonstrate how they contribute to students' learning and the broader school performance target in general. For her, there should be regular meetings to review the targets in order to achieve the targets. The need for review of performance targets was also expressed in the

data. On the contrary, while respondents proposed termly performance targets for teachers, Whitewood opted for a yearly performance target for teachers. It emerged from the data that, it is an existing practice but needed to be structured and taken more seriously by headteachers and SISOs. It is considered a 'Teacher-Focused Strategy' because it is focused on improving the performance of teachers so that its impact will be felt on students' performance.

e. Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an existing teacher development programme for Ghanaian schools. It is a platform where teachers with requisite knowledge in certain subjects or topics are given the opportunity to teach their colleague teachers who have difficulties in such subjects or topics. In the two accessed districts, PLC was organized on Wednesdays. Respondents perceived it as a strategy for improving academic performance because, when teacher performance is enhanced, the effect will be realized in students' academic performance. The data below emphasize PLC as a 'Teacher-Focused Strategy'. SS-5 commented:

> PLC is one of the mandatory things that comes with the standard based curriculum. The CL (Curriculum Leader) and the headteacher are in charge of the PLC in every school. The CL goes round the school to identify challenges and discuss them during the PLC time. A teacher with a difficulty in fraction could be assisted by a colleague during PLC. We usually have the PLC on Wednesday after school. The CL will bring out the challenges he or she identified so that we discuss. Teachers with requisite knowledge about a challenge will just rise to the occasion and deliver. It is not always about the headmaster or the curriculum leader. It can go through a whole month and it will just be the teachers addressing issues during PLC but not the CL or the headteacher. The PLC is an effective way of improving performance in schools. It is reducing the occasion of teachers dodging topics they have difficulty in teaching (SS-5).

The data above present PLC as an effective 'Teacher-Focused Strategy' that can improve teacher performance and by extension, improve students' academic performance and make schools effective. For it to be an effective strategy, it must be intensified in schools. This will mean that more resources should be committed to it to make it more fruitful. PLC as a strategy for improving students' performance can be confirmed from the submissions of Hughes (2015). He defined PLCs as groups of professional educators who meet regularly to reflect upon and discuss their instruction and students' work. He said, PLC is more useful for higher grades in which students learn different subjects from different teachers, and teachers are specialized to a single subject area. He said further that PLC can be a useful way to organize teachers because they can meet with others who are experts in the same subject area and reflect on best practices for instruction in that specific area.

Additionally, PLC was found as a tool for improving academic performance in schools within the accessed districts but the study was silent on its level of effectiveness. If the researcher is to take a position on the effectiveness of PLC in Ghanaian basic schools, the grounds for such a position would not be found in this study but rather the study of Dampson (2021). In fact, Dampson was doubtful as to whether literature from the Ghanaian perspective was well grounded to ascertain the effective implementation of PLCs to help teachers improve their professional practice as stipulated in the policy document. His study found specifically that the level of effectiveness PLC activities in some Ghanaian basic schools was low on all the 6 dimensions of the scale except shared and supportive leadership. He found further that, a good number of the basic schools had never held any PLC meetings since the curriculum was introduced. Even schools that observed PLC meetings often ignored the delivery methods in the PLC manual. This discovery by Dampson implies that, for PLC to

maintain its status as a performance improvement strategy as found in this current study, it needs to be taken more seriously in basic schools than it is currently happening.

4.4.3 Instruction-Focused Strategies

When strategies are designed to develop the school plant and teachers in order to make schools effective, attention must also be paid to instructional delivery in schools. For example, when teachers are well developed, it must show in their instructional delivery in the classroom. Respondents outlined performance improvement strategies which also focused on improving instructional delivery in schools. 'Instruction-Focused Strategies' are the third set of strategies outlined by respondents for making Junior High Schools effective in the accessed districts. The strategies are students-centred approach, remediation activities, students' placement and transition, and instructional supervision. Respondents explained that when attention is paid to these in schools, performance will improve for schools to become effective. The individual strategies are presented below.

a. Students-centred approach

Students-centred approach is a style of teaching which places the students at the centre of the knowledge production process. The teacher reduces his role as students' role increases. This is one of the instructional delivery approaches which respondents perceived as effective for improving students' academic performance and making schools effective. T3-SCH 2 had this to say:

> Group work and peer-teaching can be effective ways of improving performance. Demonstrations can be either pupil-teacher or pupil-pupil. Pupil-pupil demonstration can help both the teacher and the students to know where they are falling short. Leadership roles in group work should be rotated to give opportunity to other students to learn (T3-SCH 2).

SS-5 further observed:

> Teacher-centred approach is becoming defunct but some teachers are still glued to it. The common core curriculum even admonishes teachers to employ students-centred approach in teaching. What I will do from now onwards is to enforce its application in schools. I will make sure teachers demonstrate that in their lesson plans. It is an effective approach because I remember, when I was in the university, I understood concepts or topics well when lecturers got us actively involved in the teaching and learning process (SS-5).

It is evident from responses above that the students-centred approach of teaching could involve practices such as group work and pupil-to-pupil demonstrations and peer-teaching in the classroom. It was added that, leadership roles in group works be rotated to give opportunity to other students to play active roles in group works. They said, subjects involving practical demonstrations should not always be led by the teacher but sometimes by the students. Also, through peer-teaching, students with adequate understanding of concepts should be given the opportunity to explain such concepts to their colleagues in class. Thus, with a combination of these students' centred techniques, respondents believed that performance would improve for schools to become effective. Burakova (2021) emphasized peer tutoring as a relevant students-centred approach for improving performance. She defined peer tutoring as a teaching approach where students are employed as tutors for other students. She identified four models of it – class-wide peer tutoring, cross-age peer tutoring, peer assisted learning strategies and reciprocal tutoring. In the class-wide peer tutoring, the teacher divides the class into groups of two or five as a maximum. These groups must contain students of differing academic abilities, and anyone can assume the tutor or tutee status. With the cross-age peer tutoring, an older student is assigned as a tutor to a younger student, and their positions do not change. The older student remains the tutor while the younger student remains the tutee. Teachers employing the peer assisted learning strategies put two students

in a group who may not necessarily have differing ability levels. The aim is to help each other in different subjects where one is doing better than the other. With reciprocal tutoring, two students are put in a group to alternate the roles of a tutor and a tutee. Also, Smawfield (2021) emphasized the importance of group work by stating that group work can create the conditions for active learning, create conditions for pupils to learn from and support each other, and allow teachers to cater for individual difference.

b. Remediation activities

Remediation activities are supplementary academic interventions meant to improve students' performance. They are extra tuition meant to help students with challenges and sometimes to the entire class to help them understand topics properly or to cover more topics in the syllabus. It is presented in this section as one of the instruction-focused strategies meant to improve students' performance. Respondents believed that performance of students will improve when schools engage in remediation activities. Explaining this, a respondent said:

> We have to add remedial classes to whatever strategy that we want to adopt to improve performance here. Nobody will deny the relevance of extra classes for the students now that the curriculum is so loaded. It is the monetary aspect that is creating some challenges but I think it is one of the best tools we have and so teachers and parents need to come to a compromise on this so that we can help the students. This is the main strategy employed by private schools to get the results they get and the parents are ready to pay (Teacher 1, School 3).

Respondents perceived extra classes as a major means of providing remedial teaching to students in Junior High Schools. They said, through extra classes more topics could be covered so that students could be adequately prepared for the BECE. Extra classes were perceived as a crucial remediation tool because syllabuses of late are so loaded that, teachers need enough time to complete them. However, there is a challenge associated with this

strategy because of the monetary factor involved. This notwithstanding, the relevance of extra classes as a major remediation tool for improving performance and thereby contribute to school effectiveness was not downplayed. It can be established through a compromise between teachers and parents. This means, to achieve better academic performance in Junior High Schools in the accessed districts, extra classes as a remediation tool must be taken seriously. According to McDaniel (2018) a remedial activity is meant to improve a learning skill or rectify a problem area. He defined it as an individualized teaching of students who are experiencing difficulties in specific subject areas. He said, remedial instruction might be taught individually or in groups. Touching on its relevance, McDaniel noted that it forms the foundation for learning a subject in greater detail.

c. Students' placement and transition

Another unseen hand that usually influences students' academic achievement is placement and transition system in schools. When teachers teach and examine students, the next step is to place and promote students. Transition or promotion in Ghanaian Junior High Schools is currently relaxed. In view of this, respondents believed that, to improve academic performance in schools, placement and transition should be taken seriously. T10-SCH 5 had this say:

> The current system we are running with regard to promotion is not helping. Whether a student is doing well or not, he or she is promoted. There is no motivation to learn. The headteachers should be empowered to repeat students who are not performing. If a student is not performing, he or she should be made to repeat the class. As a strategy, I think we should avoid the wholesale promotion and screen students properly (T10-SCH 5).

T9-SCH 5 further stated:

> There is no cut-off point for placing students in the Senior High Schools. This does not encourage students to learn since any grade can secure them

> placement in Senior High Schools. The students are now having a low expectation because of the systems in place like the wholesale promotion and placement. The teachers are doing their best but the students are not giving out their best because they do not recognize that expectation (T9-SCH 5)

Respondents perceived repetition as a motivator to learning. Thus, the current 'wholesale promotion' in schools is not helping as students do not have any motivation to learn hard. This phenomenon has been extended to placement in Senior High Schools (SHS). Thus, recently, students are placed in SHS no matter the grade they attained in the BECE. Respondents attested to the effectiveness of repetition in motivating students to study as teachers noticed significant improvement in students' academic achievement when repetition was functional in Junior High Schools in the accessed schools. The finding on the effectiveness of repetition in improving students' performance is contradictory to the findings of Kyereko, Smith, Hlovor, and Keney (2022) that grade repetition had no positive effect on student achievement. They however added that repetition could only be beneficial when it was augmented with support from both inside and outside the school through additional academic support, including tutoring, during and beyond the school day. In addition, existence of 'wholesale promotion' found in this current study is confirmed by the same study of Kyereko et al. when they found that there is no clear policy on grade repetition at the national level guiding basic schools in Ghana. They mentioned the existence of circulars and memos from Ministry of Education directing schools to promote all students. Their study discovered further that there were directives from Government that discouraged grade repetition. Based on this directive, some public schools have, on paper, thus stopped repeating students. According to them, some schools carried out grade repetition only when parents of affected students consented. This phenomenon is not different from what has been found in this current study. There is one common feature about the study of Kyereko et al.

and this current study despite the contradictions. Thus, there is something positive about repetition. Repetition must not be implemented in isolation if it is to yield the needed result as a school improvement strategy or as a strategy for making schools effective.

d. Instructional Supervision

The last of the 'Instruction-Focused Strategies' is 'Instructional Supervision'. Instructional supervision is also an existing practice but it is perceived as a strategy because of its pivotal position in instructional delivery in Junior High Schools and the need for it to be intensified. It is one of the most functional means of ensuring effective instructional delivery from teachers. Instructional supervision is done by both SISOs and headteachers in Junior High Schools in Ghana. SS-3 emphasized this point in the following way:

> I will embark on intensive school visitation because I have realized that if teachers realize that the SISO is not frequenting the circuit, laxity sets in. Attendance and punctuality improve when there is intensive school monitoring. When I intensify class observation, I will be able to identify pedagogical challenges of teachers (SS-3).

HT 4- SCH 4 indicated:

> Government should resource SISOs to intensify supervision if we really want to improve academic performance of students. I supervise instruction alright but teachers attach much seriousness to SISOs supervision. As teachers when we realize that you are always on us, we will sit up (HT 4- SCH 4).

The responses above present instructional supervision as an essential tool for enhancing teacher output in schools. It is believed that when teacher output improves, the effect will be realized in students' academic achievement. To achieve this, monitoring should be intensified in schools. To intensify school monitoring, government needs to resource SISOs. This is what needs to happen to make this 'Instruction Focused Strategy' more effective in improving students' academic achievement in Junior High Schools in the accessed districts.

The role of instructional supervision in enhancing teacher performance and students' academic achievement had been emphasized by a number of studies (Dangara, 2015; Kinutai & Zachariah 2012). Dangara's study in Nigeria found that regular instructional supervision using robust supervisory strategies like checking of students' notebooks, classroom visitation/inspection by school administrators, checking teachers' lesson plan/notes and inspection of teachers record keeping have significant correlation with teachers' performance and academic achievement of students in Secondary Schools. Additionally, Kinutai and Zachariah also found a positive correlation between instructional supervision and students' academic performance. They, however, added that the quality of classroom delivery depended largely on the knowledge, preparation and motivation of the teacher which can also be influenced positively by the supervisory performance of the school administrator.

4.4.4 Community-Focused Strategies

'Community-Focused Strategies' in this context refers to all efforts to be initiated by the schools to increase the participation of the community in the school improvement activities of the schools. Schools are usually established to develop the community as a first beneficiary. In achieving this goal, the community cannot be left out. These strategies emphasize the need for schools to make cautious efforts to collaborate with the community in making schools effective. Two strategies emerged from the data namely stakeholder collaboration and parental involvement. These two 'Community-Focused strategies' are presented below.

a. Stakeholder collaboration

The central idea in this strategy is that, schools in the accessed districts will be effective if all relevant stakeholders perform their respective roles as expected. Collaboration in this context was conceptualized as the ability of each of the education stakeholders to discharge their duties in such a way that other stakeholders' goals will be achieved. The achievement of individual stakeholder goals will sum up to the achievement of the collective stakeholder goals. Thus, collaboration will exist only when each stakeholder performs his or her role as expected to facilitate the discharge of the duties of other stakeholders. This state of affair is what respondents expected in schools to make them more effective. HT 3- SCH 3 shared her view in the following words:

> The key stakeholders are parents, government, teachers and students. Each of these stakeholders is supposed to play their role before we can improve performance of our students. If teachers come to school on time but they do not have the resources such as registers, lesson notes, textbooks and chalk to work, how can performance improve? If the one responsible does not provide these resources, how do teachers work effectively. The children as stakeholders also have an obligation to learn but if they do not learn, teachers cannot write the BECE for them. If teachers teach but parents do not supervise the children in the house to learn, teachers cannot be blamed for this. All the four stakeholders have to play their role so that together we will achieve our goal of improving academic performance (HT 3- SCH 3).

The data above outlined teachers, government, parents (Community) and students as the primary stakeholders whose collaboration is needed to make schools effective. Teachers will collaborate with other stakeholders by teaching effectively. Government will collaborate with other stakeholders by providing the needed resources for effective teaching and learning. Thus, the government is expected to create an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning to take place in schools. Parents will have to collaborate by supporting the learning process at home by supervising students to learn. Students will collaborate with

other stakeholders by learning effectively and passing their exams. These expectations emphasize interdependence in the respective roles of the stakeholders. Because of this interdependence in the roles, failure of any of the stakeholders to discharge its duty as expected will disrupt the system. Therefore, the identified strategy from the data is that, individual stakeholders need to be responsible and committed to their roles. When this happens, the needed collaboration will improve performance and make Junior High Schools more effective in the accessed districts.

Furthermore, the 'Community-Focused Strategy' advocates the need for schools to win community support in terms of provision of education resources. It was believed that when schools discharged this duty perfectly, performance in Junior High Schools will improve thereby making schools more effective. This collaboration must be distinguished from the collaboration investigated in research question six of this current study. While the collaboration in terms of 'Community-Focused Strategy' looks at all stakeholder roles in education, the collaboration investigated in research question six is focused on just one of the stakeholder roles. Thus, when stakeholders collaborate effectively in all or majority of their roles in the schools, academic achievement will improve. This is the basis of this 'Community-Focused Strategy'. However, when stakeholder collaboration is restricted to a single role – school improvement planning, the finding of this current study in research question six made a contrary finding. Thus, stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning has been found in this study to be inversely related to academic achievement. It must however be pointed out that, this may not always be the case as this study also found a positive correlation between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in thirteen schools.

b. Parental involvement

The schools have a number of stakeholders among whom are parents. Parents occupy a crucial position among the stakeholders because of their distinctive role in the education process. In view of this, respondents indicated a special strategy focused on parents to get them actively involved in the schools. This is because the involvement of parents in the life of the schools is so fundamental to their improvement. The data below emphasize this point:

> The strategy is, government should allow parents to know what they are supposed to do. They should know their responsibilities and bring them on board. The policy of free is killing our work or making the work difficult and so they should be made to contribute their quota. Some parents even refused to purchase books for their children, because of the free concept (HT 1- SCH 1).

In addition, T9-SCH 5 shared:

> There is much disconnection between us and the parents. Some parents have not visited their wards in school ever since they started schooling here. We need to bridge this communication gap in order to get students' performance to improve. Without good communication between the school and the parents, involvement of parents in the school will be difficult (T9-SCH 5).

From the data, the strategy of parental involvement is hinged on active connection between the school authority and parents through effective communication. It was believed that parents could be conscientized on their parental responsibilities towards the education of their wards through effective communication between the school and parents. To get parents actively involved in the education of their wards, they need to be re-oriented on the Free Education policy since the policy does not take away parental roles in the education of their wards. In view of this, the schools must actively engage the Parents' Associations (PA) to enhance their involvement in the school to help in the provision of teaching and learning resources to support the government. Respondents believed that through this kind of parental

involvement, academic performance in Junior High Schools could improve for the schools to become effective. Contrary to this finding is the study of Quansah (2020) on the effect of parental involvement on academic performance. He found that both home-based involvement and school-based involvement could not perfectly predict the criterion variable (academic performance). However, comparatively, home-based involvement appeared to be a better predictor of academic performance than school-based involvement. This partially supports the finding of this current study that parental involvement can improve students' academic achievement as a 'Community-Focused strategy' for making schools effective in the two accessed districts. It means if parents actively support their wards in the home and provide their needs, their academic achievements are likely to progress.

4.5 Constraints to effective collaboration

This section provides an answer to research question five: What are the existing constraints to effective stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts? Meanwhile, in previous discussions, efforts were made to explain the element of collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation. Such an effort was driven by the theoretical position of this study that, when school improvement planning and implementation are done locally in a collaborative manner, schools will be in a better position to improve. Such a theoretical position warranted the need to explore existing constraints to effective collaboration. It is in identifying the constraints to effective collaboration that the nature of collaboration among stakeholders in the accessed schools would be properly understood. By 'constraints to effective collaboration', it is meant, the difficulties encountered by stakeholders in working together as a team in school improvement planning and implementation. Seven major themes emerged

as constraints to effective collaboration in the accessed schools in the two districts. The themes are: (1) Lack of transparency in financial administration (2) Lack of time (3) Differences in stakeholder backgrounds (4) Lack of consensus (5) Limited understanding of stakeholder responsibilities (6) Weak stakeholder relationship (7) Non-collaborative government policies. These seven sub-themes on constraints to effective collaboration are discussed below.

4.5.1 Lack of transparency in financial administration

Transparency is a major ingredient in every collaborative effort. Stakeholders in schools need to be transparent to each other especially in terms of financial administration to facilitate effective and collaborative school improvement planning and implementation. The data showed a lack of transparency in financial administration in some of the schools accessed. This lack of transparency obviously impacted on the level of collaboration among stakeholders at the school level. Respondents expressed this position in the following words:

> We have a challenge with the preparation of the SPIP in some of our schools. Due to lack of transparency in the process, I refuse to sign it sometimes. The process of cashing the money sometimes does not follow due process. Some headteachers, upon assistance from the directorate were able cash the Capitation Grant without other signatories. But at the normal circumstance, the SISO is supposed to sign, then counter-signed by the SMC Chair. Some of the headteachers do not involve other stakeholders in the preparation of the SPIP. They either prepare it at their offices alone or send it home and prepare it (SS-5).

The response above displays non-collaborative atmospheres in some of the schools in the accessed districts. It was revealed that some of the headteachers were not transparent in the preparation and management of the SPIP. Some of them prepared the SPIP single-handedly without involving the teachers and other stakeholders at the school level. Sometimes, the

SISOs who were expected to supervise the preparation and management of the SPIP at the school level were sidelined. This is a clear picture of lack of transparency which is a constraint to effective collaboration. This means, school improvement planning and implementation in some of the schools were not done collaboratively due to lack of transparency. This finding is similar to what Setlhodi (2020) found when she explored how shared leadership collaboration practices between SGB and SMT can improve performance. She discovered that decision-making process was done unilaterally by the principals thereby excluding inputs by and dialogue with other stakeholders. She said this conducts of the principals resulted in complications with compliance because there was no shared vision, which led to the absence of buy-in. She said the feeling of disregard and lack of transparency on the side of the principals resulted in stakeholder resistance to their plans. Basson and Mestry (2019) after analyzing documents relating to the financial policies of the selected schools found that, financial management in some of the schools were not transparent. They found that SGBs had neglected to include the roles of SMTs in the finance committee in the policies. Also, there were no clear delegation of authority and responsibilities on the side of the principals with regard to financial management. Basson and Mestry found challenges relating to collaboration among stakeholders and they attributed this to lack of transparency in financial management.

4.5.2 Lack of time

Some of the stakeholders in Ghanaian schools are not full-time workers in the schools. This means, school matters may not be the first item on their priorities. Meanwhile, stakeholders need to commit much time to school activities to maintain some level of collaboration for school improvement planning and implementation. When there is lack of time on the side of

stakeholders, effective collaboration becomes very difficult to achieve. Lack of time emerged as a constraint to stakeholder collaboration in the accessed schools in the two districts. The data below highlight lack of time as a constraint:

> Some of our stakeholders have busy schedules and that prevent them from having time for us. When there is the need for us to give them information, we call them on phone and they pick the calls. The commitment of the parents is very low. We have an enrolment of about 500, but we hardly register attendance of 30 at our PA meetings most of the times. This makes decision making very slow because we usually do not form a quorum to take decisions. Meanwhile, when they get the information that there is an incidence involving, their wards in the school, they will quickly rush to the school. Their work is more important to them than the education of their wards (HT 3- SCH 3).

HT 5- SCH 5 commented:

> I find it difficult to contact the PA and the SMC Chairpersons. This makes coordination very difficult when we want to do something. When you invite them, they will give you a favourable response, but eventually they will not show up. Meanwhile we cannot take any decision without community representation because the school is owned by them (HT 5- SCH 5).

The following was shared by SS-2:

> A headteacher invited me to a PA meeting in one of my schools. I got there and waited for so long and the PA chairman was not coming. The parents were also not present even at 10:00 am. I asked the headteacher to start the meeting. It was at the end of the meeting that the PA chairman and the executives came. He tried giving a whole lot of excuses for coming late (SS-2).

It can be deduced from the responses above that lack of time on the side of stakeholders was a constraint to effective collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation. Some parents, SMC Chairpersons, and PA Chairpersons in particular did not have time for the schools and were less committed. Their busy work schedule was the contributing factor to their inability to have time for the schools. Some SMC chairpersons did not have time for planning meetings and that delayed decision making in some of the schools. Meanwhile,

collaboration cannot take place unless stakeholders have time to attend meetings and contribute to decision making. In a situation where stakeholders do not have time for the schools, as it was in some of the schools in the two districts, collaboration in school improvement planning becomes a problem thereby making 'lack of time' a constraint to effective stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation. This finding coheres with the study of Basson and Mestry (2019) which found lack of time on the part of parents on the SGB (School Governing Board) as a constraint to effective stakeholder collaboration. Their study revealed that the availability of parents on the SGB to attend extraordinary meetings other than formal scheduled SGB meetings was a major concern in maintaining a collaborative relationship between the SGB and SMT (School Management Team). The absence of parents was attributed to the busy schedule of parents who served on the SGB. Basson and Mestry said, sometimes parents found it difficult to attend to financial matters of the school as they all had full-time jobs and other careers. Their data showed that most of the parents were not always available during school hours because they worked in the mines and in the private sector. Thus, to get all the parents on the SGB together was difficult.

4.5.3 Differences in stakeholder backgrounds

Schools are run by stakeholders with different backgrounds, orientations and experiences. Such differences could either have positive or negative impact on the planning and implementation of school improvement programmes. Such differences could result from occupations, political, religious and chieftaincy affiliations. These differences can stifle collaboration if not well managed. Stakeholders in the accessed Junior High Schools were of different backgrounds as outlined above. Their differences in background emerged as a

constraint to their effective collaboration as stakeholders of the schools. The following data emphasize this theme:

> Differences in the backgrounds and the way they think delay our planning process. Some of them belong to different chieftaincy factions in the community and this reflects in their behaviours during discussions at our meetings as stakeholders. Some of them belong to different political parties and that also influences their arguments at meetings. A simple issue could turn into a hot argument and propaganda will also set in to delay the whole process. They sometimes accuse themselves of bringing certain issue on board because of their party so the opponents resist (HT 2- SCH 2).

A similar experience was shared by HT 5- SCH 5:

> My SMC is sometimes very political. He will talk about all the policies that the government is bringing. He is always negative about it. This usually delays proceedings at our meetings. Because of these political positions, collaboration becomes difficult because they deliberately refuse to agree to issues due to their political interests (HT 5- SCH 5).

The following was shared by HT 3- SCH 3:

> People express certain positions during meetings because of their backgrounds or orientations. The differences in the backgrounds of stakeholders do impact on our collaboration. Someone from a rich home will easily support a levy to do something for the good of the students. The parent from a poor background may object to that and condemn the whole decision (HT 3- SCH 3).

From the data above, stakeholders exhibited different backgrounds such as educational backgrounds, economic backgrounds, political backgrounds and chieftaincy backgrounds. These backgrounds influenced stakeholder behaviours at meetings. For example, stakeholders belonging to different chieftaincy factions did not usually agree at meetings. Stakeholders argued differently due to their different economic backgrounds. The differences in backgrounds and ways of thinking delayed decision making in some of the schools accessed. Moreover, the impact of stakeholder background on group decision making or collaboration has been emphasized by Haissam (2023). He observed that, one of the

collaboration challenges is the difficulty in dealing with cultural differences, when people from diverse areas, cultures, and values must work together to reach a common goal. For him, the differences in backgrounds and cultures can generate conflicts especially when the values and work styles do not align. Meanwhile, in this current study, such differences sometimes generated misunderstandings at planning meetings and made collaboration difficult. Furthermore, misunderstandings also ensued as a result of lack of understanding of issues and different political affiliations. In fact, political affiliations influenced discussions at meetings and this sometimes led to deliberate refusal to agree to issues thereby making collaboration difficult. These factors fueled the lack of consensus identified as a constraint to stakeholder collaboration in some of the Junior High Schools in the accessed districts. Lack of consensus is discussed below.

4.5.4 Lack of consensus

One important condition that must exist for collaboration to take place is consensus. Stakeholders need to have consensus over issues to enable them harmonize their interests for effective collaboration. Lack of consensus is an evidence of disparity in stakeholder interests. Some JHSs in the accessed districts experienced lack of consensus among stakeholders and the study has identified some of the factors giving rise to that. The data below and those under the preceding theme emphasize lack of consensus as a constraint to stakeholder collaboration:

> There have been a number of occasions that we could not reach consensus at our meetings. We have had to abandon certain intentions because the stakeholders did not agree. This is because, we need the support of the majority of the stakeholders to get a decision implemented. The lack of understanding or agreement among the stakeholders brings the lack of consensus. It appears

> some of them have different interests and since it is difficult to meet everybody's interest, there will not be a consensus (HT 4- SCH 4).

The data above present 'lack of consensus' as a constraint to stakeholder collaboration in some Junior High Schools in the accessed districts. Lack of consensus manifested itself in disagreements at planning meetings. The result of the lack of consensus was delay in decision making. The causes of lack of consensus included lack of understanding, differences in interests, differences in stakeholder backgrounds, political affiliations and chieftaincy factionalism among the stakeholders. From the data, stakeholders did not always lack understanding of issues but they refused to understand due to the political affiliation and chieftaincy factionalism which controlled and determined the interests to pursue at planning meetings. This situation obviously mars any collaborative effort made to improve the schools. A similar finding was made by studies such as Yaro, Salleh, and Arshad (2018) and Bechuke and Nwosu (2017). Yaro, Salleh, and Arshad identified lack of consensus as major constraint to stakeholder engagement or collaboration in Nigerian schools. Bechuke and Nwosu found that disagreements among education stakeholders affect development in schools because focus is diverted due to personal strains and destruction. They added that disagreements could lead to loss of focus on work at hand which inadvertently results in poor performance.

4.5.5 Limited understanding of stakeholders' responsibilities

Stakeholders need to understand their key responsibilities to be able to discharge them effectively in a more collaborative manner. Stakeholders of education need to have better understanding of educational issues to enable them engage in collaborative relationship for school improvement. The data showed limited understanding of responsibilities of some of

the stakeholders in schools accessed. This limited understanding affected effective collaboration among educational stakeholders in the schools accessed. This theme is emphasized by the data below:

> Someone is illegally developing a structure on our school land but because one of our key stakeholders is related to the developer, he is finding it difficult to address the issue. This is a clear case of lack of understanding of one's duties. He has failed to understand that there is a difference between his relationship with the developer and the discharge of his duty as a key stakeholder. This is purely the work of the executives, not the headteacher. With this, how do we make a plan regarding the protection of the school's lands when we know one of us has a special interest in the issue (HT 2- SCH 2).

SMC 1- SCH 2 also had this to add:

> I would not say things are always smooth when we are planning or deciding on something. Some of us are not teachers but we are trying to support. We may not understand issues as the teachers do. The teachers find it difficult to understand us. When they bring a proposal, we normally seek explanation but they think in doing that we are proving difficult. In terms of collaboration, I will say, we are doing our best as human beings despite a few challenges (SMC 1- SCH 2)

Furthermore, HT 3- SCH 3 observed:

> Some of the parents exhibit limited understanding of their responsibilities in the school. We had a PA meeting where we told the parents to buy exercise books. Some of them said education is free, so why were we asking them to buy exercise books. We had to spend time to explain everything to them before they understood (HT 3- SCH 3).

The responses above indicate that limited understanding on the part of stakeholders impacted on school improvement planning and implementation in some Junior High Schools in the accessed districts. The data pointed to the existence of conflict of interest among some of the stakeholders due to their limited understanding of their responsibilities in the schools. Limited understanding also sometimes led some stakeholders engaging in fruitless arguments which delayed decision making thereby making collaboration difficult. Also,

limited understanding made some stakeholders refuse to provide the needed assistance to schools in terms of infrastructure as they thought it was Government's responsibility to provide infrastructure in schools. "Parents also refused to help the school fix part of our roof which was ripped off by the storm. They told us it was Government's responsibility, not theirs" (HT 4- SCH 4). Parents for example have exhibited limited understanding of their roles in the education of their wards under the free education policy in Ghana. They erroneously thought since education is free in Ghanaian Junior High Schools, it is Government's duty to provide everything. In a nut shell, the phenomenon of limited understanding of stakeholders' responsibilities in schools sometimes marred the collaborative atmosphere needed for effective planning and implementation in schools in the districts. Indicators of limited understanding of stakeholders' responsibilities identified in the data included conflict of interests, fruitless arguments and failure to provide the needed assistance to schools. Because of these, collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation was sometimes challenging and it was as a result of the phenomenon of 'limited understanding' of stakeholders' responsibilities in the schools.

Furthermore, Setlhodi (2020) had similarly argued that stakeholder collaboration suffers when some of the stakeholders have limited understanding of their responsibilities. This is in line with the position of Mestry and Grobler (2007) that appropriate and shared decisions can only succeed if everyone is sufficiently knowledgeable and have information available to them. Setlhodi (2020) mentioned further that limited understanding of responsibilities and limited skills of stakeholders could compromise the pursuit of collegial spirit because for her those stakeholders who have limited skills may not participate fully which may lead to

difficulties of implementation. Similarly, Roborife and Phasha (2010) had also identified poor understanding of stakeholder roles as a constraint to effective stakeholder collaboration.

4.5.6 Weak stakeholder relationship

Another theme that emerged from the data was the phenomenon of weak stakeholder relationship. This theme was considered important because stakeholder collaboration thrives well when there is a cordial relationship among stakeholders. Meanwhile, interactions among stakeholders in some schools was minimal and that weakened the needed relationship for effective stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation. The data below emphasize this theme:

> We do not have consistent interactions as stakeholders to share ideas. I do not even know the SMC chairperson. The SISO does not have one-on-one interaction with teachers. He normally meets with the headteacher when he comes around. We are far apart in terms of interactions (T9-SCH 5).

Furthermore, T7-SCH 4 stated:

> When the SISO comes, appreciation is low but criticism is high. It cannot always be criticism, there must be appreciation too. When a SISO is coming, an announcement is made and the whole environment becomes tensed up and so we do not share our grievances with them. Meanwhile, they are the best people to understand our grievances and help us because they have been in our situation before (T7-SCH 4).

Additionally, SS-3 observed:

> Some of the parents have contacts of some of our superiors and so they easily report teachers and officers when there is an issue. We cannot insist on any decision they are not comfortable with because they will just pick their phone and call people in higher positions. This dampens the spirit of other stakeholders and further weakens the expected relationship among stakeholders. Teachers normally perceive such behaviours as betrayal (SS-3).

PO-2 also had this to add:

> … some NGO went to one school and gave them uniforms, footwear, TLMs without the knowledge of the directorate and the headteacher also did not

> inform us. When this happens, we find it difficult to make proper need assessment of the said school and factor it into our plan (PO-2).

The data above express a number of opinions about weak relationship between stakeholders and how that affected effective collaboration for school improvement planning and implementation in schools in the two districts. The data showed that stakeholders did not have frequent interactions to share ideas about how to improve the schools. For example, in some situations, SISOs and SMC Chairpersons did not have much interactions with teachers. The weak relationship between teachers and SISOs resulted from frequent criticisms from SISOs. This phenomenon negatively affected the needed collaboration for effective school improvement planning and implementation. Teacher-parents relationship in some schools was also described as weak because of parents' habit of reporting teachers to superior authorities in the district. This break in the communication channel was understood by teachers as betrayal and this negatively affected the relationship between teachers and parents in particular in some schools. Furthermore, the data portrayed weak relationship between education directorates and some headteachers. Thus, some headteachers sought donor assistance from NGOs without informing the directorates. In such a situation, the directorate found it difficult to make proper need assessment of schools and plan accordingly. For collaboration between schools and directorates to be effective, there is the need for sharing of information. Because the directorate needs to be properly informed on the needs of the schools for effective planning. Holding on to information on resources can negatively affect the district's action plan.

Similarly, Ahmed, Zufi, and Hossen (2017) found in Bangladesh, that there was no collaborative bridge between teachers and SMC on sharing information and views. In the

case of Ahmed et al, the fractured collaboration was as a result of the authoritarian leadership style of the SMC president who possessed much powers in the management team. Roborife and Phasha (2010) described a phenomenon that represented weaker stakeholder relationship in the schools they studied in South Africa. In their research report, parents indicated that their job responsibilities required them to leave very early in the morning and arrive home late in the evening, when school activities were over, thus making it difficult for them to participate in school- related activities. Moreover, contacts with parents even on the phone was a challenge since mobile phones were luxurious in such informal areas. Also, letters could not be hand-delivered due to lack of street addresses. In view of these, parents hardly received information on their wards' education as they usually arrived home at a time when children were asleep and left early in the morning when children were still asleep.

4.5.7 Non-collaborative government policies

Government is the major stakeholder in schools in Ghana and therefore its decisions greatly affect all activities of the schools. Effective stakeholder collaboration cannot take place without government support in terms of policies. Thus, government policies need to uphold the ideals of collaboration in order for school stakeholders to collaborate effectively for school improvement. One policy of government was perceived as 'non-collaborative' in the sense that, it was not hinged on collaborative principles. This is the reason why the theme, 'non-collaborative government policies' was identified as a constraint to stakeholder collaboration in schools within the two accessed districts. Data on this theme are provided below:

> Some of the policies from government will not give you the full control over the students and the parents. Now teachers are not part of the PA meanwhile we used to play active role in the PTA. Even as a headteacher, am technically

> not part of the PA, but I join their meetings because they are not professionals. I need to be present to provide guidance on their decisions. Unprofessional individuals are now making decisions for schools. This is reducing the relationship and collaboration that need to exist between teachers and parents (HT 3- SCH 3).

From the data above, one major policy of government was identified as non-collaborative and that was the elimination of teachers from the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA). This association is currently referred to as Parents Association (PA). Respondents argued that this policy does not simply eliminate the teachers from the association but also the needed relationship or collaboration that must exist between teachers and parents. In the past the PTA used to be the key platform for teacher-parent engagements. Currently, parents take decisions in some schools and only inform the headteacher or the SISO in some occasions and this was found not to be supportive of effective collaboration for school improvement. This finding is partially reflected in the study of Yaro, Salleh, and Arshad (2018) which identified politicization of education policies as one of the major constraints to stakeholder engagement or collaboration in Nigerian schools. They observed that successive governments in Nigeria implemented their own policies promised in their manifestos with little attention to the real impact of the policies on the recipients and society at large.

4.6 Relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement

This is the section where quantitative data is embedded in this predominantly qualitative study. Data in this section constitute the results of the test of the hypothesis of this study which were meant to answer research question six: What is the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa

West and Central districts? The answer to this research question will tell whether the thesis or the focal theory will have to be maintained on revised. A confirmed relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement will provide adequate support to the thesis of this study: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*, as well as the focal theory of the study: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be improved when school improvement planning and implementation is pursued as a collaborative local effort*. Thus, the thesis and the focal theory of this study point to the same issue, thus, schools will improve when stakeholders plan and implement school improvement programmes collaboratively at the school level. In the same way, schools will become ineffective when they fail to plan and implement school improvement programmes collaboratively at the school level.

4.6.1 Biographical Data

This section provides basic information about the respondents to enable readers understand the inputs of respondents in their rightful contexts. With regard to sex distribution of the respondents, there were 101 (48.1%) male teachers and 109 (51.9%) female teachers. This means, there were more female teachers than males who participated in the study but the percentage difference offered a fair representation of both sexes in the study. Additionally, there were 26 (86.7%) male SMC Chairpersons while females were 4 (13.3%). This means females were not fairly represented in that category of respondents but that did not in any way affect the results of the study. Similarly, there were 21 (70%) male PA Chairpersons as against 9 (30%) females. This also offered an unbalanced representation of females in that

category of respondents but again, that did not affect the results of this study. Furthermore, out of the 14 SISOs, 12 (85.7%) were males while 2(14.3%) were females. This is also an unbalanced representation of females in this category of respondents.

In addition, with regard to number of years spent at post by all respondents, 112 (39.4%) fell within the year range of 1-3 years at post, 124 (43.7%) fell within the year range of 4-6 years at post, with 48 (16.9%) falling within the year range of 7-10 years at post. This means respondents had enough experience at post to speak to issues with regard to stakeholder collaboration in planning. With regard to the academic qualification of respondents, out of the 210 teachers, 187 (89%) teachers were degree holders with 23 (11%) of the teachers being diploma holders. All 14 SISOs were degree holders. With regard to the SMC chairpersons, 5 (16.7%) were degree holders; 8 (26.7%) were diploma holders; 13 (43.3%) were SHS graduates; and 4 (13.3%) being JHS (Middle School) graduates. Additionally, 4 (13.3%) of PA chairpersons were degree holders; 3 (10%) were diploma holders; 14 (46.7%) were SHS graduates; and 9 (30%) being JHS graduates. This means, all respondents were literate implying that they clearly understood items and made choices that reflected the reality on the ground. In terms of occupation of respondents, 240 (84.5%) were government workers while 44 (15.5%) were working in the private sector. This means respondents were not idle but sacrificed some of their time for school activities as they were all employed.

4.6.2 Testing of hypothesis

The results of the test of hypothesis are presented below. The researcher investigated the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in thirty (30) randomly selected schools to test the hypotheses stated below. The Pearson

product moment correlation was used to analyze the data, and the interpretation of the strength of the correlation coefficient was based on the recommendation of Cohen (1988). According to Cohen, correlation coefficients up to ±0.10 is weak; correlation greater than ±0.10 up to ±0.30 is modest; correlation coefficient greater than ±0.30 up to ±0.50 is moderate; correlation coefficients greater than ±0.50 up to ±0.80 is strong; and correlation coefficients greater than ±0.80 very strong. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.1.

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no statistically significant relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts.

H_1: There is a statistically significant relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts.

Table 4.1: Correlation Matrix for Collaboration and Academic Achievement

			Collaboration
All schools	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.116*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.046)
GW1	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.193*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.035)
GW2	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.144*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.041)
GW3	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.520*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.032)
GW4	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.562*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.029)
GW5	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.585*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.000)
GW6	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.182*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.022)
GW7	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.455*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.019)
GW8	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.294*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.019)
GW9	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.493*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.011)
GW10	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.491*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.012)
GW11	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.536*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.000)
GW12	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.667*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.000)
GW13	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.643*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.000)
GW14	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.209*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.038)
GW15	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.057
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.875)
GW16	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.162*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.026)
GW17	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.301*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.014)
GW18	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.022
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.951)
GW19	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.239*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.032)
GW20	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.459*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.013)
GC21	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.299*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.037)
GC22	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.648*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.000)
GC23	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.548*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.000)
GC24	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.156*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.028)
GC25	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.661*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.000)
GC26	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.689*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.000)
GC27	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	-0.292*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.028)
GC28	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.027
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.942)
GC29	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.080
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.827)
GC30	Academic Achievement	Pearson Correlation	0.099
		Sig. (2-tailed)	(0.785)

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)
Source: Fieldwork (2023)

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the linear relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and students' academic achievement. The results displayed in Table 4.1 revealed that generally, there was a modest and statistically significant negative relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement, $r = -0.12$, $p<0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative was accepted. It means generally, there was an inverse relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement. That is, when stakeholder collaboration in planning increased, academic achievement decreased and vice versa.

Generally, a negative correlation was found between the two variables but the school-by-school correlations computed showed both positive and negative correlations. For example, in school GW1, there was a modest and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement ($r=0.193$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). In GW2, the findings showed that there was a modest and statistically significant negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement ($r=-0.144$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). Additionally, the findings pointed out that, in GW3, there was a strong and statistically significant negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement ($r=-0.520$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). In GW4, the findings revealed that the relationship between collaboration and academic achievement was negative, strong, and statistically significant ($r=-0.562$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). In GW5, the findings established that there was a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement ($r=0.585$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). In GW6, the findings showed that there was a modest and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement ($r=0.182$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). Again, in GW7, there was a moderate and statistically significant

negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement (r=-0.455, p<0.05, two-tailed). The results further showed in GW8 that there was a modest and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement (r=0.299, p<0.05, two-tailed), while the relationship between collaboration and academic achievement in GW9 was negative, moderate and statistically significant (r=-0.493, p<0.05, two-tailed). Likewise, there was a moderate and statistically significant negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement in GW10 (r=-0.491, p<0.05, two-tailed).

Additionally, there was a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement in GW11 (r=0.536, p<0.05, two-tailed). However, the findings pointed out that, there was a strong and statistically significant negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement in GW12 (r=-0.667, p<0.05, two-tailed), and in GW13 (r=-0.643, p<0.05, two-tailed) respectively. In GW14, there was a modest and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement (r=0.209, p<0.05, two-tailed), but in GW15, the negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement was weak and not statistically significant (r=-0.057, p>0.05, two-tailed). The findings indicated that there was a modest and statistically significant negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement GW16 (r=-0.162, p<0.05, two-tailed), but there was a moderate and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement GW17 (r=0.301, p<0.05, two-tailed). However, in GW18, the positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement was weak and not statistically significant (r=0.022, p>0.05, two-tailed). The findings also showed that there was a modest and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement GW19 (r=0.239, p<0.05, two-tailed), but

the relationship between collaboration and academic achievement in GW20 was moderate, negative and statistically significant ($r=-0.459$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed).

Furthermore, the findings revealed that there was a modest and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement GC21 ($r=0.299$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). However, the findings showed that there was a strong and statistically significant negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement in GC22 ($r=-0.648$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed) and in GC23 ($r=-0.548$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed) respectively. Contrary to the finding in GC24 that there was a modest and statistically significant negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement ($r=-0.156$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed), the results in GC25 showed that there was a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement ($r=0.661$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). In GC26, the results indicated that there was a strong and statistically significant negative relationship between collaboration and academic achievement ($r=-0.689$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed), while the relationship between collaboration and academic achievement in GC27 was modest, negative and statistically significant ($r=-0.292$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). The results also indicated that there was weak and positive relationship between collaboration and academic achievement in GC28 ($r=0.027$, $p>0.05$, two-tailed), GC29 ($r=0.080$, $p>0.05$, two-tailed), and GC30 ($r=0.099$, $p>0.05$, two-tailed), but these relationships were not statistically significant.

In fact, there is no consensus on the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. Whilst Ajetunmobi et al. (2020); Setlhodi (2020); Gcelu (2019); Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018); Bechuke and Nwosu (2017); Heck

and Hallinger (2010); Wight et al. (2006); Adelman and Taylor (2005) admitted of a relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic performance, Guzman (2020); Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010); and Lockheed, Harris, and Jayasundera (2010) found the two variables to be unrelated. None of the studies reviewed came up with a finding of an inverse relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. The general finding of this current study that there is an inverse relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement deviates from the findings reviewed in this study about the subject. Scholars have found the two variables to be either related or unrelated but not in a sense where as one increases, one decreases as was the case in this current study.

Additionally, more studies have found collaboration to be very essential for improving academic achievement of students (Epstein, 2005; Adelman & Taylor, 2005; Wight, Williamson & Henderson, 2006; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Owens & Valesky, 2011; Sheldon, 2010, Fleming, 2013; Huber & Conway, 2015; Bechuke & Nwosu, 2017; Mohapi & Netshitangani, 2018). For example, Wight, Williamson and Henderson (2006) emphasized that forming profound trust with parents and collaborating with them in school activities as well as in the learners' studies can help to improve educational outcomes such as grade and test scores, as well as building self-esteem and decreasing dropout rate. Bechuke and Nwosu (2017) noted that collaboration between parents participating in governing structures and teachers in leadership positions is essential for improvement of results in schools. Mohapi and Netshitangani (2018) observed similarly that for schools to achieve their desired results, School Governing Boards (SGBs) and School Management Teams (SMTs) in particular must

collaborate in the sense of understanding their roles and observing boundaries while pursuing good performance. Furthermore, Kwaslema and Onyango (2021) found that effective planning and implementation contributed to improved academic performance. Their study was however silent on the needed collaboration in the planning and implementation but the authors saw the need for that and so recommended that heads of school should involve all stakeholders in developing strategic plans for schools in order to improve performance. This finding did not amount to a robust establishment of a relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that good planning can result in better academic achievement in schools thereby indicating a relationship of a sort.

On the contrary, Guzman's (2020) study established that there was no significant relationship between the extent of stakeholders' participation in school improvement planning and school performance. Guzman's finding suggested that the degree of stakeholders' involvement in school improvement planning may not guarantee a very high school performance. A few observations can be made on this study. First the study focused on stakeholder participation but not collaboration. Meanwhile, participation does not necessarily imply collaboration since members of a team can participate in a planning process without collaborating. This is one point where Guzman's study differs from the current study which is focused on stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning. Second, Guzman's study measured school performance in terms of dropout rate, repetition rate, completion rate, and graduation rate. Meanwhile, these indicators may only have indirect relationship with academic achievement. In this regard, Guzman's study is again different from the current

study which is focused on establishing a link between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement.

In trying to explain why stakeholder collaboration may not be related to academic achievement, Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010) stated that there were more powerful forces in the school system pulling performance either upward or downward other than mere stakeholder collaboration. From this dimension, a number of questions could be asked in an attempt to explain the finding of this study about the inverse relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement. In this current study, the focus should be on both variables (stakeholder collaboration and academic achievement) since each may be associated with some unidentified factors that might have given rise to this finding. First, stakeholder collaboration was found to be generally weak according to the qualitative data. In fact, the qualitative data indicated diversified opinions on the existence of collaboration among stakeholders in planning. The data indicated that there may be some level of collaboration but it is not all that strong. The weak collaboration resulted from factors such as lack of time on the side of stakeholders and lack of transparency in financial administration. If collaboration was generally weak in a number of schools in the accessed districts but some of the schools had higher means on the achievement scores, then this represents a negative relationship as found in this study.

To have a better understanding of the finding, it needs to be interpreted in a broader context looking at the respective findings in all the 30 schools for which correlation was computed. It must be stated that, if the analysis is made based on findings in each of the thirty (30) schools, the picture looks different. This is because, out of the thirty schools, thirteen (13) of

them obtained a result of positive correlation between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement (GW1, GW5, GW6, GW8, GW11, GW17, GW18, GW19, GC21, GC25, GC28, GC29, GC30). Out of these thirteen (13) schools, three (3) of them obtained the result of strong positive correlation (GW5: ($r=0.585$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed); GW11: ($r=0.536$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed); GC25: ($r=0.661$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). One (1) school obtained a result of moderate positive correlation (GW17: ($r=0.301$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). Five (5) schools obtained the result of modest positive correlation ((GW1: ($r=0.193$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed), GW6: ($r=0.182$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed), GW8: ($r=0.299$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed), GW19: ($r=0.239$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed), GC21: ($r=0.299$, $p<0.05$, two-tailed). Four (4) schools obtained the result of weak positive correlation ((GW18: ($r=0.022$, $p>0.05$, two-tailed), GC28: ($r=0.027$, $p>0.05$, two-tailed), GC29: ($r=0.080$, $p>0.05$, two-tailed), GC30: ($r=0.099$, $p>0.05$, two-tailed). These specific schools' results indicated that, in principle, there is both positive and negative relationships between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement. The positive relationship is very popular in literature as indicated above. The negative relationship discovered in this current study is however unpopular in literature. Nevertheless, it is the positive correlations found in these thirteen schools which provide justification and evidence for the focal theory of this study: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be improved when school improvement planning and implementation is pursued as a collaborative local effort*.

Thus, it was assumed at the beginning of the study that, stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and implementation can improve academic achievement. Meanwhile, the result of positive correlation between collaboration and academic achievement means that, as stakeholder collaboration in planning improves or increases,

academic achievement increases and vice versa. The focal theory which used to be a mere assumption at the beginning of this study, now has some level of support or ground to be posited as a theory in this study. It is therefore restated: *Students' academic achievement will improve when stakeholders plan and implement school improvement programmes collaboratively at the school level.*

Furthermore, the theory admits the reality of other factors affecting academic achievement in schools. Therefore, for the academic achievement to be improved, these factors must be held in check through the four 'Performance improvement Strategies' identified in qualitative data in relation to research question four (School-focused strategies, Teacher-focused strategies, Instruction-focused strategies, and Community-focused strategies). Additionally, the theory submits that when these strategies are employed by schools in addition to collaborative school improvement planning and implementation, academic achievement will improve.

It must be stated finally, that the general finding about negative correlation between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement did not detract from this theory. This is because the relevance of stakeholder collaboration for academic achievement has been established by the findings in the thirteen schools on positive correlation between the two variables. So, the theory still stands. The new position on their relationship is that, depending on the contexts of schools, stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning may either have positive or negative correlation with academic achievement. The negative correlation can be corrected through the four performance improvement strategies or model developed in this study.

4.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter (Chapter Four), data highlighting the actual findings made in relation to each research question have been presented and discussed in the light of related literature. With regard to the nature of school improvement planning and implementation, it was found generally, that, school improvement planning and implementation in schools studied were not strictly structured or uniform in terms of procedures. Moreover, school improvement planning and implementation were not collaboratively done and this negatively affected the nature of school improvement planning and implementation in the selected schools in the districts.

Furthermore, schools implemented good school improvement programmes, yet, the programmes were not effective due to a number of implementation challenges. The schools in the districts were found to be ineffective because of reasons such as inadequate government funding, infrastructure, teaching and learning resources; low computer literacy; unsatisfactory teacher performance; unsupportive school environment and behaviours of parents; problem of school dropout and security as well as poor teacher motivation.

On the theme, 'making schools effective', four broad strategies were found as means of making schools effective in the districts. The strategies are school-focused strategies; teacher-focused strategies, instruction-focused strategies; and community-focused strategies. With regard to the theme, 'constraints to effective collaboration' lack of time and transparency in financial administration; differences in stakeholder background; lack of consensus; limited understanding of stakeholder responsibilities; weak stakeholder relationship and non-collaborative government policies, were found as the key constraints to

effective collaboration in the schools studied. Finally, stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement were found to be inversely related.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the summary of the study, summary of key findings, conclusions, recommendations, implications for educational leadership, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are presented. The conclusion is a synopsis of the entire study indicating the theory developed from the study and how that amounts to a contribution to knowledge and filling of a gap in relation to the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. The conclusion also demonstrates how the research questions have been answered by the data in terms of the thesis: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts are the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'* and the focal theory: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be improved when school improvement planning and implementation is pursued as a collaborative local effort*, of the study.

5.1 Summary of the study

The study was conducted on the topic "School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public Junior High Schools in the Gomoa West and Central districts. Regarding the purpose, the study sought to investigate the phenomenon of school ineffectiveness resulting from ineffective school improvement planning and implementation and how this affected academic achievement in public JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts. The study was guided by six research questions. The literature review was organised

around these six research questions. In addition, theories and models such as: models of collaborative planning theory – the theory of collective impact, and collegial model of stakeholder involvement, the four domains for rapid school improvement implementation, the systemic school improvement model and the strategic pillars of Eight Cities were reviewed. Six concepts based on the research questions were developed to serve as themes for the literature review. The theories and models were reviewed as they were related to the concepts or themes developed.

Methodologically, the study was underpinned by the pragmatists' philosophical position which cohered with the mixed methods approach. In line with the chosen approach, embedded mixed method design was adopted for the study. The study's population were Education Stakeholders (E.g., School Improvement Support Officers-SISOs and Planning Officers from the Education Directorates; PA Chairpersons from Parent Associations; SMC Chairpersons from School Management Committees and teachers from schools) of Gomoa West and Central districts. Though thirty (30) schools were involved in the study for quantitative data, five (5) schools were selected for the qualitative data. A sample size of 286 was selected for the entire study. Sampling techniques employed included purposive sampling, quota sampling, census sampling, and simple random sampling. Questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides were the tools used in gathering quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

Additionally, before administering the instruments, their validity and reliability were ensured. Face and content validity were ensured. Reliability of the questionnaires was ensured based on the Cronbach's alpha (0.89) obtained from the pre-test data of thirty (30)

participants. In all, 31 participants were involved in the pilot study. Furthermore, normality of the entire quantitative data for stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning, and academic achievement was determined through a Kolmogorov- Smirnov test. The questionnaires and the interview guides were pre-tested in four (4) schools selected from two districts other than the study area. The questionnaires were administered to 284 participants with 28 interviews conducted in the study. All participants (teachers, SMC chairpersons, PA chairpersons, SISOs) except planning officers were given questionnaires. Correlational analysis was done to establish the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. Also, thematic analysis was employed in analyzing qualitative data.

In addition, the results were presented in accordance with the objectives and research questions of the study. Qualitative data were presented in themes derived from the data under each of the first five research questions and objectives. Verbatim data from respondents were presented by indentation. The data were then interpreted and discussed in the light of related literature. Finally, hypotheses were tested for the sixth research question and the results presented in an APA table displaying the correlation between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement for the 30 schools.

5.2 Key findings of the study

The key findings are the major findings derived from the data. They are presented in accordance with the research questions of the study. The conclusions and the recommendations have all been based on these key findings. Together, these key findings provide a bedrock to this study's contribution to knowledge.

5.2.1 Nature of school improvement planning and implementation

The findings in relation to research question one have been itemized below:

1. Headteachers did not have full autonomy to plan for the schools.
2. School level planning generally focused on areas such as enrolment drive, sports, school management, culture, minor repairs, teaching and learning resources, academic work, discipline, co-curricular activities, and teacher accountability.
3. A six-step model of school-level planning was derived from the data: (1) Need assessment (2) Preliminary consideration of planning items by teachers (3) Re-organisation of planning items by management (4) Consultation with stakeholders on planning items (5) Actual planning by stakeholders (6) Official permission to execute plan.
4. The SPIP was the general planning guide for schools as well as the major platform for school level planning.
5. The preparation of the SPIP was not as collaborative as expected.
6. Districts relied on two planning guides – the ADEOP (Annual District Education Operational Plan) and the GALOP (Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project) to develop their action plan.
7. Districts were not fully independent in planning as variables of planning were nationally determined.
8. Core areas of district level planning included infrastructure, capacity workshop for teachers and GES staff, enrolment drives, staffing, provision of teaching and learning

materials, administrative procedures, disbursement of capitation grant and monitoring.

9. A seven-step district level planning model was developed – (1) Problem identification or diagnosis (2) Setting of objectives (3) Resources or logistics (4) Assignment of duties (5) Plan organisation/development (6) Plan review (7) Plan approval.

10. Inspections, SPIP and SPAM were the main means by which the districts identified school needs and factored them into their action plans.

11. Planning at the school and district levels exhibited the characteristics of both bottom-up and top-down approaches of planning.

12. Generally, collaboration in school improvement planning was not all that smooth though some level of collaboration existed between schools and directorates, directorates and district assemblies.

13. Dialogue and consultations were found as essential tools for collaboration in school improvement planning in the districts.

14. Schools did not follow similar steps in implementing school improvement plans. Yet a four-step model of implementation could be derived from their specific steps – (1) Formation of committees (2) Appointment of facilitators (3) Resourcing of committees (4) Coaching and monitoring.

15. Implementation of school improvement plans did not follow strict implementation routine as it appeared quite informal and that the four-step implementation model

derived is a product of combined implementation efforts in schools accessed but not as a universal practice followed in all schools.

16. Commitment levels of SMC, PA chairpersons and parents to implementation of school improvement plans were generally low.

17. The main reasons which accounted for the low parents' commitment to implementation of school improvement plans were lack of time and poor understanding of government's role in education.

18. Headteachers failed to distinguish between implementation plan and implementation strategy.

19. Headteachers considered scale of preference, motivation, inclusion, monitoring and supervision, and responsibility chart as their implementation strategies.

20. Implementation of school improvement plans did not follow rigorous steps at the district level.

21. Districts followed a simple routine in implementing their plans as most of the plans in the districts were implemented at the school level by teachers and SMC.

22. Implementation plans entailed variables such as timelines, output, objectives, implementing units and resources.

5.2.2 Effectiveness of school improvement programmes

The key findings made in relation to research question two have been itemized below:

1. Schools in the accessed districts were not embarking on bigger school improvement programmes and the reason was lack of funds.
2. Generally, students-related programmes implemented in schools to improve performance included Quizzes, Debates, Reading Projects, Radio Lessons, Remedial Teaching, Mid-Term Tests, Extra Classes and Candidates' Support Programme.
3. In relation to teachers, PLC (Professional Learning Community) was the only programme identified.
4. There were divided opinions on the level of effectiveness of school improvement programmes implemented. Programmes were considered effective on the basis of (1) performance or placement of students in contests (Quizzes, debates and reading competitions), (2) placement of students in SHS resulting from good BECE performance, (3) enhanced teacher performance through PLC, and (4) Enhanced academic performance of students.
5. Others considered programmes ineffective because of implementation challenges such as (1) Delay in implementation due to lack of funds (2) Government's prohibition on collection of monies in schools (3) Poor patronage of students, and (4) Unsupportive behaviours of parents.
6. Generally, school improvement programmes in the two districts were feeble, but not necessarily in terms of their nature, but rather their associated challenges.

5.2.3 Reasons for public school ineffectiveness

The key findings made in relation to research question three have been itemized below.

Schools in the two districts were described as ineffective due to the following reasons:

1. Inadequate government funding
2. Inadequate infrastructure
3. Inadequate teaching and learning resources
4. Low computer literacy
5. Unsatisfactory teacher performance
6. Unsupportive school environment
7. Problem of school dropout
8. Insecurity in schools
9. Poor teacher motivation
10. Unsupportive behaviours of parents

5.2.4 Making Schools Effective (Performance Improvement Strategies)

The key findings made in relation to research question four have been itemized below.

Four broad 'Performance Improvement Strategies' were derived from the data:

1. School-focused strategies (e. g. higher expectation, effective use of resources, school infrastructure and learning resources, and discipline).
2. Teacher-focused strategies (e. g. teacher accountability and performance contract, productive staffing, conditions of service and motivation, performance targets, and professional learning community – PLC).

3. Instruction-focused strategies (e. g. students-centred approach, remediation activities, students' placement and transition and instructional supervision).

4. Community-focused strategies (e. g. parental involvement and stakeholder collaboration).

5.2.5 Constraints to effective collaboration

The key findings made in relation to research question five have been itemized below.

1. Lack of transparency in financial administration
2. Lack of time
3. Differences in stakeholder backgrounds
4. Lack of consensus
5. Limited understanding of stakeholder responsibilities
6. Weak stakeholder relationship
7. Non-collaborative government policies.

5.2.6 Relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement

The key findings made in relation to research question six have been itemized below.

1. There was a relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement.

2. The relationship or correlation could be negative or positive.

3. There were statistically significant negative correlations between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in 17 JHSs.

4. There were statistically significant positive correlations between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in 13 JHSs.

5. Overall analysis indicated a modest and statistically significant negative relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement, $r = -0.12$, $p<0.05$.

5.3 Conclusions

The theoretical position of this study had been that when education stakeholders collaborate at the school level in school improvement planning and implementation, academic achievement of students will improve. From the level of an assumption, this position has moved to the level of theory based on the data gathered in this study. At the initial stages, schools in the two districts were considered ineffective on the basis of their poor performance in the BECE. The basis of such a claim initially was inconclusive until data were gathered in this study to either negate or justify that. In fact, poor performance in the BECE cannot be the only ground for describing schools as ineffective. A number of factors give rise to poor performance which becomes the ultimate determinant of school ineffectiveness. Schools in the two districts accessed have become ineffective because school improvement planning and implementation were feeble. The needed collaboration to spice up the planning process has not been encouraging because commitment level of some of the stakeholders was very low. This has negatively impacted on the kind of school improvement programmes run in

the schools within the accessed districts. The school improvement programmes run have not yielded the desired results because the contexts of the programmes were unsupportive.

Furthermore, the intention to build a theory around stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement was reinforced by the results of the correlational analysis for the thirty schools. The established relationship between the two variables was the basis of the theory propounded through this study. The relationship could be positive or negative as evidenced in this study. The negative relationship between the two variables was a reality discovered which appeared either novel or unpopular in literature and therefore a major contribution of this study to knowledge and theory. Consequently, the positive correlations found in some schools between the two variables rather provided the justification and evidence for the focal theory of this study: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be improved when school improvement planning and implementation are pursued as a collaborative local effort*. As a focal theory, it was an assumption to be validated with data from the study to become a theory or revised when the data do not support. Meanwhile, the result of positive correlation between collaboration and academic achievement meant that, as stakeholder collaboration in planning improved or increased, academic achievement increased and vice versa. This finding moved the focal theory from the level of assumption to the level of theory which is hereby restated as: *Students' academic achievement will improve when stakeholders plan and implement school improvement programmes collaboratively at the school level.*

Furthermore, the theory admitted the reality of other factors affecting academic achievement in schools. These factors were highlighted in the ten causes of school ineffectiveness identified in this study. Therefore, for the academic achievement to be improved, these

factors must be held in check through the four 'Performance improvement Strategies' identified in this study –School-focused strategies (higher expectation, effective use of resources, school infrastructure and learning resources, and discipline), Teacher- focused strategies (teacher accountability and performance contract, productive staffing, conditions of service and motivation, performance targets, and professional learning community – PLC), Instruction-focused strategies (students-centred approach, remediation activities, students' placement and transition and instructional supervision), and Community-focused strategies (parental involvement and stakeholder collaboration).

Once again, mention must be made of the fact that, the general finding about negative correlation between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement did not detract from this theory. This is because the relevance of stakeholder collaboration for academic achievement has been established by the finding on positive correlation between the two variables. So, the theory still stood. The new position on their relationship was that, depending on the contexts of schools, stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning may either have positive or negative correlation with academic achievement. In a situation where there is a negative correlation as was the case in this study in some schools, such an anomaly can be corrected through the four performance improvement strategies or model developed in this study.

Therefore, it can finally be stated that, the thesis of this study that: '*Ineffectiveness in JHSs in the Gomoa West and Central districts were the results of the districts' failure to approach school improvement planning and implementation as a collaborative local effort'*, and the focal theory: *The fortunes of underperforming schools in deprived communities can be*

improved when school improvement planning and implementation are pursued as a collaborative local effort, are partially supported by the findings of this study. Thus, weak stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning could be part of the factors causing poor academic achievement in schools but not the only causative factor. Also, strong stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning may not always lead to improved academic achievement as other factors influence students' academic achievement.

5.4 Implications for educational leadership

The ultimate goal of educational leadership is to make schools more functional in the sense of repositioning schools to improve their performance. Every objective pursued in this study is connected to educational leadership. Similarly, the findings presented in relation to these objectives have a number of implications for educational leadership. For example, it was concluded based on the findings that, schools in the two districts accessed have become ineffective because school improvement planning and implementation were feeble. The needed collaboration to spice up the planning process has not been encouraging because commitment level of some of the stakeholders was very low. Meanwhile stakeholder mobilization and the need for their collaboration in schools are cherished ideals in contemporary educational leadership practices. This means, educational leaders at the district and school levels have a responsibility of innovating to make schools more attractive to stakeholders. For them to achieve this, they need some level of autonomy in their professional practice as educational leaders. On the contrary, this study found headteacher autonomy in schools to be problematic. Leaders need some level of autonomy to make decisions and to innovate and bring improvement. The finding of this study on headteacher autonomy implied that, educational leadership in basic schools in Ghana needed serious

reforms tilted towards training and empowerment for headteachers. Training is crucial here because headteachers' leadership practices with regard to planning were not up to the expected standards.

Furthermore, the finding of this study on how schools in the accessed districts have become ineffective because of the challenging contexts in which they operated is notable. Moreover, the school improvement programmes run have not yielded the desired results because the contexts of the programmes were unsupportive. These revelations have implication for educational leadership. As a response to the causes of school ineffectiveness identified in this study, it is therefore implied for educational leaders at all levels and stakeholders to provide adequate funding and infrastructure for schools, provide adequate teaching and learning resources, improve teacher quality, reduce school dropouts, motivate teachers, improve school security and environment and get parents to be more responsive to educational needs of their wards.

Finally, it was established in this study that there was a relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement. It was found further that, the correlation could either be positive or negative. The phenomenon of negative correlation between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement was quite unusual but that was what this study found. This implies that, a new discourse is raised in the field of educational leadership to unravel why academic achievement could decline in an environment where there is a collaborative school improvement planning. On the contrary, there is the need to unravel also, why academic achievement could be improving in a school experiencing uncollaborative school

improvement planning regime. By implication, this study has placed a responsibility on educational leaders to improve the quality of planning in schools and be broadminded in dealing with basic school ineffectiveness since its associated factors are very broad.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The study faced a number of limitations which in no way compromised the authenticity and the quality of its findings. The independent variable (stakeholder collaboration in planning) could have been investigated in terms of other related variables in addition to planning and their respective correlation to academic achievement, but due to time and duration, stakeholder collaboration was investigated as a single variable. Methodologically, the finding about an inverse relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement required a sequential probe into why such an inverse relationship existed between the two variables in those schools. However, due to methodological restrictions, that was not done. The relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement could have been studied with a larger sample in more districts or even in an entire region to make the results more generalizable. However, due to time and resource constraint, the researcher could not do that and therefore resorted to the current sample size as the most workable sample size within his context.

5.6 Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the basic findings made in relation to each of the six research questions. In line with the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. In line with the findings that school improvement planning and implementation were not done autonomously and collaboratively in schools in the accessed districts, it is recommended that the Government revises its policy on public school management to give more powers to education directorates and headteachers to initiate programmes to improve schools and also enjoin schools and district education directorates to engage in more dialogue and consultations to get stakeholders to show more commitment to the activities of the schools.

2. Based on the finding that school improvement programmes in schools accessed have been rendered feeble, it is recommended that, government lifts up its commitment to the financial needs of Junior High Schools by paying the Capitation Grant on time to enable schools embark on more quality programmes.

3. In line with the finding that JHSs in the two accessed districts were ineffective, it is recommended that, adequate funding, infrastructure, teaching and learning resources be provided by the government and other relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, computer literacy, teacher performance and motivation, school security, and parental involvement should be enhanced in schools within the accessed districts by the district education directorates to make the schools more effective.

4. In line with the finding that performance improvement should focus on the school, teachers, instruction and community, it is recommended that district education

directorates and GES headquarters directed national and district school improvement strategies at these core areas to make JHSs more effective.

5. Based on the finding that there were existing constraints to collaboration such as lack of time, lack of consensus, limited understanding of stakeholder responsibilities etc., it is recommended that workshops and seminars be organized for the teachers, SMC members, Parents' Association and other stakeholders by the district education directorates to educate them on collaborative approaches to school management and the need for them to be more committed to the schools' activities to bring improvement.

6. In line with the finding that there was a relationship between stakeholder collaboration in school improvement planning and academic achievement, it is recommended that district education directorates enjoin school authorities to embrace collaborative practices such as dialogue and consultations in their administration in order to improve academic achievement. Also, it is recommended on the basis of the inverse relationship between stakeholder collaboration and academic achievement that schools explore the specific causes of their non-performance and work on them, in order to experience a positive correlation between stakeholder collaboration and academic achievement.

5.7 Suggestions for future research

Stakeholder collaboration could have been investigated in a more broader context other than school improvement planning. In view of this, it is suggested that future studies investigate school improvement in a boarder context and relate it to academic achievement. The study also revealed causes of school ineffectiveness in the two accessed districts. In view of this, it is suggested that future research works focus on factors influencing academic achievement

in the two districts. Furthermore, the four performance improvement strategies identified in this study may be experimented in an action research to test their effectiveness in improving performance in schools. Individual scales could be developed to measure them and investigate their effects on academic achievement in a regression analysis.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

PHD EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Stakeholder collaboration scale

This questionnaire is a scale developed by the researcher to measure the level of collaboration among educational stakeholders in school improvement planning. It is meant to answer the research question: ***What is the relationship between stakeholder collaboration in planning and academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts?*** As a Likert scale questionnaire, it is scored as: **Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1).** It is purely an academic exercise meant to meet the requirements for the award of a PhD degree in Educational Leadership. Confidentiality is highly upheld by the researcher.

RESPONDENT'S CONSENT

Please kindly indicate your consent to participate in this study by ticking *(√)* in the box below:

☐

Biographical Data of respondents

(a) Sex: Male [ ] Female [ ] (Please Tick)

(b) Age: 20-30 [ ] 31-40 [ ] 41-50 [ ] 51-60 [ ] 61-70 [ ]

(c) Position ……. (District planning officer, SISO, Teacher, SMC Chairperson, Parents' Association Chairperson)

(d) Number of years spent at post 1-3 [ ] 4-6 [ ] 7-10 [ ] Specify……

(e) District: Gomoa West [ ] Gomoa Central [ ]

(f) Circuit (for SISOs only) ……

(g) Name of school …….

(h) Educational level…… (Degree, Diploma, Secondary school graduate, Basic education graduate)

(i) Occupation: Government [ ] Private [ ] ……

NB: Kindly answer the following questions by ticking *(√)* the option that represents your opinion. Thank you.

1. There is much cooperation among us as stakeholders in resolving conflicts that arise during planning.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

2. There is clear definition of roles for stakeholders in planning for school improvement.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

3. There is mutual accountability among stakeholders in planning for school improvement.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

4. As stakeholders of the school(s), we usually come to a compromise on how to pursue the goal of the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

5. There is a practice of joint decision- making in the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

6. There is a shared vision among stakeholders in the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

7. Planning in the school(s) is inclusive enough.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

8. Stakeholders of the school(s) are accessible for planning.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

9. There is a sustained engagement of stakeholders in planning for school improvement.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

10. Stakeholders are kept abreast of the progress of the school(s) resulting from planning.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

11. I can vouch for the commitment of stakeholders towards school improvement planning in the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

12. Planning proceeds on a principle of shared responsibility in decision making in the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

13. Decision making in the school(s) is done through dialogue among the stakeholders of the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

14. In working towards the attainment of the goals of the school(s), we share our expertise as stakeholders of the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

15. I can attest to the existence of delegation of power among us as stakeholders of the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

16. Decisions in the school(s) are made through negotiation by us the stakeholders.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

17. I receive maximum respect from other colleague stakeholders of the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

18. There is much trust among us as stakeholders in planning for school improvement.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

19. I acknowledge the skills, experience, knowledge, creativity and contributions of other stakeholders of the school(s) in planning.

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

20. I actively support and contribute to the efforts of other stakeholders in planning for the school(s).

Strongly Agree [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree [ ] Strongly Disagree [ ]

Thank you for your participation

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDES

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
PHD EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADTEACHERS

This interview guide is meant to solicit the views of headteachers of Junior High Schools regarding the underlisted items. The data to be gathered would help in meeting the requirements for the award of a PhD degree in Educational Leadership on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts***. Confidentiality is highly upheld by the researcher.

School……

District……

Date……

Duration: From…… To……

1. How autonomous are you in initiating school improvement plans?
2. What are the key areas that your school improvement planning focuses on?
3. What specific steps do you follow in planning for the school?
4. How do you make use of planning guide to develop comprehensive school improvement plans?
5. What roles do implementers of school improvement plans play in the planning process?
6. What steps do you follow to implement school improvement plans in the school?
7. How committed are the school's stakeholders to implementation of plans?
8. How do you develop implementation strategies for the implementation of your school improvement plans?

9. What specific programmes have you implemented to improve performance in the school?
10. How would you describe the state of the following variables in your school?
    (a) Government funding
    (b) Infrastructure
    (c) Teacher qualification
11. What would you say about the performance of your teachers in this school?
12. How can teacher accountability be employed as a way of improving students' performance in your school?
13. What systems do you think can be used to improve teacher hiring, retention and sanctions?
14. If given the opportunity, what would be your special strategy to improve instruction in your school?
15. How do you create an atmosphere of higher expectations for teachers and students as a measure to improve performance?
16. How easy is it for you to coordinate the activities of stakeholders for school improvement?
17. How have the differences in the backgrounds of some of the schools' stakeholders impacted on their collaboration for school improvement?
18. Can you recount a situation where some of the stakeholders of the school exhibited limited understanding of their responsibilities in the school?
19. How have you dealt with the following in your encounter with stakeholders of the school?

(a) Delay in decision making

(b) Lack of consensus

(c) Politicization of education policies

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

This interview guide is meant to solicit the views of teachers of Junior High Schools regarding the underlisted items. The data to be gathered would help in meeting the requirements for the award of a PhD degree in Educational Leadership on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts***. Confidentiality is highly upheld by the researcher.

School……

District……

Date…….

Duration: From…… To……

1. What specific programmes have been implemented to improve performance of students in the school?
2. How have the programmes fared?
3. How do students' data and performance influence instructional practice in your school?
4. In what ways does your school environment support effective teaching and learning?
5. How would you describe the state of the following variables in your school?

   (d) Computer literacy

   (e) Government funding

   (f) School dropout

   (g) Infrastructure

(h) School security

(i) Teacher motivation

6. Describe the community's attitude towards teachers in the school?
7. How is the school performing with its available resources?
8. If given the opportunity, what would be your special strategy to improve performance in the school?
9. How do you create an atmosphere of higher expectations for students as a measure to improve performance?
10. Describe the relationship between the teachers and the following stakeholders.

(a) SMC Chairperson

(b) Parents' Association Chairperson

(c) SISO

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT OFFICERS (SISOs)

This interview guide is meant to solicit the views of School Improvement Support Officers regarding the underlisted items. The data to be gathered would help in meeting the requirements for the award of a PhD degree in Educational Leadership on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts***. Confidentiality is highly upheld by the researcher.

District……

Circuit……

Date…….

Duration: From…… To……

1. What would you say about school improvement planning in the schools within your circuit?
2. How have issues of accountability of teachers been emphasized during planning in the schools?
3. What is your view on the school improvement programmes implemented in schools within your circuit?
4. Share your views on instructional practices in schools within your circuit?
5. How would you describe teachers' attitude to work in your circuit?
6. What would you want to achieve with the introduction of performance contract for teachers in your circuit?

7. What would be your special strategy to improve instruction in the schools within your circuit?
8. To what extent are parents empowered to participate in planning in the schools within your circuit?
9. Kindly describe your level of satisfaction with how stakeholders of the school devote their time to the schools' improvement activities.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR DISTRICT PLANNING OFFICERS (Education Directorate)

This interview guide is meant to solicit the views of district planning officers at the education directorate regarding the underlisted items. The data to be gathered would help in meeting the requirements for the award of a PhD degree in Educational Leadership on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts***. Confidentiality is highly upheld by the researcher.

District……

Date……

Duration: From…… To……

1. What policies or regulations on the development of school improvement plan do you know about in the district?
2. How does the district make use of planning guide to develop comprehensive school improvement plans?
3. What key areas does your school improvement planning focus on?
4. What specific steps do you follow in planning for schools?
5. Describe your experiences with stakeholders during planning.
6. How does the district factor specific school needs into its school improvement planning?
7. Do you usually attach implementation plan to your school improvement plans?
8. What steps do you follow to implement school improvement plans in the district?

9. How do you develop implementation strategies for the implementation of your school improvement plans?
10. What is your view on the school improvement programmes implemented in schools within your district?
11. How easy is it for you to coordinate the activities of stakeholders for school improvement planning?

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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS' ASSOCIATION CHAIRPERSONS

This interview guide is meant to solicit the views of parents' association chairpersons regarding the underlisted items. The data to be gathered would help in meeting the requirements for the award of a PhD degree in Educational Leadership on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts***. Confidentiality is highly upheld by the researcher.

School……

Date…….

Duration: From…… To……

1. Kindly describe your planning experiences in the school as a management team member.
2. What would you say about how the school's needs influence its planning?
3. How would you describe the attitudes of the school's stakeholders in developing good plans for the school?
4. How inclusive is the decision-making style of the headteacher in the school?
5. To what extent are parents empowered to participate in planning in the school?
6. Your background and profession may be different from other members of the management team. How does this impact on your understanding of issues during planning in the school?
7. Kindly describe the level of cooperation among stakeholders during planning in the school?

8. How does your job impact on your level of commitment to your duties in the school as a stakeholder?
9. What usually brings delay in decision making in the school?
10. How would you describe your relationship with teachers in the school?

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PHD EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SMC CHAIRPERSONS

This interview guide is meant to solicit the views of SMC Chairpersons regarding the underlisted items. The data to be gathered would help in meeting the requirements for the award of a PhD degree in Educational Leadership on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts***. Confidentiality is highly upheld by the researcher.

School……

Date…….

Duration: From…… To……

1. Kindly describe your planning experiences in the school as a management team member.
2. What would you say about how the school's needs influence its planning?
3. How would you describe the attitudes of the school's stakeholders in developing good plans for the school?
4. How inclusive is the decision-making style of the headteacher in the school?
5. To what extent are parents empowered to participate in planning in the school?
6. Your background and profession may be different from other members of the management team. How does this impact on your understanding of issues during planning in the school?
7. Kindly describe the level of cooperation among stakeholders during planning in the school?

8. How does your job impact on your level of commitment to your duties in the school as a stakeholder?
9. What usually brings delay in decision making in the school?
10. How would you describe your relationship with teachers in the school?

APPENDIX C: PRE-INTERVIEW BRIEFING

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Mark Quansah

PRE-INTERVIEW BRIEFING

Let me express my appreciation and gratitude to you for accepting to grant this interview to help me complete my thesis and to advance the course of knowledge in Ghana and the world at large. To achieve this, we kindly have to take note of the following:

1. This interview is meant to provide data to help complete the thesis on the topic: "***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts"***.
2. Anonymity of respondents is very crucial and so respondents are to avoid the mentioning of their names or the names of the school or the community when responding to questions.
3. The interview will be audio recorded. This will enable me to get the verbatim responses of respondents for analysis.
4. Respondents are assured that their responses will be analyzed and reported academically with no traces to the identity of respondents.
5. All audios from the interviews shall be accessible to the researcher alone and deleted after the analysis.

Thank you for your assistance

APPENDIX D: LETTERS

Mark Quansah
Winneba Secondary School
P. O. Box 39
Winneba
20th June, 2022.

The Head of Department
Department of Educational Administration and Management
University of Education, Winneba
P. O. Box 25
Winneba

APPLICATION FOR INTRODUCTORY LETTERS

I write to apply for **three** introductory letters addressed to – the District Director of Education at Gomoa West district, the District Director of Education at the Gomoa Central district, and a general introductory letter for schools within my research area. I am currently working on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central districts***. This request is to enable me obtain permission from the appropriate authorities within my research area for a smooth data collection exercise.

I count on your usual cooperation. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Quansah

Mark Quansah
Department of Educational Administration and Management
University of Education, Winneba
P. O. Box 25
Winneba

30th June, 2022.

The Director
Gomoa West District Education Directorate
Apam- Central Region

Dear Madam,

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO GATHER DATA

I write to apply for your permission to gather data in ten (20) Junior High Schools in your district. The data will be used for academic purposes. It is one of the steps towards the completion of a PhD programme in Educational Leadership at the University of Education, Winneba. I am currently working on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central district*s**. In addition to the ten schools, I shall also need your permission to gather data from the following officers at the education directorate: Human Resource Officer, Deputy Director Supervision, School Improvement Support Officers, Statistics officer, Exams Officer, Planning Officer, Research and Records Officer and the ICT Coordinator.

I count on your usual cooperation. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Quansah

Mark Quansah
Department of Educational Administration and Management
University of Education, Winneba
P. O. Box 25
Winneba
19th July, 2022.

The Director
District Education Directorate
Gomoa Central
Afransi- Central Region

Dear Madam/Sir,

APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO GATHER DATA

I write to apply for your permission to gather data in ten (10) Junior High Schools in your district. The data will be used for academic purposes. It is one of the steps towards the completion of a PhD programme in Educational Leadership at the University of Education, Winneba. I am currently working on the topic: ***School improvement planning and implementation for academic achievement in public JHSs in Gomoa West and Central district*s**. In addition to the ten schools, I shall also need your permission to gather data from the following officers at the education directorate: Human Resource Officer, Deputy Director Supervision, School Improvement Support Officers, Statistics officer, Exams Officer, Planning Officer, Research and Records Officer and the ICT Coordinator.

I count on your usual cooperation. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Quansah