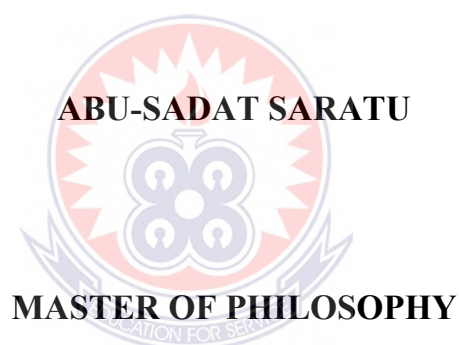


**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADS  
IN THE EFFUTU MUNICIPALITY**



**2022**

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THE EFFUTU MUNICIPALITY**

**ABU-SADAT SARATU  
(202146266)**



**A thesis in the Department of Educational Administration and  
Management, Faculty of Educational Studies, submitted to the School of  
Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Philosophy  
(Educational Administration and Management)  
in the University of Education, Winneba**

**NOVEMBER, 2022**

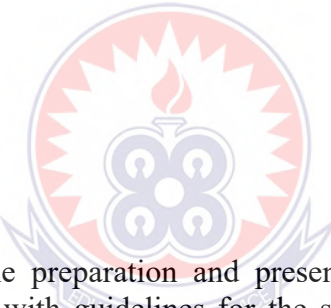
## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I, Abu-Sadat Saratu, hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own efforts with the exception of references made to other people's work and in published articles, which have been dully cited and acknowledged. I declare that this work has not existed in part or in a whole elsewhere as a presentation.

**Signature**.....

**Date**.....



### Supervisor's Declaration

I, hereby declare that, the preparation and presentation of this project work was supervised in accordance with guidelines for the supervision of dissertation as laid down by the School of Graduate Studies, University of Education, Winneba.

**Supervisor' Name:** Prof. Samuel Asare Amoah, PhD.

**Signature**.....

**Date**.....

## DEDICATION

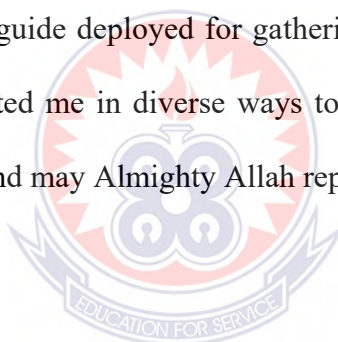
This dissertation is dedicated to my father (**Alhaji Awal Abu-Sadat**) for supporting and taking care of me and my education from the day I came to the world.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I will first and foremost acknowledge, Almighty Allah for giving me the strength to carry out the study. Special thanks go to my supervisor, Prof. Samuel Asare Amoah, for taking time of his busy schedules to meticulously and consciously go through this dissertation as well as his valuable advice and suggestions. The completion of this dissertation is as a result of the support I received from my family members especially my father - Alhaji Awal Abu-Sadat, My mother- Hussaina Alhassan, My husband - Alhaji Dr. Adamu Yushau Usmanu, all brothers and sister, and my children - Ummulkhair, Adamu and Hauwa'u. I say thank you to them all.

I will also like to convey my appreciation to all the participants who made time to respond to the interview guide deployed for gathering data for this study. Finally, to all and sundry who assisted me in diverse ways to reach this far in my educational pursuit, I say thank you and may Almighty Allah replenish all your effort.



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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality. The objectives of the study, based on Lezzote's correlates of effective schools, were to find out the instructional leadership practices exhibited by basic school heads, identify ways in which basic school heads monitor students' progress, examine the measures basic school heads adopt to ensure a safe and orderly environment for students as well as the strategies employed by basic school heads to create learning opportunities for students in the Effutu Municipality. The study employed a qualitative approach underpinned by the interpretive paradigm. Specifically, the study employed a case study research design with purposive sampling procedure to select a sample of seventeen (17) participants. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The effective schools and instructional leadership theories provided a broad framework for the study. The study revealed that the instructional leadership practices exhibited by basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality are instructional supervision, inclusivity approach and managerial and administrative functions. The head teachers constantly observed classroom activities and inspected teachers' lesson notes and students' workbooks as means of monitoring students' progress. Again, besides mobilizing support to undertake maintenance and renovation works in their schools, basic school head teachers in the Effutu Municipality also instituted a School-Parents-Community partnership as a way of safeguarding the environment for students to learn. Finally, the study revealed that the head teachers employed such strategies as ability-based learning, ability groupings, access to learning materials, assessment and organizing extracurricular activities to help create learning opportunities for their students. The study concluded that although the school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality are in line with Lezzote's effective schools model, there is no evidence to suggest that these influence learning outcomes. With evidence of the use of technology and virtual studies being ignored by the head teachers, the study recommends that the Effutu Municipal Education Directorate adopts a digital technology policy for all heads of basic schools in the Municipality. The Directorate should build the capacity of the heads and help them gain the competencies needed to enhance their school improvement practices through technology. The basic school heads should also study their schools' situations and adopt practices that best work for them.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Education occurs when people acquire knowledge and skills from what is being taught (Hornby 1984 cited in Adu-Agyem & Osei-Poku, 2012). As widely known and accepted to be the key to success and the force that drives civilization and development, education has become absolutely necessary. Indeed, the United Nations Millennium Development Goal Two (MDG 2) and the Sustainable Development Goal Four (SDG 4) underscore the need for an inclusive and equitable quality education which will promote lasting learning opportunities for all. However, the issue of quality has always been a global concern compelling educators around the world to continuously make changes in their schools and the systems that support them with the view to raising standards and improving quality (Harris, 2005).

Consequently, many countries introduced major reforms to make their schools effective. In England for instance, the academy model school and the London Challenge educational reforms were introduced to improve accessibility and quality education. While Wilkins (2015) observes that the academy school model brought about the improvement of underperforming schools in England, Baars et al. (2014) claimed the London Challenge educational reform from 2000 to 2010 brought about significant improvements in student outcomes.

The USA reforms equally saw the Charter and Contract Schools initiatives which proponents of the US reforms argued to have made significant contribution to the achievement of *no child being left behind* goal. This undoubtedly led to increased

opportunities for learning and provision of access to quality education for students (Dillon, 2005 cited in Wilkins, 2015).

The Bangladeshi reforms likewise devoted attention to school reforms which centred on improvement practices to enhance quality education and make primary and secondary education easily accessible both for the poor and the rich (Konok, 2011). In Ethiopia, Amsale (2010) revealed that the reformation of school systems to ensure quality assurance in the educational system led the government to incorporate school improvement practices into the system in 2007.

The concern and need for quality education is not different in Ghana as successive governments over the years have attempted to implement major reforms in the educational system all in a bid to improve upon its quality. Considering the fact that Basic Education generally is thought to be a very significant stage in the educational system and believed to lay the foundation for further education, Gordon Guggisberg placed much emphasis on it by introducing the Educational Reform of 1919-1927. Similarly, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, acknowledging the significance of primary education, introduced fee-free compulsory primary and middle school education in the 1960s with the aim of promoting quality Basic Education. Successive governments have also initiated reforms both at the basic and the secondary school levels with the ultimate aim of enhancing the quality and efficiency of our education. It is therefore evident that school improvement (SI) is considered critical in ensuring the development of education and serving as a tool for achieving good academic results in schools (Escobar, 2019).

Van Velzen, et al. (1985) as cited in Konok (2011) define school improvement as an organized, efficient and continuous effort expected to effect changes in learning conditions and other interconnected internal conditions in one or more schools, emphasizing on accomplishing educational goals more effectively. Hopkins et al. (1994) also maintained that school improvement entails raising student achievement with emphasis on the teaching and learning processes and the conditions that support them. In summary, school improvement takes place when educational structures are strengthened or enhanced to increase students' learning outcomes or achievements. School improvement cannot be achieved in a vacuum, which is why it has become necessary that certain practices are put in place to make it achievable. It must be noted that when schools improve and become effective, quality education is enhanced and this becomes evident in students' performance.

Leadership is argued to be an important variable to school improvement. Madhlangobe and Madhlangobe (2014) assert that leadership influences school improvement and that, schools cannot improve if leadership structures are not effective enough. Day et al. (2006) argue that the leadership of the head teacher [at the basic education level] is very crucial in school improvement as it has direct and indirect effects on students' learning outcomes. As leaders, head teachers can influence change that can make schools more effective. Thus, as low academic standards and low pass rates are attributed to ineffective leadership (Inkoom, 2012), it is incumbent on head teachers to foster school improvement practices and promote success in schools.

Another factor considered key in school improvement is the practice of monitoring students' progress (Lezotte, 2010). As asserted by Lezotte, schools will improve and become effective if measures are put in place to monitor students' progress holistically. In her view, Cotton (1988) observed that [educational research] literature on effective schooling identified monitoring of student learning a determinant of high-quality education. Thus, it differentiates effective schools and teachers from ineffective ones.

The American Federation of Teachers (2003) opined that efforts to improve schools will not be effective without an orderly and safe learning environment. Lezotte (2010) also admonished educators to make schools a place where students can feel safe, physically and emotionally. According to him, school leaders must treat schools as “sacred places” to enable both students and teachers focus on learning. It is therefore, the responsibility of head teachers to create a safe and orderly school environment that will promote high level of student engagement and learning.

In addition, The American Institutes for Research (AIR) (2014) stressed the need to provide opportunity for students to learn. According to the AIR, it behoves schools to implement strategies that can promote deeper learning. In corroborating this assertion, Lezotte (2010) postulated that schools must ensure the creation of a syllabus must be flexible enough to allow re-teaching when the students are having trouble with certain key concepts. Instructional time should be utilized not only to cover the syllabus but to help the students master it.

Head teachers, therefore, have an important role to play in school improvement activities and so they must identify strategies or practices that will help reform teaching approaches for purposes of achieving improved learning outcomes. As

leaders of schools, head teachers should have an implementation chain where policies that are channelled from the top are monitored to ensure that they are properly implemented at the down (Birkland, 2010).

Literature reveals that, mostly, educationists focus on the concept of school improvement with a common emphasis and strategies for improving schools placed on students' performance (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Ghana Education Service, 2009; Kingsford, 2010). Apparently, this has resulted in the least attention placed on other practices such as leadership, monitoring students' progress, ensuring an orderly safe and learning environment, and provision of learning opportunities found effective in improving schools (Lezotte, 2010). It is against this background that, the researcher investigates the school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Basic education lays the foundation for further education and training. Quality basic education has the capacity to widen an individual's academic prospects and make him or her marketable and ready for the job market. Although educational reforms and school improvement practices have been introduced at the basic school level to improve academic performance, they appear to have failed to produce the desired results. Academic performance at the basic school level continues to fall and this is evident in the results of Junior High School candidates. Research findings revealed that in 2009 and 2010 only about 40% of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) graduates qualify to gain admission into second cycle institutions in Ghana (Ghana Education Service, 2009; Kingsford, 2010).

Similarly, Henaku (2009) noted that some schools in Ghana, especially those in the rural areas, continuously recorded zero percent in the BECE results and this is becoming very alarming. The Effutu Municipality is no exception as it has recorded as high as 57.1% failure in the BECE (Effutu Municipal Assembly, 2016). According to the Effutu Municipal Education Directorate (2021), the municipality's BECE average failure rate from 2016 to 2020 stands at 34.35 per cent. It also recorded an average failure rate of 52.64 per cent between 2011 and 2015. The municipality has only managed to score an average pass rate of 47.36 for the last ten years (i.e. from 2011 to 2015). This implies that majority of BECE candidates in the municipality fail in the examination and this unfortunate situation is mostly attributed to school ineffectiveness.

Although many practices found to be effective in improving schools exist (Lezotte, 2010), almost all the existing studies on school improvement practices focused on the instructional leadership practices of the heads (Amakyi, 2021; Donkor & Asante, 2017; Muresherwa & Jita, 2021; Kaparoua & Bush, 2015; Lee et al., 2012; Leaf & Odhiambo, 2016). Besides, most of the studies were conducted in second cycle institutions outside Ghana. The only two studies that have attempted to investigate the phenomenon in Ghana were carried out using quantitative research designs (Amakyi, 2021; Donkor & Asante, 2016). Therefore, the researcher employs qualitative research approach to investigate the school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The study will focus not only on the instructional leadership practices but ways in which basic school heads monitor students' progress, the measures the heads adopt to ensure a safe and orderly environment for students and the strategies they employ to create learning opportunities for the students.

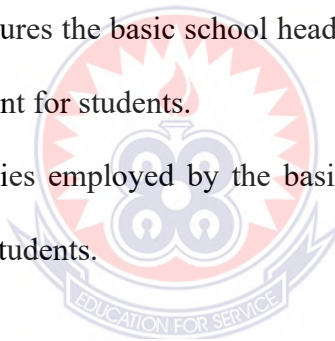
### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine school improvement practices of heads of basic schools in the Effutu Municipality. This was a qualitative research underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

Specifically, the research sought to:

1. Find out the instructional leadership practices exhibited by basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality for school improvement.
2. Identify ways in which the basic school heads in the municipality monitor students' progress for school improvement.
3. Examine the measures the basic school heads put in place to ensure a safe and orderly environment for students.
4. Assess the strategies employed by the basic school heads to create learning opportunities for students.



### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the instructional leadership practices employed by basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality for school improvement?
2. In what ways do the basic school heads monitor students' progress for school improvement?
3. What are the measures put in place by the school heads to ensure safe and orderly environment for students?
4. What strategies do the basic school heads employ to create learning opportunities for students?



## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The researcher hopes that the findings of this study will contribute to school improvement practices which will improve academic performance. The significance of the study can be grouped under two main themes namely the theoretical and practical significance.

### **1.6.1 Theoretical Significance**

In line with Lezotte's theory of effective schools which underpins the study, findings of this study will unearth the different school improvement strategies basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality adopt, depending on the prevailing circumstances and conditions, to improve academic performance of students. This will offer new ways of understanding the theory.

### **1.6.2 Practical Significance**

The study may serve as a foundation for other researchers to conduct further studies on school improvement practices. Besides, the study will supplement literature on school improvement practices of basic school heads.

## **1.7 Delimitations of the Study**

The study was confined to school improvement practices among head teachers of basic schools in the Effutu Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana. The practices were delimited to instructional leadership, monitoring of students' progress, ensuring safe and orderly environment and creating learning opportunities for students.

## 1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

The following definitions have been provided for the purpose of this present study.

**School Improvement:** Making schools better to enhance teaching and learning.

**School Improvement Practices:** Those practices that effect changes in schools to enhance students' performance.

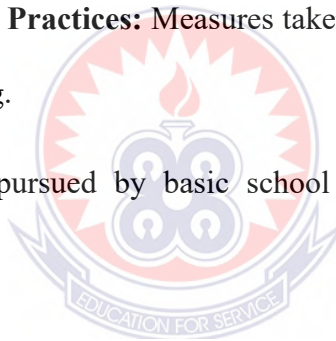
**Basic Schools:** Public Junior High Schools in the Effutu Municipality.

**Basic Education:** This covers education from kindergarten to Junior High.

**School Head:** A school staff member whose responsibility is to provide academic leadership and management of the school.

**Instructional leadership Practices:** Measures taken by basic school head teachers to enhance students' learning.

**Monitoring:** Activities pursued by basic school head teachers to keep track of students' learning.



## 1.9 Organization of the Study

The study is organised into five chapters. Chapter One consists of the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, operational definition of terms and organisation of the study. Chapter Two comprises a review of related literature on school improvement and school improvement practices. The chapter also discusses theories underpinning the study. Chapter Three highlights the various methods employed in conducting the research. Here, the specific tools and procedures used in collecting and analysing the data are explained. Chapter Four presents and analyses

the results obtained from the study. Chapter Five provides a summary of the findings; draws conclusions and offers recommendations and suggestions.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter presents a review of some related literature by researchers on instructional leadership while contextualizing at the primary or basic school level. The literature consists of reviews at both global and local levels. Some of the literature reviews discussed at the global level were from the US, Germany, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The review begins with the theories underpinning the study and continues with the basic concepts on instructional leadership. The review further discusses some empirical researches that are related to the focus of the current study.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Literature Review**

The theoretical foundation of the study is rooted in the Effective School Theory (EST) put forward by Lezotte (2010) and the Leadership Instructional Theories which is a portmanteau of other educational theories relevant to the study. The EST discerns the fundamental attributes and methodologies that contribute to the efficacy of educational institutions in relation to student academic attainment and the overall improvement in performance of the school. On the other hand, the Instructional leadership theories collectively offer a structured approach for educational administrators to effectively lead and enhance the overall quality of education.

##### **2.1.1 Effective school theory**

The Effective Schools' model, propounded by Lezotte (2010), states that an effective school is characterized by seven correlates namely: leading the instructional program, focus on school mission, safety and orderliness of schools, expectations for success, home-school relations, frequent monitoring of students' progress and opportunity to

learn for students. The theoretical framework is predicated upon the notion that educational institutions are intricate entities necessitating the presence of diverse elements for achieving success. According to Lezotte (2010), the seven Correlates of Effective Schools serve as robust indicators of educational institutions that achieve success in facilitating learning for all students, irrespective of their socioeconomic background or ethnic identity. These correlates are discussed below.

➤ **Leading the Instructional Programme**

According to Lezotte (2010), strong instructional leaders are proactive and seek help in building team leadership and a culture that is conducive to learning and professional growth. In the effective school, the principal and others act as instructional leaders and effectively and persistently model and communicate the mission of the school to staff, parents and students. The principal is the one to initiate and influence the seven correlates of an effective school. The seven correlates can therefore be termed as the principals' leadership practices. Schools that are effective tend to have dynamic leadership.

Michael Lynch supported the assertion of Lezotte in his article "What factors make the school effective? He suggests that, first factor is quality leadership. In other words, students perform better where the principal provides strong leadership. Effective leaders are visible, able to successfully convey the school's goals and visions, collaborate with teachers to enhance their skills, and are involved in the discovery of and solutions to problem (Lynch, 2015). The following year, he again wrote that, "The first attribute is quality leadership. Students perform better when the principal and school board members provide strong leadership. Effective leaders are visible, can successfully convey the school's goals and visions, collaborate with

teachers to enhance their skills, and are involved in the discovery of and solutions to problems” (Lynch, 2016). Amer, in reviewing Dr. Lezotte’s book, “What Effective Schools Do, agreed to the assertion that in an effective school, the leader must be the “leader of Leaders”(Amer, 2022).

Ajirt Mondal also endorsed Lezotte’s model. On the issue of school leadership Mondal, asserts that principal and other school leaders are focused on student achievement; support for improving and enhancing school culture, teaching, and learning; and effective collaboration among school leaders, teachers, parents, students, and partners in the community. The principal and other school leaders demonstrate and inspire an unwavering commitment to fulfilling the vision of the school among all members of the school community (Mondal, 2020). The head of the school bears the ultimate responsibility in the management of the school. All other factors are subject to his leadership.

➤ **Safe and Organized Place**

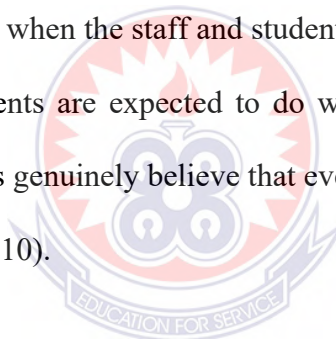
An effective school must provide an environment that is conducive for learning. A school environment must be a place where students feel safe physically, emotionally, and mentally. According to Lezotte (2010), safe and orderly environment correlate was defined in terms of absence of student’s undesirable behavior (Lezotte, 2010). To him, teachers, parents and other mentors need to encourage a learning environment in school age kids by treating schools as ‘sacred places’ He further stressed the need to go beyond the elimination of undesirable conditions and provide desirable conditions necessary for effective learning. He stated that when a school atmosphere is conducive for learning, students respond positively with positive attitudes.

➤ **Clear and Focused Mission**

Visions capture the aspirations of organizations. A clearly articulated mission and vision of a school helps stakeholders to stay united and focused on striving to achieve the goals and objectives of school. According to Lezotte (2010), an effective mission emphasizes innovation and improvement in providing learning for all students and educators of all backgrounds. The teachers must translate the mission so as to let it fall in line with what they teach. The mission and vision of the school will guide everyone's effort in the teaching and learning process (Lezotte, 2010).

➤ **Expectations for Success**

In an effective school, the general expectation is that students can attain high levels of educational achievements when the staff and students believe that they can make it. In an effective school, students are expected to do well. Lezotte (2010), states that at effective schools, teachers genuinely believe that every student has the raw material to be successful (Lezotte, 2010).



➤ **Home-School Relations**

There must exist a partnership between the home and the school if effective school should be achieved. Teachers and parents must work together to help the children get the most out of the educational system. According to Lezotte (2010), in effective schools, parents understand and support the mission of the school. They are therefore given the opportunity to play a meaningful role in helping to shape the children (Lezotte, 2010). Lezotte opined that effective schools go beyond purely academic matters. Parents and other stakeholders can come together to work on issues such as drug use among students, gang acidity and bullying (Education.com, 2013).

➤ **Frequent Monitoring of Students' Progress**

Lezotte (2010) asserts that in an effective school, students' achievements are measured in terms of quality and equity. An effective school facilitates high academic achievement. In an effective school, a wide range of assessment tools are employed to measure the progress of the students in terms of their performance. Assessment is vital in every education. This is to ensure that teachers can work on improving the performance of students over time. Lezotte (2010), concluded after a research that, students who were regularly tested on their academic progress were more successful than those who were not. Frequent teacher written evaluations give teachers the needed information which is used to design strategies that will help them address the challenges of students (Education.com, 2013). According to Lezotte, assessment of students must be holistic and less formal.

➤ **Opportunity for Students to Learn**

More time is needed for student on a task. Students must not be rushed through their academic work. In an effective school, as outlined by Lezotte, school-going days are adjusted to make room for all students to attain mastery of their task. Schools that find creative ways to extend time on learning will likely be more effective (Lynch, 2015).

**Criticisms/ Disadvantages of the Theory**

The effective school model lacks universal definition. This makes the application of the theory problematic. According to Mondal (2020), reviews of the effective school's literature reveal that there is no consensus on the definition of an effective school (Mondal, 2020). It is for this reason that several other authors developed different correlates to measure an effective school.



The theory did not consider the other factors that have the potential of influencing the outcome of teaching and learning. The theory is silent on factors such as readiness or pre-school experience, the intelligence of the students and the quality of teachers, which are equally important to the success and growth of education.

### **Conclusion**

The effective school model by Lezotte has become one of the major models of education. The goal of the model is to help improve the schools' system in general, which culminates into improved standards of student's performance. The most significant feature of effective schools is to ensure that students can have a more active learning experience. The effective school model as explained and discussed above, provides a perfect frame for modelling of education. The correlates provide all stakeholders in education with knowledge on how to deal with issues of education. As noted, the model is only a frame and therefore there may be variations in its practicality.

The theory is relevant to this study because the seven correlates of an effective school as advanced by Lezotte (2010), demonstrate the need for effective leadership on the part of the administrator (school principal). To enhance and ensure that schools are effective, the school must have a strategy in management practices. Heads of schools have become the main implementers of policies and strategies formulated by the other stakeholders of education. The success or otherwise of any educational program depends on how they manage the schools. It is for this reason that most of the models aimed at school improvement target the heads of schools. Several other authors built on Lezotte's effective school model.

### **2.1.2 Instructional leadership theories**

The concept of instructional leadership, as initially conceptualized by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), refers to the actions undertaken by principals with the objective of enhancing and advancing the educational process within schools. These actions encompass a wide range of activities, including but not limited to fostering collaboration among teachers, students, and parents, engaging in school planning and management, and optimizing the utilization of school facilities and resources. Instructional leadership theories encompass conceptual frameworks aimed at comprehending and implementing leadership strategies with a specific emphasis on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. These ideas are founded upon the premise that educational administrators hold a pivotal position in influencing the calibre of teaching and academic performance among students.

There exists a multitude of models and notions that serve to elucidate the phenomenon of instructional leadership. Several scholars in the field of instructional leadership commonly use the work of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) as a primary source of reference (see Nor Azni, 2015; Muda, Mansor & Ibrahim, 2017; Yusof, 2019). Scholars have expanded the conceptualization of instructional leadership to encompass many methodologies. According to Robinson et al. (2008), the notion of instructional leadership may be categorized into two distinct approaches: a "exclusive" approach and a "inclusive" approach. Scholars who classify instructional leadership as "exclusive" perceive the principal as the only individual accountable for establishing school objectives, overseeing operations, and formulating strategies for enhancing school performance. This particular viewpoint tends to concentrate only on the function of principals as instructional leaders (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985).

Historical leadership theories have posited the notion that individuals had inherent attributes that equip them with the ability to effectively advise and exert influence over others within educational settings (Grigoropoulos, 2020). Subsequent theories have placed greater emphasis on external influences and degrees of expertise (Kwan, 2020). However, Grigoropoulos et al. (2020) suggested different schools of thought led to multiple instructional leadership models and theories including (1) Trait approaches, which deal with the great man theory, which emphasizes the individualities of the leader in the basic school; (2) Leadership style, which results from Michigan and Ohio State studies (Bratton, 2020) and emphasizes leader behaviours; and (3) Contingency theoretical approaches, for example, the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) theories, which make references to the importance of situational influences (Tsolka, 2020). Following Grigoropoulos et al.'s (2020) admonition, the instructional leadership theories utilized in this study include behaviourist theory of leadership, trait theory and situational/ contingency theory.

#### **2.1.2.1 Behaviourist Theory of Leadership (BTL)**

The Behaviour theory Approach is in contrast to finding out what characteristics or traits made leaders effective (Kwan, 2020). The behaviourists tried to find out what leaders did and how they carried out their tasks which made them effective (Hallinger et al., 2020). Hallinger further defined leadership styles as the various patterns of behaviour favoured by leaders during the process of directing and influencing workers. Experts have propounded different styles of leadership over the ages. These styles, according to Hallinger et al. (2020), range from authoritarian to democratic. He cited McGregor as having summed up these two extremes in his Theory X (the authoritarian) and his Theory Y (the democratic), believing that his Theory Y was more appropriate for today's manager.

McGregor's Theory X propounded that the average person has an inherent dislike for work (Lewis, 2019). Because of this, most people must be coerced, controlled, or threatened with punishment to get them to put forward adequate effort towards the achievement of organizational goals (Aas & Paulsen, 2019). The average person, according to this theory, prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition, and wants security above all. Huong et al. (2020) describes this leadership style as task-centered because it concentrates on the task and ignores the people doing it and their needs.

A modern approach to management according to Huong et al. (2020) is expressed in McGregor's Theory Y which considers work as being as natural as play or rest, which the average person not only accepts but seeks responsibility (Tsakeni et al., 2020). According to this theory, external control and the threat of punishment are not the only means of bringing about effort toward organizational objectives. Theory Y or the consultative style as referred to by Tsakeni et al. (2020), proposes that people enjoy solving problems, especially when they see the benefits involved from using a solution they helped devise. They explain that if you tell people what to do without consultation, they often react by reducing their effort or losing interest. Wherever possible the staff should be involved in how the job should be done (Sebastian et al., 2019).

Behaviour is something that a person does that can be observed, measured, and repeated (Sebastian et al., 2019). Behavioural leadership theory argues that the success of a leader is based on their behaviour rather than their natural attributes (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Behavioural leadership theory involves observing and evaluating a leader's actions and behaviours when they are responding to a specific situation. This theory believes that leaders are made, not born (Bada et al., 2020).

According to the behaviourists, leaders are not born with any special uniqueness but can be trained, and traits that a leader must have can be taught and developed (Bada et al., 2020). Therefore, anyone can be a leader, but they must have the proper environment and training for leadership qualities to develop (Skaalvik et al., 2020). Interest in the behaviour of leaders has been stimulated by a systematic comparison of autocratic and democratic leadership styles (Naylor, 199 cited in Skaalvik et al., 2020). It has been observed that groups under these types of leadership perform differently:

1. Autocratically led groups will work well so long as the leader is present. Group members, however, tend to be unhappy with the leadership style and express hostility.
2. Democratically led groups do nearly as well as the autocratic group. Group members have more positive feelings, however, and no hostility. Most importantly, the efforts of group members continue even when the leader is absent.

### **Main Assumptions of the Theory**

1. Behaviour is observable and objective
2. Behaviour is the result produced by the stimuli of an organism.
3. Leaders are not born successful but can be created based on learnable behaviour.
4. Based on how leader behave and assumes that these traits can be copied by other leaders
5. Anyone can be a leader, but they must have the proper environment and training for leadership qualities to develop

6. The success of a leader is based on their behavior rather than their natural attributes

### **Advantages of the Behaviorist Theory**

1. It is easy to put into practice.
2. It is simple to understand.
3. The results are usually quick.
4. It uses small steps to shape the behaviour.
5. It does not require a specialist to implement it - anyone can use the approach.
6. It is based on the principle that reinforced (rewarded) behaviour will be repeated.
7. It allows leaders to be flexible and adapt based on their circumstances.
8. Rewards are not used to motivate workers.
9. Workers are compelled to work quickly for high production.
10. Decisions are taken quickly for implementation.

### **Criticisms or Disadvantages of the Behaviourists Theory**

1. It has no scientific backing or legitimacy
2. It ignores environmental and situational factors that often influence people's behaviour and attitudes.
3. Behavioral theories are a learned process and take time
4. Whether you are a leader or an employee, determining certain behaviors that fit scenarios comes with trial and error.
5. The work is strictly structured and does not promote initiative and creativity.
6. Close supervision exercised by leaders is abhorred by workers.
7. Workers' needs are often ignored; they easily get frustrated and have low morale to work.

8. Conflicts easily arise between workers and leaders

### **Summary and Relevance of the Behaviorist Theory of Leadership**

The Behaviorist Theory of Leadership is grounded on the principles of behaviorism and centers around the notion that leadership behavior can be acquired, cultivated, and altered via the processes of reinforcement and conditioning. Although not the prevailing paradigm in the realm of educational leadership, behaviorist concepts provide pertinent attributes that may be effectively employed in the enhancement of fundamental school practices for the purpose of school development. For example, the use of Behaviorist ideas may be utilized to influence the behavior of instructors and staff members, so enhancing their teaching methods and relationships with pupils. The establishment of explicit behavioral standards for teachers, students, and school leaders, which concurrently supports the enhancement of educational processes inside schools, can be firmly rooted in behaviorist ideas. It is essential to acknowledge that although behaviorist concepts can be advantageous in molding leadership behaviors and practices, an exclusive dependence on behaviorism may fail to consider the intricate social and emotional dimensions of educational leadership, as well as the necessity for heightened intrinsic motivation among teachers and staff. The idea is utilized to offer insights and comprehension about the behavioral components of school management that contribute to the general enhancement of the school.

#### **2.1.3 Trait theory**

The trait theory is the oldest leadership perspective and was dominant for several decades. It focuses on individual leaders and attempts to determine the personal characteristics (traits) that great leaders share (Plaatjies, 2019). According to Shepherd et al. (2019), leadership sought to identify enduring personal characteristics

and traits that distinguish leaders from followers and effective from ineffective leaders. Traits are distinctive internal qualities or characteristics of individuals such as physical characteristics (for example, height, weight, appearance), personality characteristics (for example, dominance, originality) skills, and abilities (such as intelligence, knowledge), and social factors (such as interpersonal skills, sociability) (Shepherd et al., 2019).

By the mid-1970s, a new generation of leadership experts began to argue that the earlier studies focused too much on the abstract personality traits and physical appearance of leaders (Shepherd et al., 2019). The recent literature on leadership indicates that although no traits ensure leadership success, certain characteristics are potentially useful. It further indicated that some personality characteristics, many of which a person needs not to be born with but can strive to acquire, do distinguish effective leaders from other people (Herawati et al., 2020). Herawati and Tjahjono, (2020) identified the following competencies that are characteristics of effective leaders such as; drive, leadership motivation, integrity, intelligence, and knowledge of the business. Drive refers to the inner motivation that leaders possess to pursue their goals. It also refers to a set of characteristics that reflect a high level of effort (Hallinger et al., 2020).

The drive includes the high need for achievement, constant striving for improvement, ambition, energy, tenacity (persistence in the face of obstacles), and initiative. Leadership motivation stems from the fact that leaders want to lead. They have a strong need for power because they want to influence others to accomplish goals that benefit the team or organisation (Hallinger et al., 2020). Integrity has to do with the correspondence between actions and words, honesty, and credibility (Hallinger et al., 2020). It refers to the leader's truthfulness and tendency to translate words into action.



Leaders will only have followers when trust is maintained through the leader's integrity (Hallinger et al., 2020).

Leaders believe in their leadership skills and ability to achieve objectives for the improvement of the basic school. The leadership role is challenging and setbacks are inevitable. Self-confidence allows a leader to overcome obstacles, make decisions despite uncertainty and instill confidence in others in the school. Effective leaders need to have a high-level knowledge about their environment, industries, companies, technical matters, and the general business environment in which they operate. In summary, Huong et al. (2020) drew the following conclusion:

1. That the traits of physical energy, intelligence greater than the average intelligence of followers, self-confidence and achievement motivation, and the motives of the leader were found to consistently differentiate leaders from one another.
2. That the effects of the traits on leader behaviours and leader effectiveness are enhanced to a great extent by the relevance of the traits to the situation in which the leader functions.

### **Main Assumptions of the Trait Theory**

1. People are born with inherited traits.
2. Some traits are particularly suited to leadership.
3. People who make good leaders have the right (or sufficient) combination of traits.
4. That personality traits are relatively stable and therefore predictable over time
5. Personality traits are relatively stable across different situations
6. Trait theories take into account that personality consists of several different traits and that some people have 'more' or 'less' of each trait than others

7. Some traits are more closely interrelated than other traits and tend to occur together

#### **Advantages of the Trait Theory:**

1. It provides detailed knowledge and understanding of the leader's element in the leadership process.
2. It is a naturally pleasing theory.
3. It serves as a standard against which the leadership traits of individuals can be assessed.
4. It is valid as a lot of research has validated the foundation and basis of the theory.
5. The trait theory does not require academic qualifications to come to a leader.
6. The trait theory basis of selection is not tedious or does not require ample time duration.

#### **Criticisms or Disadvantages of the Trait Theory**

1. Not all people who possess 'natural' leadership qualities become great leaders
2. It has no scientific backing or legitimacy
3. It ignores environmental and situational factors that often influence people's behaviour and attitudes
4. The focus is primarily on males with the idea of the heroic man
5. It does not account for external factors such as the immediate environment.

Hence, even if people have the qualities needed for good leadership, they may not always end up becoming effective leaders.

### **Summary and Relevance of the Trait Theory of Leadership**

The trait theory of leadership posits that specific innate personal qualities and features in individuals confer a predisposition for effective leadership. Although the theory in question has faced significant criticism and its applicability in modern leadership theory is restricted, there are pertinent elements of trait theory that warrant consideration within the framework of enhancing educational practices in elementary schools. Trait theory can exert an impact on the selection criteria employed in the appointment of educational leaders, such as principals or head teachers. Primary educational institutions have the capacity to seek for individuals with particular attributes that have been correlated with proficient leadership, including good communication abilities, flexibility, and a robust work ethic.

Moreover, school administrators that possess favourable characteristics have the potential to act as influential figures for both educators and learners. Leaders that demonstrate attributes such as honesty, empathy, and resilience have the potential to serve as role models, motivating others to adopt similar characteristics and therefore fostering a favourable school environment.

Furthermore, leaders who possess qualities such as critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and sound judgment are capable of making well-informed judgments in order to effectively tackle problems and hurdles encountered during the process of school reform. In a similar vein, leaders who possess qualities such as charisma, excitement, and the capacity to inspire others have the potential to encourage teachers, students, and other stakeholders to actively engage in endeavours aimed at enhancing the school. It is important to reiterate that the only reliance on trait theory does not yield a thorough comprehension of leadership within educational settings. The effectiveness

of leadership in educational institutions is shaped by a multifaceted interaction of several elements, encompassing the surrounding circumstances, the particular style of leadership employed, and the competencies and actions demonstrated by leaders. The trait theory is employed to explain the presence of trait characteristics in leadership that contribute to the implementation of school improvement methods in elementary schools. From this theoretical standpoint, when selecting and developing teachers and administrators, it is important to take into account characteristics and actions that are in line with the particular requirements and objectives of the institution of learning.

#### **2.1.4 Situational / contingency theory**

The contingency theory is a behavioural theory developed by Fred Fiedler through his 1958 scholarly work on leader effectiveness in group settings. The theory typically suggests that there is no exact leadership or management style that is most appropriate in organizing and managing a structured institution (Shala et al., 2021; Tsolka, 2020). Although researchers have attempted to identify effective leader behaviours that would work in every situation the various researchers pursuing the behavioural view of leadership eventually found that leader behaviours that worked well in one situation were often not as effective in another situation (Yukl, 2011). This implies that different situations require different styles and that the effectiveness of a style depends upon the situation in which it was used (Yukl, 2011). In essence, a good leader must be willing to employ an appreciable level of dynamism in tackling specific circumstances and addressing particular needs in view of the times and other determining factors. As asserted by the theorist, best practices in human institutions are subject to the contingencies of individual and unique situations.

There are potentially many situational factors that could influence the effectiveness of leaders, hence the evolution of several different situational approaches. Fielder's Contingency Theory posits that leaders differ in the degrees of their orientation towards the task versus that toward the people (Kundu et al., 2019). These differences make leaders more effective in some types of situations than in others. According to this model, leader effectiveness depends on whether the person's natural leadership style is appropriately matched to the situation (Tsolka, 2020). In other words, leader effectiveness is determined by both the personal characteristics of leaders and by the situation in which leaders find themselves (Tsolka, 2020).

Mansour and Elziny (2020) noted that the situational leadership theory states that leadership should tell, sell, participate or delegate depending on the readiness of followers. By telling, the leader defines the roles needed to do the job and tells followers what, where, how, and when to do the tasks (Mansour et al., (2020). It is thus important that leaders understand their behaviour, the behaviour of their subordinates, and the situation before utilizing a particular leadership style (Anthony et al., 2020).

### **Assumptions of the Contingency Theory**

The emergence of this theory provided counterintuitive argument against classical theories which suggested that there is one ideal approach for effectively organizing and managing human institutions. Ever since this theory was developed, it has received multidisciplinary attention. Essentially, it is being largely discussed in literature in communications, human resource management, and educational management among others. The eclectic acceptance of this theory in academic

literature is as a result of the theory's core assumption that there is no one best way to manage or lead a group of people, which mostly scholars resonated with.

Some other variables of the theory include the relationship that exists between the leader and their members, structure of task, and position power (Tsolka, 2020). In essence, the contingency theory examines whether the existing leader-member relationship is good or poor; whether the task structure is high or low; and whether the power position of the leader is strong or weak. These factors invariably stimulate the leader to determine the exactness of the situation in which they are and whether their approach to leadership is ideal for that particular situation. The theory indicates that it is crucial for leaders to be mindful of these individual variables in dealing with specific issues. The theorist also pointed out that good leader-member relationship, high task structure and strong leader position is a solid combination in dealing with most cases in the organization. The reverse of this combination is rather detrimental to the growth of the organization. A good leader-member relationship is evident when members trust the leader, like the leader and get along with the leader. When there is poor leader-member relationship, the atmosphere is that of friction between the leader and the members. Also, members do not have confidence in the leader. In regards to high task structure, requirements are clear and the end goal is definite. With low task structure, requirements are unclear and end goal is vague. For leader's position power, the phenomenon is strong when leaders have the power to hire, fire, promote and give pay rises to subordinates. Meanwhile, this variable could be weak when leaders have no authority to do any of the aforementioned things. The assumptions are summarised as follows:

1. One of the assumptions underlying contingency theory is that no single type of institutional structure is equally applicable to all institutions. Rather,

institutional effectiveness is dependent on a fit or match between the type of technology, environmental volatility, the size of the institution, the features of the institutional structure, and its information system.

2. The theory of contingency recommends that no leadership style is precise as a stand-alone as the leadership style used is reliant upon the factors such as the quality, situation of the followers, or several other variables.
3. Contingency theorists assumed that the leader was the focus of the leader-subordinate relationship; Situational theorists opined that the subordinates played a pivotal role in defining the relationship.

### **Advantages of the Contingency Theory**

Based on the assumption of the contingency theory that there is no single best way of leading, the theory is considered as dynamic in nature (Suleiman et.al., 2018). This feature of the theory has a competitive advantage with respect to other theories of leadership. In essence, the dynamic nature of the theory gives managers the prerogative to change or modify organizational policies to suit a particular situation.

Another advantage of the theory is that it exposes leaders to several techniques of dealing with issues and this consequently helps the leader to boost their leadership and decision-making skills (Toluwase, 2017). Additionally, the theory is structured in a way that employees' inputs are considered in the decision-making process which consequently helps in the growth of the business.

### **Criticisms/ Disadvantages of the Contingency Theory**

Despite the fact that the contingency theory has received wide academic attention and appropriated in myriad studies on leadership and management, it is not without criticisms. Scholars such as Gille (2011) has suggested that the contingency theory

largely concentrates on the key situation or issues that need attention of leaders but does not pay significant attention on the leaders themselves, leadership qualities and how leadership styles are modified. Some point to the fact that the failure of the contingency theory to propose a single approach of dealing with issues in an organizational setting is a major flaw of the theory (Cherry, 2017; Suleiman et al., 2018). These scholars indicated that that in principle, the theory seem simple but practically it becomes complicated owing to the fact that although it is susceptible to dealing with various issues, there is no specific model embedded in the theory which can be practicalized to deal with the uniqueness of issues.

Another school of thought suggests that the contingency theory is reactive in nature (Toluwase, 2017). There is the suggestion that handling various situations become burdensome for the manager because the manager is always reacting differently to individual events which might be intricate in nature.

It is also argued that although literature on the contingency theory is somewhat expansive, a lot has not been done in to deal with unique or individual issues that the leaders may encounter (Gille, 2011). The aforementioned author opines that it is not adequate enough to suggest that a leader's action is contingent on the situation.

### **Justification of the Contingency Theory**

Situational Leadership considers the motivational level of employees when selecting a leadership style. For example, a motivated and willing employee will require less coaching than an unmotivated individual. Since motivation largely comes from within the individual, head teachers must understand what motivates their teachers or risk diminishing engagement and efficiency in our schools. Situational Leadership can provide leaders and managers of schools with the tools necessary to influence others



and to help them appropriately cultivate and exercise their power to influence and affect change. Situational Leadership approaches performance as situation-specific, requiring leaders to assess performance based on a specific task and work climate. Thus, the theory is applied to the study to ascertain ways heads of basic schools in the Effutu municipality analyze tasks and working climate of both teachers and students when assessing them. The theory would also help to find out the appropriateness of the rewards and sanctions the heads meted out relative to school improvement practices in their schools.

### **Summary and Relevance of the Contingency Theory of Leadership**

The Contingency Theory of Leadership asserts that the efficacy of a leader is dependent on the particular circumstances or environment. The Contingency Theory holds significance within the realm of school improvement techniques in basic schools, as it provides insight into the adaptation of leadership styles and measures among these educational institutions. The Contingency theory places emphasis on the notion that effective leadership should possess the ability to adapt to the distinct requirements and conditions of the educational institution. School administrators have the capacity to implement this concept by customizing their leadership approach and tactics to align with the distinct problems and objectives of their educational institution. Moreover, the Contingency Theory upholds the notion that leaders ought to exhibit adaptability and a willingness to modify their leadership style and techniques in response to the demands of the environment, given that the implementation of school development measures may necessitate varying leadership approaches at different phases.

In the context of education, this idea proves to be valuable once again in comprehending the diverse evaluation and management of risks that are linked to

endeavours aimed at enhancing schools. This necessitates the examination of potential obstacles and uncertainties that may occur within the distinctive environment of a certain elementary educational institution. In general, the acknowledgment of the absence of a universally applicable leadership strategy is crucial in shedding light on the reasons why educational leaders in elementary schools exhibit a greater inclination towards adaptability and responsiveness in the face of the dynamic and evolving character of the educational landscape. This tool assists leaders in making well-informed decisions and adapting their activities to address the unique demands and problems encountered along their school's path towards development.

#### **2.1.5 Synthesis of instructional leadership theories**

The study considered three instructional leadership theories as a theoretical premise for the research. The Behaviourist Theory of Leadership, Trait Theory and Situational/ Contingency Theory. Whereas the BTL offers insight into how behaviour of leadership (in this case school head) tends to determine school improvement practices. The Trait Theory presents a different perspective from the traits of the leaders (school heads). Traits recognizes the personality of school head and improvement results. The contingency theory on the other hand emphasizes a how well improvement practices of school heads match their particular environment or school.

In practical application, the integration of several leadership theories and tactics into a holistic approach is frequently shown to yield more effectiveness in tackling the complex difficulties associated with enhancing educational outcomes in elementary schools. When selecting and developing educational leaders, it is essential to take into account the features and behaviours that are in line with the particular demands and

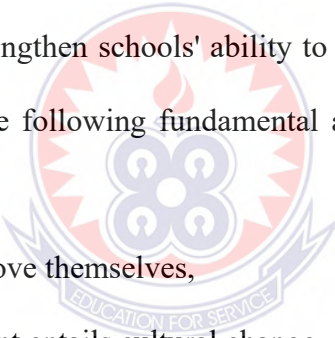
objectives of the school. Overall, the instructional leadership theories explored in this study provide a framework for understanding the actions of school heads in the improvement of basic schools, placing emphasis on behaviour, cognitive and psychic elements.

## **2.2 Conceptual Literature Review**

This section of the study is dedicated to reviewing the relevant literature pertaining to the primary concepts under investigation. This is done with the aim of offering a comprehensive examination of fundamental ideas relevant to the research topic.

### **2.2.1 The Concept of School Improvement**

School improvement is a type of educational change strategy that aims to improve student outcomes and strengthen schools' ability to manage change (Hopkins, 2001). Harris (2002) outlined the following fundamental assumptions about school reform approaches:

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- (a) Schools may improve themselves,
  - (b) school improvement entails cultural change,
  - (c) there are circumstances for change at the school and classroom levels, and
  - (d) school improvement is concerned with increasing change capacity.

According to Creemers and Reezigt (2007), the general concept of school improvement is seen as unsophisticated and mechanistic in school improvement circles and thus would not work generally in all schools. Schools must innovate and invent their own remedies to individual challenges as well as general improvement. School improvement is a strong instrument for putting hypotheses to the test. School improvement can also bring fresh perspectives and opportunities for successful school aspects, which can be investigated further through effective school research. In recent

years, there have been examples of fruitful collaboration between school effectiveness and school improvement, with innovative approaches to combining the two traditions/orientations being tried (Reynolds, et.al., 2000).

The concept of effective school improvement was defined as follows, based on Hopkins et al. (1994) definition of improvement: Effective school improvement is a planned educational change that improves student learning outcomes while also strengthening the school's ability to manage change. The term "managing" has been added to emphasize the processes and activities that must be carried out in school in order to accomplish change/improvement.

The topic of school culture should not be overlooked if school improvement is to be successful. The danger of short-term and cosmetic improvements exists when the school structure changes but the school culture does not change (Creemers et al., 2007). The qualities of the school culture must be favourable for school improvement to occur. Schools, for example, must have common goals and take ownership of their achievement. Collegiality, risk-taking, mutual respect and support, openness, and a lifelong learning mentality are also required.

The search for additional insights in other theoretical traditions such as organizational theories, curriculum theories, behavioural theories, and theories of organizational learning and human resources management incorporated different points of view in the theoretical analysis for useful insights for effective school improvement: (1) the integration of the school effectiveness and school improvement traditions; (2) the search for additional insights in other theoretical traditions such as organizational theories, curriculum theories, behavioural theories, and theories of organizational learning and human resource management (Hoeben, 1998; Reezigt, 2000). These

theories were chosen in the hopes of providing concepts and connections between concepts related to the complicated process of school improvement, which involves educational concerns (such as curriculum), school management (such as school structure), and participant behaviour. Lezotte's model on the other hand link school improvement with instructional leadership practices, monitoring students' academic progress, safe and orderly environment of students and providing pupils with learning opportunities (Levine & Lezotte, 1990).

### **2.2.2 Dimensions of school improvement practices**

The literature on school improvement emphasizes the need for modifying crucial processes in institutions and prioritizing school improvement within specific contexts in order to get in-depth insights into transformative processes (Harris, 2020). Extensive scholarly literature pertaining to the school improvement practices highlights the significance of capacity development and the influence of school environments. The presence of capacity development has a significant impact on achieving desired outcomes, since the absence of such capacity might hinder schools from maintaining ongoing school improvement initiatives that lead to enhanced student outcomes (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001). Harris (2011) emphasizes the significance of intentional, focused, and strategic efforts to enhance capacity in order to achieve successful implementation of change. King and Bouchard (2011) suggest that the concept of school capacity encompasses five interconnected aspects that exert an influence on the caliber of teaching and academic performance inside educational institutions. The factors that contribute to an atmosphere of professionalism include the understanding, skills, and mindsets of teachers for successful instruction, the logical structure of the curriculum, the leadership provided by principals, and the availability of technological resources.

Nonetheless, it is worth recognising that school improvement practices involve a diverse array of variables and areas of concentration. The inclusion of these elements is crucial in order to improve the overall quality of education and enhance student outcomes within a school setting. Several crucial characteristics of school improvement practices encompass:

### ***Curriculum and Instruction***

The term "curriculum" often encompasses the entirety of educational experiences (both teaching and learning) within the educational process. It is a deliberate and organized arrangement of instructional activities, or the manner in which a student's educational encounters are framed within the objectives set by the instructor or educational institution (Goodson & Ball, 2012). The enhancement of curriculum involves the elevation of grade level standards, the elimination of continuous evaluation, and the substitution of end-of-subject examinations with periodic summative assessments (Winter, 2014).

In addition, Apple (2014) argue for the active involvement of instructors in the curriculum design and development processes. It is believed that incorporating practitioners' ideas into the curriculum is an appropriate method, since it allows for the consideration of diverse views and facilitates the development of a curriculum design that is both straightforward and impactful. The enhancement of curriculum encompasses the elevation of grade level standards, the elimination of continuous evaluation, and the substitution of end-of-subject examinations with intermittent summative assessments (Winter, 2014). Additionally, Apple and Jungck (2014) argue for the active involvement of instructors in the curriculum design and development procedures. It is believed that incorporating practitioners' ideas into the curriculum is

a suitable method, since it allows for the consideration of diverse views, ultimately resulting in a curriculum design that is both straightforward and impactful.

### ***Learning Environment***

According to Usman and Madudili (2019), the concept of the learning environment comprises several elements such as learning resources and technology, instructional methods, modes of learning, and links to social and global settings. The phrase encompasses not only the cognitive aspects, but also the human behavioral and cultural components, which encompass the significant role of emotion in the process of learning. Learning environments exhibit variability across different classrooms and contexts, each characterized by distinct elements. The learning environment, as an integral aspect of school improvement practice, encompasses the physical, social, and psychological factors present within a school setting that have an impact on students' capacity to acquire knowledge and flourish.

The term "educational environment" refers to a comprehensive concept that includes several elements such as the physical infrastructure, classroom dynamics, institutional culture, and interpersonal dynamics among students, instructors, and staff members. Enhancing the learning environment entails establishing a secure, encouraging, and all-encompassing setting that cultivates active participation, drive, and optimal educational achievements for every student. Improving the learning environment is a crucial component of initiatives aimed at enhancing schools, as it possesses the potential to exert a substantial influence on students' scholastic accomplishments, welfare, and comprehensive educational journey.

The effect exerted by a principal on a school is predominantly indirect, primarily via the establishment and maintenance of a school culture. This culture, in turn, directly affects the academic performance of students (Watson, 2001). According to Fink and Resnick (2001), it is argued that the responsibility of fostering a hospitable and inclusive culture that facilitates effective teaching and learning lies with the school administrator. Gerrard and Farrell (2013) emphasize the significance of principals understanding the school culture before implementing any planned changes. As key figures in the educational system, principals' perception of the desired culture plays a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of efforts to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

### ***Relationship and Support***

The establishment of positive ties between schools and families is of utmost importance as it significantly influences children' academic success and growth throughout all educational levels (Morera et al., 2015). Accordingly, Gilroy (2018) identifies parental participation in the education of young learners as the primary factor contributing to the desired improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, Bush (2007) asserts that the responsibility of school leadership includes fostering more parental involvement in their children's education, a measure that may be assessed by the level of parental participation in school-parent meetings.

### ***Professional Development***

Professional development plays a crucial role in the implementation of effective school reform strategies. Teacher professional development is a continuous and dynamic endeavour aimed at facilitating the enhancement of educators' knowledge, competencies, and dispositions to optimize their effectiveness in the educational



setting. Efficient professional development is congruent with the improvement objectives of the educational institution and is founded upon the specific requirements of the faculty. Additionally, this platform fosters collaboration and offers instructors valuable opportunity to acquire knowledge from both their peers and subject matter specialists.

Professional development encompasses a variety of modalities, including as workshops, conferences, online courses, mentoring, coaching, and peer observation. Investing in professional development is a crucial endeavour for educational institutions committed to enhancing student outcomes. By equipping educators with the requisite information, skills, and attitudes necessary for efficacy, educational institutions may provide an enhanced learning milieu that benefits all students. A recent study conducted by Giraldo (2014) investigated the correlation between professional growth and the provision of high-quality education. The researcher's analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data obtained from four distinct instruments yielded significant evidence of a substantial transformation in the performance of instructors and the academic accomplishments of pupils. According to Hannay et al. (2003), it is imperative for professional development and performance assessment to align in order to effectively assess academic progress.

### ***Leadership***

The importance of effective school leadership cannot be overstated as it plays a critical role in establishing a clear vision, offering guidance, and fostering a constructive and cooperative school environment. According to Hallinger and Heck (2010), leadership is a dynamic process that exerts influence on individuals, empowering management to motivate individuals to willingly and effectively carry

out necessary tasks. Leadership encompasses the act of motivating and providing assistance to individuals in order to attain a goal that is grounded in distinct personal and professional principles. In a similar vein, Kruse (2013) elucidates that leadership may be defined as a social process that entails exerting influence to optimize the collective endeavours of individuals in order to attain a certain objective. According to Sharma, Sun and Kannan (2012), the attainment of effective leadership is not just contingent upon acquiring a leadership position, but rather hinges upon the possession of comprehensive knowledge and comprehension of successful leadership abilities, as well as the personal capacity to effectively use them.

According to Earley (2013), the role of school leadership includes the collaboration and guidance of teachers in order to enhance the educational processes inside schools. Head instructors have a crucial function at the core of educational institutions. The leadership responsibilities assumed by school principals encompass several elements, including instructional leadership, cooperation, communication, and strategic decision-making, with the ultimate objective of enhancing the overall quality of the school. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in facilitating the necessary transformations and improvements required to elevate the quality of education, boost academic outcomes, and optimize overall institutional effectiveness. Leadership has a [fundamental role in shaping and harmonizing several facets of endeavors aimed at enhancing schools.

### **2.2.3 The concept of school effectiveness**

School effectiveness refers to the performance of the organizational unit called 'school'; which can be expressed as the output of the school and which in turn is measured in terms of the average achievement of the pupils at the end of a period of formal schooling (Scheerens, 2000). Scheerens further explains that School effectiveness is seen as the degree to which schools achieve their goals in comparison with other schools that are equalized in terms of student-intake through manipulation of certain conditions by the school itself or the immediate school context. Thus, the extent to which a school is successful in achieving its goals and objectives could be termed as school effectiveness. Singha (2018) however considers an effective school as one which is mostly dedicated to the development of students in all aspects and doing so is responsible for improvement of society and nation. This implies that although the academic success of students is the primary measure of school effectiveness, an effective school should eventually meet the needs and expectations of such stakeholders as students, parents, teachers and the community.

### **2.2.4 Concept of instructional leadership**

The concept of instructional leadership has been widely studied since the 1980s and 1990s (Hallinger, 2003). To this end, various models and concepts exist to explain instructional leadership. The instructional leadership models and theories can be referred to as the Hallinger and Murphy Models (1985), Model Weber (1996), Model Murphy (1990), and Mc Ewan Model (2009). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) define instructional leadership as principals' behaviours aimed at promoting and improving the process of teaching and learning in schools involving teachers, students, parents, school planning, school management, school facilities, and resources.

Many instructional leadership researchers make Model Hallinger and Murphy (1985) the main reference (Nor Azni, 2015; Jamelaa, 2012; Yusri, 2012; Premavathy, 2010; Brown and Chai, 2012; Mattar, 2012; Peariso, 2011). Based on this model there are three dimensions in instructional leadership activities, namely, determining school missions, managing instructional programs, and creating a school learning environment (Premavathy, 2010). Instructional leadership sub-dimensions in this model include eleven leadership functions. These include; explaining school goals, supervising and evaluating teaching, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, assure instructional time, maintaining learning support, providing incentives for teachers, enforcing academic standards, promoting professional development, and providing incentives for learning (Brown & Chai, 2012).

Teachers are the main implementing agencies of teaching and learning in the classroom. The influence of instructional leaders on improving the quality of teaching of teachers can affect the learning of students. In addition, based on the research synthesis conducted by Hallinger on the leadership models studied (2011), it is observed that instructional leadership also has a great impact on students' learning. The findings of Abdul Ghani and Anandan (2012), Zahara & Suria (2011), and Quah (2011) also show that instructional leadership practices contribute to the quality of student learning. Instructional leadership, thus, has a stronger influence on students' learning than transformational leadership (Ghani & Anandan, 2012).

### **2.2.5 Instructional leadership practices**

The schooling sector requires leaders who are fully active in the improvement of instruction and curriculum in schools in a global educational environment where schooling systems are compared worldwide and where there are rising expectations

for the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills (Naidoo & Petersen, 2015). School leaders are therefore expected to show dynamic leadership that matches with the tenets of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill sets. In the early 2000s, instructional leadership reclaimed its place in the leadership debate. From 2000 to 2015, we looked at publications about instructional leadership that were published in eight key journals on educational leadership. A significant number of scholarly publications on instructional leadership were published during this time span, according to the study. If we look for papers in other journals and forms of publishing, this figure will very certainly rise (example, book chapters, books, etc.).

According to Bush (2015), there is a connection between the learning outcome to engagement with classroom practice and Instructional leadership. Effective schools are seen as the ones that are able to promote a high level of student achievement. Bush further states that there are effectiveness variables that substantiate the conceptual framework and instructional leadership. The following variables were related to school effectiveness. Strong administrative leadership; especially, in the areas of instruction and curriculum; Safe and orderly environment; Regular and systematic monitoring of student's performance; Systematic and broad-based reward system for students; Strong communicating support and a norm of academic press including a high expectation for student's performance and an emphasis on mastery of basic skills.

Instructional Leadership in the educational system globally is a critical concept because of the key role it plays in driving the school's curriculum outcomes if the concept is embraced holistically. The improvements in the supervision of instructions under leadership are of utmost importance to educational authorities and governing

bodies of education. Instructional supervision is identified as a means to enhance the performance of teachers and students' achievement. It relates to professional roles played by stakeholders and is required as a standard to improve performance.

Effective educational programmes and systems place enormous responsibility on all learning activities if monitoring and evaluation guidance are rigorously and continuously practised and, hence the need for supervision to achieve the outcomes. Sergiovani (2007) summarizing what supervision entails, maintains that supervision is carried out for good reasons, allowing schools to be better, encouraging and supporting teacher growth. Sergiovani argues that supervision enhances the student's progress throughout their academic and developmental stages of learning experiences. However, he posits that failure of any supervision depends on the information and source of authority that the supervisor bases instructions on. The sources of the five authorities are bureaucratic, technical knowledge, moral, professional and personal. The combination of these supervisory policies and practices has a place and should be used by supervisors to produce better results to promote school and teaching effectiveness. Sergiovani identified five themes that contribute to the facilitation of classroom instructions. These are supported for the preschool classroom and staff, professional development opportunities and strategies, presence in the classroom and programmes, offering praise to teachers and staff, and overall knowledge of early childhood development.

Baffour-Awuah (2011) suggested that improving school supervision on some support systems needs revision to improve instructional supervision in schools. Baffour-Awuah further suggested that GES should put into consideration separate managerial and administrative duties from instructional supervision. The motivation behind this

approach is to enable headteachers to engage in regular supervision of instruction to promote effective teaching and learning (Baffour-Awuah, 2011).

Regular training programmes should be organized to equip personnel at the regional, district and school levels with the knowledge and skills to improve instructional practices in schools. Baffour-Awuah further maintained that GES, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education should have a long-term plan and budgetary allocation specifically for programmes to empower the personnel in charge of supervision at the basic level of education. GES again will take proper note of the methods of recruiting and selecting instructional supervisors and chief instructors of education; GES could include personnel from internal recruitments to this position and make it the number one priority to groom them (Baffour-Awuah 2011).

Also, there is the need to pay attention to the supervision of instruction which could be improved by means of regular pre-service and in-service training. Particularly, in-service training of Lead teachers, headteachers and supervisors on pressing issues relating to the best practices of school supervision is not a priority. Danso (2009), supports the idea that offering regular in-service training, providing logistics and materials, and payment of allowances to circuit supervisors are great support needed to be given to promote effective supervision. Supervision can be effective only when officers and supervisors are from time to time-oriented with fresh related ideas on the job. Danso (2009) again suggested that external supervision should complement internal supervision to improve teaching and learning effectiveness. Training given at all levels will guide the headteacher and teacher, as well as the circuit supervisor in their duties relative to supervision in schools positively, provided the right feedback is

given to the internal and external officers for further investigation to be done on pending issues.

School heads play a critical role in the development and maintenance of successful, productive schools and educational systems (Bush, 2008). In a research conducted in South Africa, Bush (2005) cited in Naidoo and Peterson (2011), claimed that many school principals lack the requisite abilities to perform successfully as school leaders and managers, and that, like corporate executives, they must understand and lead the 'core business.' The successful implementation of the curriculum, including reliable systems of evaluation of learners' educational outcomes and instructors' efficient and effective practice, is the primary activity in schools. Bush (2005) further argued that sustainable systems for educating and supporting school leaders are often insufficient throughout Africa.

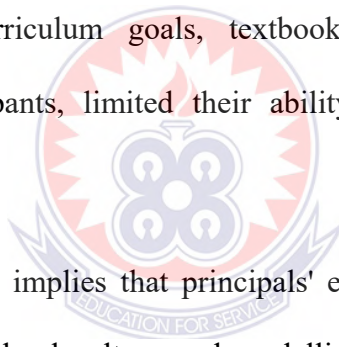
While the leadership and management literature agree that professional development programs are necessary to ensure that school principals are fit for purpose, there is far less agreement about which leadership characteristic is more likely to produce the most favourable outcomes in terms of leadership, management, and organization output toward improved learner outcomes (Naidoo & Peterson, 2011). Even less agreement exists on how to adequately educate school administrators for the responsibility of effective instructional leadership in the classroom.

What is obvious is that school principals who were trained in managerial models frequently fail to acquire the information and abilities they need to carry out their responsibilities as school heads and curriculum delivery leaders. According to Vick (2004), creating and communicating a focused vision and goal for maximum student performance is an area of school leadership development. Principals, according to



Vick, must tell employees about performance goals, including student outcomes, and then assist them in achieving them. This implies that principals must be well-versed in the curriculum, instructional techniques, and assessment, among other things.

Alsaleh's (2019) research in Kuwait found that principals experienced challenges connected to the Ministry of Education's (MoE) highly centralized structure, whose responsibilities contradicted the declared purpose of increasing school leaders' leadership capacity. Most school principals explained that they did not set their own school goals; rather, they simply carried out the Ministry's mission and priorities. In other words, they saw themselves as supervisors who enforced and executed the Ministry of Education's vision and mission while also advancing the educational process. Mandatory curriculum goals, textbooks, and curriculum timeframes, according to all participants, limited their ability to contribute insight into the educational process.



The majority of research implies that principals' effects on classroom teaching are primarily mediated by school culture and modelling, rather than direct supervision and evaluation of teaching (Hallinger, 2003 cited in Rodrigues & Ávila de Lima, 2021). Despite the fact that most principals were trained as teachers and apply what they've learned in the classroom to their leadership roles, they rarely meddle in classroom activities. Rather, they prefer to create the conditions and prerequisites for effective teaching by establishing professional frames of reference and educational infrastructure that helps teachers to improve their teaching methods.

Agasisti et al. (2019) found that 73 per cent of Italian principals said they rarely supervised students' work, more than half said they rarely provided feedback to teachers to improve their teaching effectiveness, and nearly half (46 per cent) said

they rarely or never observed educational activities in the classroom. The authors identified three unique types of principals, with the most common ('educative leaders,' accounting for 49 per cent of all schools) focusing on a particularly high concentration on supporting teachers' growth and training and a low level of active engagement in classroom activities.' The ones that do exist show a mix of the above-mentioned results for 'educational' and 'transactional' Italian principals. Portuguese leaders are mostly administrative, bureaucratic authorities tasked with enforcing national policies rather than engaging in educational discussions with teachers, and when they do, they rarely focus on classroom issues (Rodrigues et al., 2021).

Naidoo and Peterson (2011) suggest that improving the quality of teaching in elementary schools is the cornerstone for increased learners' accomplishment throughout the broader education system since the groundwork for effective learning is formed early on. The role of elementary school administrators as instructional leaders is critical in this regard. This entails an emphasis on curricular leadership as well as innovative instructional strategies for increased student performance and overall school progress, according to us. Principals of the twenty-first century, in our opinion, are expected to be change agents who are fully committed to improving school instruction and curriculum.

According to Hoy and Hoy (2003), schools are about teachers teaching and learners learning; all other activities are secondary. In this aspect, high-performing schools are distinguished by excellent leadership, effective educational approaches, and the ability to increase learning. Despite relative agreement on a perspective of instructional leadership, agreement among educational management writers on which leadership attributes are most likely to promote positive learner outcomes is usually

absent (Naidoo & Peterson, 2011). Nevertheless, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) identified the creation and preservation of sustainable learning in schools, the ability to secure success over time, sustaining the leadership of others, addressing issues of social justice, developing rather than depleting human and material resources, developing environmental diversity and capacity, and engaging in activist environmental engagement as some instructional leadership practices that improve pupils' academic progress.

Gurr et al. (2007) believe that school principals' work is critical in assisting students in achieving positive outcomes and that instructional leadership makes a difference in this regard. The authors discovered that principals influenced student outcomes by focusing on teaching and learning, supported by a shared mission, values, and vision, as well as by developing school community members' organizational, personal, and professional capacities, considering and working with the school context, and using evidence-based monitoring and critical reflection to generate change, in three case studies conducted in Australian schools.

The direct and indirect benefits of school leadership on student achievements are minimal, but considerable, according to evidence evaluated by (Leithwood et al., 2008 cited in Rodrigues et al., 2021). When only the school elements that assist explain this variance are considered, leadership explains roughly 25% of the difference in students' learning and performance. The authors also believe that leadership has an indirect impact on students' learning in the classroom: school leaders boost teaching and learning indirectly by influencing team motivation, commitment, and working circumstances.

According to Rodrigues et al. (2021) when we analyse the very description of principals' obligations in national or regional law, the need of taking the context of leadership into consideration when evaluating how and why principals do or do not lead instructional becomes extremely essential. In a number of places, instructional leadership is just not a job description for principals. In fact, in some nations, the role of being involved in specific instructional matters is simply not the responsibility of the principal.

Scholars have long recognized the impact of specific circumstances on effective school leadership (Hallinger, 2016). Contextual variables that have been shown to influence principal instructional leadership techniques were detailed by Hallinger. Institutional context, community context, national cultural context, economic context, political context, and school reform context are among these aspects (Hallinger, 2016). The final aspect is the school improvement context, which refers to the "improvement journey" of a school (Jackson, 2000, cited in Hallinger, 2016).

School leaders are critical to the development and maintenance of strong, productive schools and educational systems (Maponya, 2020). According to Naidoo and Petersen (2015), many school principals lack the requisite abilities to perform successfully as school leaders and managers (Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017) and they, like managers in the corporate sector, must understand and lead the 'core business.' The primary activity in schools is the successful execution of the curriculum, which includes reliable procedures for assessing learners' educational results and instructors' efficient and effective practice.

According to Lincuna and Caingcoy (2020), instructional leadership focuses on a school's essential tasks such as teaching and learning. It also specifies the school's vision, purpose, and aim. It is also about administering educational programs and establishing a positive school atmosphere. Among the responsibilities include providing the resources required for learning, supervising and assessing teachers, arranging staff development programs, and fostering collegial relationships with and among teachers (Kaparou & Bush, 2015).

Local factors such as school size, structure, and educational level can add another layer of complexity. Secondary schools, in particular, necessitate significant adaptations in instructional leadership because they are larger and more complex organizations (Hallinger, 2003). It is easier for the principal to be personally involved in classroom work in small schools, whereas it is more challenging in large schools or school clusters (Lima, 2011).

In Portugal, the responsibility of leading a school cluster – by far the most common style of school organization in the country rather than a group of teachers and pupils in a single building, can severely limit principals' ability to conduct instructional leadership. Similarly, Italy also noted that the fact that certain principals do not have to oversee multiple schools allows them to participate more actively in classroom activities (Rodrigues et al., 2021).

Furthermore, school culture as well as teachers' local, regional, and national professional cultures can work against a principal's more direct participation in educational affairs. Hallinger (2003) point out that, understanding the value of this sort of leadership is one thing; being able to lead in this manner in a school setting

where established norms and routines run counter to the model's assumptions is quite another.

### **2.2.5 Ways of monitoring students' progress**

The measuring of student knowledge and abilities regularly, as well as the study of student data to evaluate education, has been defined as frequent and continuing monitoring of students' progress (Luckner & Bowen, 2010). Students' progress toward the essential objectives is routinely examined and checked, according to this correlation. The outcomes of both processes are used to improve individual student behaviour and performance, as well as the overall curriculum (Lezotte, 2001). Progress monitoring is a scientifically validated method of assessing students' academic performance and evaluating the efficacy of teaching and learning. Individual individuals or a whole class can be monitored for progress (National Center for Student Progress Monitoring (NCSPM), 2012).

This entails more than simply regional or national testing; it also entails a continuous review of student work with quick remedial feedback. Authentic kinds of assessment, it is claimed, can help schools become proactive, learner-centred educational communities, resulting in improved student accomplishment (Lezotte & Pepperl, 1990). Teachers can use student performance data to regularly evaluate the quality of their teaching and make more informed instructional decisions by monitoring students' development regularly (Safer & Fleischman, 2005). It varies from traditional evaluation in that it focuses on student performance on a few key abilities using weekly or biweekly repeatable probes (Luckner & Bowen, 2010). According to the above explanation of frequent student progress monitoring, the procedure is used not only to make summative choices but also to guarantee that the student meets pre-

determined goals. This is accomplished through keeping both the student and the teacher informed of progress toward the goal, as well as providing opportunities for teachers to adapt their teaching and students to adjust their learning.

According to Kgothule and Letsie (2014) the tracking of students' progress is done in a variety of methods. In general, it entails determining the students' current levels of performance; identifying learning goals that will occur over time (weekly or monthly); measuring progress toward the goals by comparing expected and actual rates of learning, and adjusting teaching to meet the student/s' needs based on the measurements. Implementation frequently entails a series of processes, including a judgment about the level of implementation (individual student, small group, classroom or grade).

These are determined by the student's current performance level on skills that the student will be learning during a specific year; identifying achievement goals that the student must meet by the end of the year; determining the rate of progress to be made to meet the goals, and regularly measuring the student's academic progress using probes that sample the entire range of skills to be learned by the end of the year. The methods outlined above provide valuable information that can be utilized to change training to improve a student's learning if the rate at which skills are being learned appears to be inadequate, as well as to convey progress to the student, parents, and colleagues (Luckner & Brown, 2010; Safer & Fleischman, 2005).

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) is another type of progress tracking. It's a way of keeping track of a student's progress by assessing their academic abilities directly. CBM can be used to assess fundamental reading, numeracy, spelling, and written expression skills. It can also be used to keep track of preparedness. When

employing CBM, the teacher gives one- to five-minute tests to the students. The teacher determines the student's grade by calculating the number of correct and incorrect responses given within the time limit. The result is shown on a graph and compared to expected performance on the year's content. The graph allows the teacher, parent, and student to observe how the student is going toward the required performance. If the student's rate of growth is lower than required to accomplish the year's objective, the instructor uses the scores to choose whether to continue teaching in the same manner or to change it (Mc Lane, 2009).

In addition to the aforementioned, the CCSRI (2009) suggests implementing through the use of indicators such as attendance rates, course completion rates, grades, and discipline records, which are all considered equally essential in determining student needs and measuring achievement. This group of performance metrics is important for identifying problematic pupils and tailoring treatments to fit their specific needs. Because there are various approaches to track kids' progress, teachers and other stakeholders should be made aware of them so that they can choose what is best for them and their particular school setting. This may demand assistance through professional development programs aimed at raising teacher awareness of the benefits of tracking students' progress (Kgothule & Letsie, 2014).

Students learn more, teacher decision-making improves, and students become more conscious of their performance when teachers constantly check their students' progress, according to Safer and Fleischman (2005). Similarly, the NCSPM (2012) claims that when progress monitoring is done appropriately, the benefits to all parties involved are clear. Accelerated learning due to more appropriate instruction; more informed instructional decisions; documentation of student progress for accountability



purposes; more efficient communication with families and other professionals about students' progress; and teachers' higher expectations for students are just a few of the advantages. Summary of studies supporting the usefulness of progress monitoring also implies that progress monitoring leads to more efficient and correctly targeted teaching strategies and goals, which, when combined, take students closer to meeting essential achievement benchmarks (Luckner & Bowen, 2010).

Bowen (2010) conducted a study on teachers' opinions of student progress monitoring and concluded that one of the major benefits was to the pupils, according to the teachers polled. Students become involved in documenting and charting their success because progress monitoring is student-centered, and they are thus more motivated to attain their goals and see their improvement. Teachers also stated that progress monitoring assisted them in defining lessons, monitoring the impact of interventions, and 'filling in the gaps' (Kgothule & Letsie, 2014).

#### **2.2.6 Ensuring a safe and orderly environment for students**

Most adults find the concept of a child being harmed at school abhorrent; nonetheless, school safety remains a hot topic in the media, particularly whenever a serious incident occurs at a school. Fortunately, pupils are safer at school than anywhere else; violent crime in schools decreased by 50% between 1992 and 2003, and school-aged children were more than 100 times more likely to be murdered outside school grounds than on school grounds between 1992 and 2000 (Bosworth et al., 2011).

Peguero cited in Bosworth et al., (2011) suggested that "student victimization, property damage and violence, student dread, and official disciplinary consequences" should all be included in a definition of school violence. (See p. 399). In Juvonen's investigations of ethnic diversity and safety perceptions, a sense of "vulnerability" is

incorporated into the notion of school safety (Bosworth et al., 2011). Students' academic performance is lowest when they perceive the school environment as threatening, according to Godstein et al. (2008). Confidence, motivation, commitment, attendance, and grades are all on the rise among pupils.

Most studies on the orderly and secured environment have identified some three key indicators: physical characteristics and safety features are tangible and visible elements that are found in or around schools and are intended to improve physical safety, orderly environment is characterized by organization and school discipline, and school staffing and relationships promote a sense of caring and community, which increases feelings of safety (Godstein et al., 2008; Bosworth et al., 2011).

Bosworth et al. (2008) found that physical characteristics that secure school were, for instance, security cameras, fences around the school, and locked doors. The students and faculty also agreed that a safe surrounding neighbourhood helped to keep their school safe (when it was present). Tiny school size was also seen as having a beneficial impact on safety in schools that were thought to be small. They pointed out that security features or equipment (such as cameras, visitor passes, fences, or monitors) were more important to students than faculty's feelings of safety. Climate (e.g., rules, discipline, fear) and personnel (e.g., monitors, faculty control) were the second most important areas for students. Faculty, on the other hand, mentioned relationships with colleagues and pupils, climate, and physical aspects (e.g., small size, proximity to danger) as important factors in making a school safe.

In terms of school discipline and organization, Bosworth et al., (2008) found that students felt safer when they saw a clear and regular disciplinary structure. The pupils indicated that they felt comfortable when teachers broke up conflicts and enforced

discipline, but that their safety was jeopardized by the lack of a behaviour control structure and accountability. Similarly, faculty ties with one another and with students contribute to a sense of security. Faculty indicated that students feel comfortable talking to them and cited a caring environment, positive relationships, and overall comfort of pupils as factors that permit an orderly and secured environment in schools (Bosworth et al., 2008).

### **2.2.7 Ways of creating learning opportunities for students**

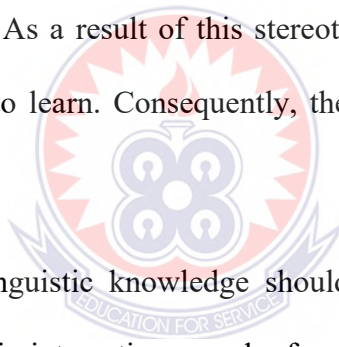
The integrity of a planning implementation process, in which deliberately created lessons are framed for students as intellectually difficult and enacted in ways that preserve high rigour, is critical to students' learning opportunities (Kang et al., 2016). By paying attention to the mediating role of instructional tasks, Stein and colleagues have conceived the process of creating student learning chances (Stein et al., 1996; Stein & Lane, 1996).

To provide appropriate learning strategies for a group of students, Cooner (2010) suggested small groupings and inquiry-based learning (EBL) activities. This was to enable pupils in small groups to get active contact hours through effective discussions, questions and answers, investigation etc. Intuitively, pupils get enough time to learn in small groups through investigation of concepts they have been thought.

A study by Matthews et al., (2013), on the impacts of grouping on non-gifted and gifted kids from grades 2 to 6 reveals that ability groupings are used to increase learners' performance. Furthermore, an article by Abdulrazak (2020) on the effects of ability grouping on the performance of basic school pupils in Ghana shows that ability grouping had an advantageous effect on instruction and learning for both high and

low ability groups as it enables the teacher to direct his or her teaching towards a particular group of people.

Conversely, Kaya (2015) in an article on the effect of the type of achievement grouping on students' question generation in science found that studies have shown students who are considered as weak are discouraged when grouped with like-achieving students. However, they become enthusiastic about learning when grouped with high achievers in mixed groups. Thus such weak students are only inspired to study harder when mixed with high achieving students. In similar ways, Kintz (2011) in his article on ability grouping and how it is affecting American classrooms found that ability groupings rather have negative effect on low ability groups because of the stigma attached to them. As a result of this stereotype, the right environment is not created for the students to learn. Consequently, the purpose for which the group is created is defeated.



Students' cultural and linguistic knowledge should be used as a foundation upon which chances for dialogic interactions can be formed to enhance students' language growth and engagement with relevant content, according to Lee et al. (2020). Lee et al. also proposed classroom and curricular settings, as well as teaching practices, to encourage dialogic learning opportunities that can guide multilingual learners to critically interact within and outside the classroom to confront sociolinguistic injustice, based on our lessons learned. For English Learners (ELs), small-group conversations can be a significant forum for engaging in scientific sense-making, developing competency with disciplinary methods, and expanding their linguistic repertoires. Creating effective peer interactions, on the other hand, necessitates a firm

grasp of what constitutes productive peer contact as well as considerable changes in teacher practice (Lee et al., 2020).

In a report by Read (2015) on Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) in Africa, the researcher examines extensive variety of issues surrounding TLM provision and usage in selected schools in Sub Saharan Africa. The issues cover curriculum, literacy and numeracy, language of instruction policy, procurement and distribution challenges, TLM development, production and their availability in most schools. Again, the report looks at the role of information and communication technology (ICT) based TLMs and their availability. The findings reveal that TLMs are necessary for improving learning outcomes and so there is the need to achieve an affordable and sustainable TLM provision for all students. The researcher argues that affordable and sustainable TLM provision can only be achieved if TLM management systems are improved.

Similarly, Read and Treffgarne (2011) in their guidance note on learning and teaching materials assert that TLMs are very important in improving learning outcomes and thus reference and library books should be made available to students to encourage further reading and the development of their interests.

In an article by Ibok (2016), on the challenge of improvisation teaching in and learning, the researcher discovered that easy access to instructional facilities in the classroom is what ensures exceptional academic success and that when a school lacks instructional resources, it becomes very difficult for students to perform well academically. Furthermore, a study by Ekpo (2014) on the impact of instructional material on students' academic performance found that instructional resources facilitate learning and teaching, and that learner-centered instructional materials

encourage deep learning and make it more enjoyable and lasting while also facilitating teachers' instructional efforts. The researcher reveals further that instructional resources help to improve academic performance in schools. Consequently, the importance of learning materials can never be overemphasised in school improvement. No wonder Lyons (2012) cited in Okongo et al. (2015) explains that, learning is a complex process that involves the interaction of the curriculum, instructional resources, physical facilities, and student motivation. Hence the availability of teaching and learning materials improves schools' effectiveness since they are the fundamental resources that result in good academic performance of students.

Presenting their community of inquiry paradigm, Garrison and Anderson (2003) underline the need for using technology in education as more than a means to 'convey knowledge.' They argue that modern communication technologies provide students with more opportunities to engage in learning by allowing them to construct meaning around the subject taught and refine and reconfirm that meaning within a larger (potentially global) community of learners. In terms of professional education, having access to this larger community via the Internet is critical.

Ballantyne and Knowles (2007) showed how virtual case studies in a safe learning environment can provide students with unmatched possibilities to participate in this process during their training. They can put their professional knowledge to the test and hone their practice abilities here. When compared to writing case studies, students self-reported that their learning was greatly boosted and that they had a richer and more realistic context for learning.

Bellocchi et al. (2016) investigated one student's learning opportunity experiences with numerous contextual evaluation methods linked with a context-based course in depth. We looked at the student's responses to context-based assessment instruments to see how much she was able to make connections between contexts and concepts through contextual tests, field reports, and extended experimental investigations. Other educators might use this technique to categorize student replies when examining student responses to the contextual assessment.

The individualized education program (IEP) is a procedure for ensuring that students with disabilities have access to and success in courses and activities that will prepare them for careers and college. Students participating in numerous opportunities to make informed decisions about their futures benefit from the process of fine-tuning a transition-age student's IEP over the course of their secondary school experience. Work-based learning experiences (WBLEs) are a valuable source of such experiences not only for students with disabilities but also for students who are not disabled (Cease-Cook et al., 2015).

### **2.3 Empirical Literature Review**

Blaise and Blaise (1999) conducted a study where over 800 American teachers participated and were asked to identify and characterize traits of principals that improved their classroom instruction and the effects those attributes had on them. The results highlighted two elements of successful instructional leadership: engaging with teachers to encourage reflection and fostering professional development.

The goal of Donkor and Asante (2016) study was to discover how heads of basic schools in Ghana's Kwaebibirem district exercise instructional leadership. The study looked at lesson planning, organization, and delivery, as well as heads' direct personal

support for teachers, supervision of teachers' and students' performance, and evaluation of teachers' and students' performance. In elementary schools, supervision, evaluation, and direct personal support activities were found to be more dominant than curriculum planning, organization, and delivery.

Naidoo and Petersen (2015) addressed a critical subject in the school reform literature: principals' curricular leadership. To assist school leaders, the study claimed that rigorous training and growth in instructional leadership methods were required. According to the findings, not all of the principals who took part in the survey are completely aware of their tasks and obligations as instructional leaders. They primarily see their roles as essentially managerial, as school leaders and administrators.

Lincuna and Caingcoy (2020) investigated the breadth of instructional leadership activities of public elementary school administrators at a school in the Philippines, including their actual practices, obstacles faced, and strategies for overcoming such challenges. The findings found that public school administrators have always demonstrated a high level of proficiency in the four areas or strands of instructional leadership. Themes of their real activities emerged as providing technical support, conducting clinical supervision, and innovating teaching and learning.

The goal of Lee et al. (2012)'s study was to investigate the impacts of several qualities of instructional leadership on student learning in Hong Kong secondary schools, where the wider institutional settings are defined by a high accountability policy environment. Leadership approaches centred on instructional management have been shown to improve student learning by amplifying the favourable influence of students' connection to their school on academic accomplishment. In contrast,



when other school- and student-level factors are held constant, leadership behaviours linked to direct monitoring of instruction were found to impede student learning by reducing the favourable influence of student perceptions of school attachment on academic achievement.

Leaf and Odhiambo (2016) reported on research that looked at secondary principals', deputies', and teachers' opinions of deputy principal instructional leadership, as well as deputies' professional learning requirements. The data indicated that deputies were responsible for a wide range of responsibilities; all of the principals distributed leadership to their deputies in order to develop leadership capacity and to assist their professional growth in a number of ways. Most deputies at three of the case study schools were often acting as instructional leaders, enhancing their school's performance through distributed leadership, team building, and goal setting.

Nguyen et al. (2016) investigated instructional leadership strategies and organization in Singapore primary schools. Principals' instructional leadership tasks are divided into four major categories: vision formulation and implementation, physical and organizational structure, professional development, and leading and managing teaching. Importantly, the study sheds light on a hybrid structure of instructional leadership that includes both hierarchical and heterarchical features.

Seobi and Wood (2016) described how heads of departments (HODs) participate in a school participatory action research approach to assist them build a framework for strengthening instructional leadership. While not a definitive answer to increasing the quality of teaching and learning, the action learning framework produced by the participating HODs may give suggestions for other HODs to enhance their own instructional leadership methods. Because it is a process-based paradigm, using it to

improve instructional leadership might be advantageous in both well-resourced and under-resourced environments.

Moeketsane et al. (2021) evaluated subject leaders' viewpoints and perceived competency in instructional leadership as a foundation for its connection. The findings reveal that views regarding instructional leadership have a negative correlation with perceived competencies and have no effect on such competencies. Knowledge and perceptions, on the other hand, revealed a substantial link and are thus regarded to be superior predictors of subject leaders' perceived skills in instructional leadership.

Using a structural equation model, Pietsch and Tulowitzki (2017) explored the direct and indirect links between distinct leadership types, including instructional, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, and teachers' instructional methods. According to the findings, a bi-factor model appears to be the optimal measurement model. Following that, it is demonstrated that mediating factors are controlled by a leadership core as well as various leadership features.

Fancera and Bliss (2011) investigated whether instructional leadership duties, as described by Hallinger's Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale, have a beneficial impact on collective teacher efficacy to increase school accomplishment. They discovered that school socioeconomic status was a better predictor of student success than instructional leadership or collective teacher efficacy.

Muresherwa and Jita (2021) also examined the implementation of instructional leadership strategies by school heads in Zimbabwe's inclusive secondary schools is the subject of this article. It answers the following central questions: How do school leaders conduct instructional leadership practices in inclusive secondary schools, and

how does school leadership sense-making explain instructional leadership practices in this instructional environment? The study was based on the enactive sense-making theory and used a qualitative multiple case study research approach. The survey found that participants understood instructional leadership in their schools in the morphed sense of the idea as a multidimensional and stakeholder-based social action grounded on equitable principles. However, different stakeholders across the social divide appear to have different understandings of the concept of "equity" and the purpose of education in society.

In a study by Amakyi (2021), the instructional leadership methods of senior high school heads in Ghana were investigated through a non-experimental survey. A simple randomly selected sample of a defined population of school heads of senior high schools in Ghana was used to collect data using closed-ended Likert type items. The findings of the study demonstrated that school leaders frequently adopt significant essential instructional leadership techniques. School leaders, on the other hand, are more likely to communicate the school's objectives. The study also discovered that there are disparities in the frequency with which high-performing and low-performing school leaders employ instructional leadership qualities such as identifying the school's goals and promoting a healthy school learning climate.

In the highly centralised setting of Greece, Kaparoua and Bush (2015) explore the enactment of instructional leadership (IL) in high-performing secondary schools, as well as the relationship between leadership and learning in boosting student results and supporting teachers' professional learning. It presents a portion of a comparative research study examining if and to what extent Greek school administrators have embraced IL. The findings demonstrate that IL is viewed as an informal collaborative

leadership practice that is intertwined with Greek principals' official multi-dimensional role and their 'semi-IL' role. Teachers' leadership has grown in the absence of official IL 'actors.'

Rodrigues and Ávila de Lima (2021) investigated a similar study in a mixed-method study to see if school principals practice this form of leadership and if it has an impact on student results. A sample of top-level school leaders from a Portuguese region participated in the study. The majority of principals' leadership strategies, according to participants, were focused on school administration and management rather than student learning. Many respondents believed that it was not their responsibility to lead in a variety of instructional areas. Furthermore, respondents assessed the influence of the majority of principals' instructional leadership strategies on student achievement as weak.

#### **2.4 Summary of Chapter**

The chapter begins with theories relating to school improvement and instructional leadership. These are the effective school theory by Lezzote and the contingency theory by Fiedler. Based on the objectives of the study, the chapter further reviews literature on concepts in instructional leadership. The chapter also reviews empirical literature in line with the objectives of the study.

The next chapter presents the methodology of the study. It comprised the research paradigm, approach, design, population, sample size, sampling technique, data collection instrument, validity, reliability, piloting of instrument, method of data collection, data analysis procedure, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methods that were employed in the study. It describes in detail the procedures used in conducting the study. The study sought to investigate school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality. The chapter is composed of the research paradigm, research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling technique, data collection instrument, data collection method and data analysis.

#### 3.1 Research Paradigm

Research paradigm/ philosophy describes the researcher's worldview that guides the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Although there are several paradigms and worldviews that shape research, they are all philosophical in character and their assumptions can be put into three categories namely; ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

Ontology is primarily concerned with the nature of a phenomenon's existence. As a result, ontology is based on assumptions about reality's nature. Epistemology is concerned with assumptions about how we know the world, how we get knowledge, and the relationship between the knower and the known. Methodology is concerned with the optimal methods for learning about the world (Creswell 2009; Lincoln et al. 2011).

The three important research paradigms that guide the conduct of scientific inquiry are positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Lincoln et al., 2011). In the realm of research, each paradigm has a unique perspective on ontology, epistemology, and

methodology. The presupposition of positivists in ontology is that there is just one reality or truth. They believe that when legitimate and reliable tools are utilized, the single truth or reality can be measured and known, hence they are more likely to apply quantitative methods to assess this reality.

The positivist view of scientific study is opposed by the interpretivism paradigm. Based on their ontology, interpretivists believe that there is no one reality or truth, and that reality must be interpreted epistemologically in order to understand the underlying meaning of things and activities. Interpretivism assumes that social events have subjective meaning, requiring scientists to think that there is no uniform viewpoint or truth (Bryman, 2008). Interpretivists also reject the positivist idea that scientists can objectively find reality. They (interpretivists) however argue that human acts, knowledge, and understanding are socially constructed (Iyamu, 2020). Interpretivists use a qualitative technique to discover those multiple realities.

The pragmatism paradigm takes a liberal approach to the positivist and interpretivism paradigms, allowing the researcher to consider both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the research process, as well as multi-stage/mixed approaches (Maarouf, 2019). Different approaches to explore and understand a phenomenon are assumed by pragmatism, and the researcher can choose the method that is most comfortable to meet the objectives of the study. As a result, a pragmatic viewpoint is an open-door paradigm that allows for various and diverging assumptions, necessitating the use of numerous research methods to gather and analyse data.

It is important to locate a research in a particular paradigm as this determines the choice of methodology and the manner in which meaning is constructed from the data gathered. The present study adopted the interpretivist paradigm to explore

understanding from socially constructed multiple realities. This helped to generate subjective understanding of school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality.

### **3.2 Research Approach**

Creswell (2014) defines research approach as the way in which objectives of a research are examined. He explains that research approach is a road plan and set of procedures for conducting research; that includes everything from hypothesis generation to data collecting, analysis, and inference drawing. The quantitative, qualitative and mixed method approaches are common approaches to research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Quantitative research approach is preferred when the research questions require numerical data. As posited by Creswell (2014), the premise of an empiricist paradigm is maintained in quantitative research rendering it self-contained and unaffected by the researcher's actions. As a result, data is utilized to measure reality objectively. A major limitation of the quantitative research approach is its inability to adequately explore the phenomenon being studied as a result of the researcher's limited proximity to the problem.

Researchers often choose the qualitative approach for research problems requiring textual data. Qualitative research, according to Braun and Clarke (2013), provides the researcher the opportunity to be actively informed in the collection and interpretation of data so as to make informed meanings of the gathered data. It also helps to capture the perspectives of research participants who have adequate information with respect to the phenomenon being studied. Unlike the quantitative technique, qualitative research focuses more on understanding the context of the problem.

Mixed methods research approach requires both numerical and textual data. This research approach allows researchers to combine data collection and analysis methods from quantitative and qualitative research approaches to address the research question(s) defined for a particular research study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Although mixed method research allows the researcher to answer confirmatory and exploratory questions at the same time within the same study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), it requires a great deal of expertise and effort to study the phenomenon under consideration using two different methods. Mixed method research approach can also be very time consuming especially when both phases are given equal consideration and priority (Terrell, 2012).

Given the research problem and questions, as well as the nature of the issue at hand qualitative research approach was chosen for the study. Again, as qualitative research takes place in a natural setting and allows the researcher to develop a degree of detail by being immersed in the actual experiences (Creswell, 2014), the present study adopted a qualitative research approach to solicit from research participants in-depth data that enabled light to be shed on school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality. It should be mentioned, however, that qualitative research methodologies have their own set of strengths and shortcomings, which the researcher is well aware of.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Research design is a systematic reasoning behind collection and analysis of data (Creswell, 2013). It guides and directs the course of the study. In the view of Grey (2014) and Creswell et al. (2007), research design deals with the processes involved in collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data; and how all of this is going to



answer the research questions. The case study research design was adopted for the study. Case studies collect and study detailed information from a single or few cases. According to Yin (2009), a case study studies present day issues within its real-life context, principally when differences between issues and context are not clearly defined. The design was thus chosen to reveal in great depth the school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality.

### **3.4 Population**

Population of a study, according to Creswell (2014), is a group of individuals who share a common characteristic. It is a big group of people or items that are the subject of a scientific question. A common, binding characteristic or trait is usually shared by all individuals or objects in a study population (Creswell, 2014). These individuals possess the information being sought and about which the inferences would be made (Birks & Malhorta, 2006). This indicates that a population can be any size and will have at least one (and occasionally multiple) distinguishing qualities that distinguish it from other populations. The population of the study was composed of all heads of basic schools in the Effutu municipality. There are 40 basic schools in the municipality. The study population targeted the heads of all the 40 basic schools in the municipality.

### **3.5 Sample Size**

For data to be reliable in a qualitative research, Seidler (1974) recommend at least five (5) participants. Although scholars such as Yin (2009) and Bernard (2002) postulate that there is no limit on the number of respondents to use in purposive sample so far as the requisite data is acquired, Creswell and Creswell (2018) advocated the use of five to six cases in a case study. Thus, data for this study was

collected from seventeen (17) basic school heads. In line with the criteria for selecting respondents for this study the respondents were heads of basic Schools in the Effutu Municipality. Additionally, at the time of the study, these respondents had served at least five years in office.

### **3.6 Sampling Technique**

Sampling is the procedure to select from the population the number of individuals required for a study. It involves picking a subset of the population to represent the complete population thereby allowing the researcher to investigate a limited number of units instead of the entire population. Qualitative sampling strategies are selective, subjective and purposeful in nature (Damon & Holloway, 2011). Two most popular sampling techniques in qualitative research are convenience and purposive.

In convenience sampling, the researcher simply uses participants who are available at the moment. Thus, convenience samples require very little planning and they are useful for purposes such as gathering data in an initial pre-test to make certain instruments to be employed in the study (Kusi, 2012).

Purposive sampling is the process of selecting individuals who will best assist the researcher in understanding the topic. According to Campbell (2020), purposive sampling better matches sample to the research's goals and objectives, thus improving the rigor of the study and the reliability of the data and outcomes. As the aim of the study was to gain deeper insight into school improvement practices of basic school heads, it was necessary to select a sample that was information rich. Thus, purposive sampling technique was adopted to select Junior High School heads who have been in office for a minimum of five years.

### 3.7 Data Collection Instrument

There are several methods of data collection used by researchers. These include; questionnaire, interview, focus group, observation and secondary data (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). In qualitative research, such techniques as interview, focus group discussion, observation and textual or visual analysis (eg from books or videos) are commonly used in collecting data to be analysed (Gill et al., 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2020). An interview is a face-to-face dialogue between a researcher and participants for the sole aim of gathering pertinent data for a research project. This instrument requires the researcher to prepare an interview guide which is essentially a list of the subjects the researcher intends to cover together with the questions that must be answered for each topic (Jamshed, 2014).

A focus group is made up of a small relatively homogeneous group. Through discussion, the researcher collects narrative data on a topic that is of interest to the members. Respondents in a focus group discussion share similar backgrounds and experiences. The number of members in a group may range from six to twelve (McKenna, 2017; Creswell, 2014; Vaughn et al., 1996). As a qualitative research data collection instrument, observation gives researchers the opportunity to interact with participants in their natural settings, see things for themselves and determine the data to collect on them (Kusi, 2012). This instrument allows the researcher to use an observation checklist in observing participants' behaviour (Howitt, 2019).

Another data collection instrument available for the qualitative researcher is document analysis; sometimes known as textual or visual analysis. This instrument is used to analyse documentary evidence to answer specific research questions (Creswell, 2014). The documents relied upon by qualitative researchers may include books, journals,

institutional documents, government White Papers and company annual reports (Blaxter, et al., 2006 cited in Kusi, 2012). Data for this research was collected through interviews. The majority of interview questions are open-ended, allowing for the collection of detailed information. Thus, the researcher chose this instrument to collect rich data that would better explain, understand, and investigate participants' perspectives, behaviours and experiences with School improvement practices.

Interviews may be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Data for this research was collected through semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview, according to Bryman (2012), is one in which the researcher has greater flexibility and fluid structures, as well as an interview guide that is designed in a sequential fashion. This interview style offers for flexibility because it allows for the inclusion of other pertinent concerns that may arise during the interview. They also give the interviewer the option to ask follow-up questions based on the respondents' responses (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to collect data from only one participant at a time in order to obtain a more intensive understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

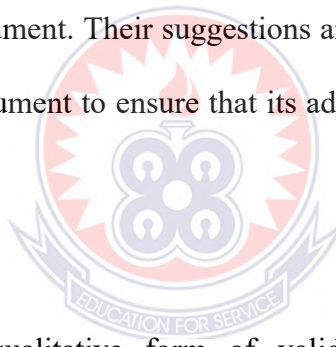
### **3.8 Validity of the Instrument**

Validity refers to the appropriateness, correctness, meaningfulness and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make based on the data they collect (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is a method of obtaining data that is appropriate for the intended use of the measuring instruments (Whiston, 2012). To ensure validity, researchers are recommended to ensure that the test measures are accurate for what they are meant to assess, for the specific group of individuals and the specific context and the meanings based on test scores. This means that there should be the development of

sound evidence to demonstrate that the intended test interpretation matches the proposed purpose of the test. There are several types of validity namely; content validity, face validity, construct validity and criterion related validity. However, social science research usually emphasises face and content validity as the primary test of validity for an instrument (Kusi, 2012).

### **3.8.1 Face validity**

Face validity authenticates the appropriateness of the instrument based on judgmental view. In this method of validating the instrument, an expert determines the validity on face value. Thus, copies of the semi-structured interview were given to the researcher's course mates to critique and offer suggestions on the appropriateness and the adequacy of the instrument. Their suggestions and recommendations were used to modify the research instrument to ensure that its adequacy covered the content of the study.



### **3.8.2 Content validity**

Content validity is a qualitative form of validity that evaluates whether the expressions contained in the measuring instrument represent the phenomenon intended to be measured (Bollen, 1989). It is the extent to which each item in the measuring instrument serves the purpose. Consistent with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) admonition that content validity can be established by expert judgment, copies of the semi-structured interview were given to the researcher's supervisor and two lecturers in the department of educational administration and management who are experts and knowledgeable in qualitative research to examine the items. The suggestions offered by these experts were used to correct and reframe the instruments.

### **3.9 Piloting of Instrument**

The semi-structured interview was piloted using two head teachers who did not form part of the main study. The pretesting was necessary to find out about the clarity and meaningfulness of the instrument to measure what it was intended to measure and to test the content validity before being used for the main study. Although the data from the piloting did not form part of the main study, the pretesting helped to eliminate ambiguous questions, establish the feasibility of the study, test the data collection instrument, establish if there were problems in conducting the interviews and allow preliminary data analysis to establish whether there were difficulties in the main data and ensure that the collected data answer the research questions. Thus, where there were inconsistencies, the items were modified before the main study was carried out.

### **3.10 Method of Data Collection**

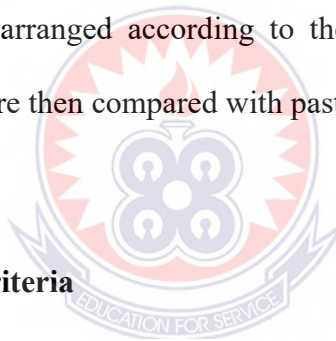
The researcher visited the selected schools with an introductory letter presented to the school heads to seek their consent and approval. The researcher assured respondents that any information they provided would be used for academic purposes only and be treated with utmost confidentiality. Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) identified eight (8) ethical principles that guided the researcher's connection with the respondents. Ethical considerations for this study were based on these principles which are as follows:

- a. Protecting the identity of the respondents
- b. Being careful not to expose respondents to psychological stress
- c. Taking care of questions unfavourable to their self-interest
- d. Not involving respondents in research without their understanding
- e. Not using precarious instruments for data collection
- f. Not being dishonest
- g. Not using force to get evidence

- h. Not depriving respondents of their privileges.

### **3.11 Data Analysis Procedure**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) define data analysis as an ongoing process that involves analysing participant information by employing general analysis steps that are unique to a specific research design. It is the process of organizing a large amount of data into a logical structure that can be interpreted (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Data analysis is an important aspect of qualitative research. In this study, the thematic analysis procedure was employed in analysing the data collected. In line with the admonition of Creswell and Creswell (2018), the interviews were first transcribed to text format and read through thoroughly in order to code the data. Codes were then applied to excerpts and arranged according to themes for final interpretation and analysis. The findings were then compared with past literature and theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).



### **3.12 Trustworthiness Criteria**

All research must be trustworthy in order to be relevant. This implies that research must be recognized as familiar and understood as legitimate by researchers, practitioners, policy makers, and the public. Thus, as stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is a way researchers can persuade themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further noted that a research is considered trustworthy if it meets the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To achieve trustworthiness in qualitative research, researchers must conduct data analysis in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods

of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible.

### **3.12.1 Credibility**

One of the significant factors in ensuring trustworthiness is credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The question of credibility generally deals with its congruence to reality. The researcher familiarized herself with the institutional culture of the participants by visiting the schools with an introductory letter and subsequently making follow-up visits and spending time with the participants. The purpose of doing this was to build a rapport of trust between the researcher and the participants. As a result, the participants felt more comfortable speaking openly with the researcher. Again, in accordance with Lincoln and Guba's, (1985) admonition, each respondent had the option to decline to participate to assure the objectivity of informants. This ensured a genuine willingness to freely provide honest information. Additionally, they were informed of the right to withdraw at any time without having to give a justification.

Also, the researcher's supervisor, from time to time, asked questions of the researcher to recognize her biases and preferences in order to avoid their influence on the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Another strategy used was iterative questioning. When the participant's response proved doubtful, the researcher probed further to uncover the truth. Additionally, the researcher gave each participant the opportunity to read through his or her transcript to confirm and indicate if their words matched (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).



### **3.12.2 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the accuracy and replicability of the methodology used. This suggests that repeating the study in the same context with the same methods and participants yields a similar result. Thus, to achieve dependability, the researcher's supervisor examined the processes of data collection, data analysis, and results of the study. This was to ensure the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

### **3.12.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability entails establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data, which necessitates the researcher demonstrating how these interpretations and conclusions were arrived at (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

To ensure that confirmability was established, the researcher made the effort to achieve credibility, transferability, and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As recommended by Koch (1994), the researcher also provided reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study.

### **3.12.4 Transferability**

Transferability, according to Tobin and Begley (2004) refers to the generalizability of inquiry. Thus, a qualitative data is said to be valid if findings of the study can be applied to other situations. Given that the researcher cannot know the sites that may wish to transfer the findings, Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulate that the researcher must provide detailed descriptions so that those who wish to transfer the findings to their own site can evaluate transferability. Accordingly, the researcher provided finer details to help shed light on the phenomenon of school improvement practices of

heads of basic schools. The researcher interpreted the data in a manner as to provide deeper meaning of her interaction with the participants.

### **3.13 Researcher Positionality**

The researcher's stance or positioning in regard to the study's social and political setting is referred to as positionality. According to Marsh et al. (2017), positionality is shaped by an individual's political allegiance, religious faith, gender, sexuality, historical and geographical location, ethnicity, race, social class, status, (dis)abilities, and so on. The personal, social or political position adopted by a researcher affects every phase of the research process (Holmes, 2020). Thus, the researcher's positionality has an impact on what a researcher chooses to explore (Grix, 2019) and how the research is conducted, as well as the outputs and outcomes (Rowe, 2014).

The author of this research is an Assistant Headmistress of one of the schools within the study area. Her duties as an assistant school head include mentoring teachers, supporting students' academic well-being and progress, and providing academic leadership and monitoring to maintain the school's academic integrity. As an insider, the researcher established and maintained a trusted relationship with research participants. This positionality helped to ensure the cooperation of the participants and the quality of the research outcomes. It is in light of this that Gordon (2008) cited in Herr and Anderson (2014) asserts that insider positionality contributes to professional and organisational transformation.

### **3.14 Ethical Considerations**

To achieve the objectives of the study, the conduct of the study was in compliance with standard ethical considerations in educational research. These ethical considerations are discussed as follows.

#### **3.14.1 Access**

A formal letter of introduction was sought from the university and presented to targeted institutions of interest to introduce the research and formally seek permission for the inclusion of the institution in the study. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. No individual was forced or coerced into participating in the study. The process of participant selection in the study was conducted in a manner that ensured the absence of bias towards any particular group or demographic trait, including but not limited to gender, age, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic position. The study allowed for the inclusion of all individuals who fell within the target group.

#### **3.14.2 Informed consent**

Prior to the conduct of the interview with identified interviewees, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the interviewee and verbally sought their consent to proceed with the interview. Individuals who did not give their consent were not included in the study. Further, interviewees were given copies of the interview guide in advance of the interview.

#### **3.14.3 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality alludes to the mutual agreement established between the investigator and the participant, ensuring that any private or delicate data will be treated with the highest level of caution and discretion (Bos & Bos, 2020). Confidentiality is fundamentally grounded on the establishment of trust. In compliance with the

confidentiality consideration in research ethics, interviewees were provided with a guarantee of confidentiality and the discreet handling of their information. Along this line, the interviewees were provided with information on the duration for which the acquired data would be stored, and were given reassurances that the collected material would be used solely for academic purposes

#### **3.14.4 Anonymity**

Anonymity is occasionally considered as a type of confidentiality, specifically aimed at safeguarding the identity of individuals in a study (Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger, 2015). A commonly held perception of anonymity posits that an individual's identity cannot be discerned or linked to the information available about them. To satisfy the anonymity consideration, the interview data was organized in a manner that ensured participants' responses were not associated with their identities. In the majority of instances, pseudonyms were employed when deemed essential. The interviews did not also seek to collect personal information about the participant, rather took an objective view sticking to the issues under consideration.

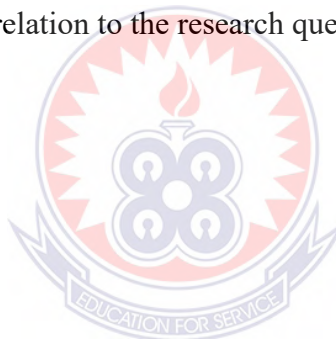
#### **3.14.5 Transparency**

Further in compliance with other ethical considerations, the researcher avoided the use of ambiguous and misrepresentative statements during the interview. Interviewees were informed on the use of information and ultimate circulation of final document, which will be presented to the university for academic purposes.

### 3.15 Chapter Summary

The chapter examines the various methods and procedures followed in gathering and analyzing data. Rationales were also provided for the selection of these methodologies. To achieve the objectives of the study, an interpretivist paradigm was employed with a qualitative research approach and a case study research design. From a population of forty (40), seventeen (17) participants were purposively sampled and used in the study. Primary data was collected by means of interviews and the data analysed using thematic analysis.

The next chapter presents the data analysis and discussion of the study. The presentation was done in themes relating to the study's objectives. The chapter further discussed the findings in relation to the research questions formulated for the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter of the study discusses the findings that were drawn from the data corpus. Based on interviews substantial data were drawn respectively from the selected headteachers of basic school within the Effutu Municipality. These data are analysed by the researcher in light of extant studies and practicable theories. Initial perusal and analysis of the data brought up about a number of categories for research questions 1-4. From the analysis of the available data, some crucial themes emerged. These themes are operationalised and discussed thoroughly in view of the data and earlier findings in literature and as well as to provide answers to the research questions. Instead of participants' real names for direct quotes, each of the seventeen (17) them is identified by an alphanumeric label; AH-1 to QH-17.

#### 4.1 Instructional Leadership Practices of Basic School Heads

**RQ 1. *What are the instructional leadership practices employed by basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality for school improvement?***

The research question one sought to examine the instructional practices basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality exhibit and findings drawn from the data suggest that the headteachers employ instructional supervision, inclusivity approach and managerial and administrative functions.

##### 4.1.1 Instructional supervision

Instructional supervision is defined in this study as the proactive effort of inspecting and critically observing the activities of teachers with the aim of providing mentorship, coaching and professional guidance to them so as to enhance the quality

of instructional delivery. From the analysed data, it is evident that the head teachers are actively involved in monitoring and supervising the classroom activities of teachers. According to the study participants, they regularly move around to observe the day-to-day activities that are carried out in their institutions in order to ensure that teachers are being professional and productive. The data also indicate that the heads of schools are also particular in observing how the student body is cooperating with the school system. The excerpts below are derived from the interaction with them and they adequately reflect these themes:

*“So, teachers are supposed to prepare the lessons that are needed to teach the various Classes. And then in the course of teaching, I also go round the various classrooms to observe the teaching and learning. Where there is the need to draw the teacher’s attention to something that needs to be done, something that needs to be taken out, I do that in a way that will not affect or distract the teaching and learning process. Then from time to time, I take students’ exercise books to crosscheck the assignments they are given, how they are marked and all that. And then I ensure that assessment is also done for each child at the end of the year.” (BH-2)*

*“Okay. First of all, I take lesson notes usually on Mondays. So, I go through the lesson notes and then mark. After marking, I make sure that teachers go to the classroom to teach. Then as teachers teach too, I move around to observe the teaching and learning. If there is anything that I have to draw the attention of the teachers to, I do so immediately. Sometimes, that is if the concern is not a major one. However, major concerns are addressed in my office after the lesson.” (MH-13)*

The excerpts above indicate that, although lesson development is largely in the domain of the teachers, the heads invariably concern themselves with the correctness in what is being taught. They do this by professionally and diplomatically drawing the teacher’s attention to how teaching and learning should be effectively done when there is a lag.

Reacting to a follow-up question on how teachers react to the role in ensuring instructional effectiveness, NH-14 commented that:

*“In fact, the teachers are aware that one of my roles is supervision, and as the lead teacher, I need to know what actually is going on in the classroom. And I cannot do it if I sit in the office and think that what they have written is what they are teaching because there is a difference between lesson note writing and lesson delivery. So, although the teachers write and submit their notes, I just want to find out. Mind you, I do not interrupt or distract the class. I just pass by and observe. That is the informal one.”*

Similarly, FH-6 indicated that:

*“We also have a structured formal observation that I inform them and we have a check list concerning the observation so that they know that this week is observation week. They even come to call for the observation. Again, the observation forms part of our new curriculum. So, they are even willing to have me there. In any case, each time I go to the class especially for the formal observation, I am introduced as part of them wanting to learn with them and the children are happy for that. One of the things I sometimes do is to reward the children when they perform very well. Once in a while, a pencil or something will be given to those who do well. So it also encourages the children to want me to be there to observe their learning so that those who will do very well can get something. So, they do not feel intimidated.”*

The comments from the headteachers reveal that instructional effectiveness is ensured through strict supervision of teachers, ensuring that teachers prepare adequately before lessons, formal observation of teachers, and ensuring that teachers use contact hours effectively. On the part of the pupils, the headteachers indicated that they observe pupils formally in classroom, reward pupils and ensure pupils do not feel intimidated in their learning environment. From the foregoing, it is in place to suggest that there is a concerted effort by teachers and headteachers to ensure that supervision is adequately carried out in order for teaching and learning goals to be fully attained. This finding is in consonance with earlier assertions that instructional supervision is a purposeful way of improving teaching through regular monitoring of students and



supervision and in-service training of teachers (Clark, 2015) in order to ensure that their performance is in accordance with the school's educational mission and objectives (Quah, 2011).

On their part, Nnebedum and Akinfolarin (2017) observed that instructional supervision involves a conscious activity undertaken by headteachers to monitor teachers and provide conducive environments for them to flourish in their teaching activities. The aforementioned scholars added that instructional supervision is a crucial aspect of instructional leadership in schools. This finding is also a reflection of Lezotte's (2010) 'Effective School Theory'. According to the Effective School theory, the leader of the school is largely involved in superintending and constantly monitoring teaching activities in order to ensure optimal productivity. In view of the theory, the professional growth of teachers is of great concern to the leader and this makes the leader proactive in supervising the teachers' performance as well as impacting on their proficiency.

In amplifying the theory, Lynch (2015) pointed out that effective leaders are visible and actively involved in ensuring that teachers are in-tune with the educational missions and objectives of the school and this was clearly evident in the data for this study. This then suggests that the theory of Effective School is being applied by headteachers in the Effutu Municipality. In view of these suggestions and gathered data, it is accurate to suggest that headteachers in the Effutu Municipality exercise instructional supervision as part of their instructional leadership practice.

#### 4.1.2 Inclusivity Approach

The present research study defines inclusivity approach as a leadership strategy employed by head teachers or school leaders where they effectively collaborate with teachers and other staff members in the running of the school. This approach ensures that teachers also have a voice in how teaching and learning should be organized as well as actively involving and planning extra-curricular activities. Findings from the data revealed that there is an appreciable level of collaborative leadership in the selected schools. In essence, the data reveals that headteachers and teachers work in unison in determining how classroom lessons ought to be conducted and how the general school environment must be.

In ascertaining the leadership styles the heads adopt in running the schools and their reasons for employing the selected leadership styles, these comments were elicited;

*“I would not want to pinpoint just one. Maybe the greater part will be the democratic one, but there are times that you have to be firm and say that this is what we are doing. So, yes, the greater part will be the democratic one but sometimes I come in with the other styles.” (JH-10)*

Additionally, HH-8 indicated in a comment that:

*“Depending on the situation I find myself, majority of the teachers are courteous and follow the tenets of a proper schooling environment. However, there are some bad nuts that always go against these tenets and in those isolated incidences I am very strict and autocratic. But largely, I am democratic and show some level of affiliative leadership to new and young teachers”*

In a very diverse response, QH-17 stated that:

*“Most of the teachers on my staff are AD II and above just like me. Therefore, I am more pragmatic and laissez faire in the leadership approach. In addition to that all the teachers on my staff either have their masters or are enrolled in sandwich programmes and therefore exhibit knowledgeable traits that have been very instrumental to the success of the school.”*

A similar response from AH-1 is stated below:

*“For me, I would say that looking at the teachers on my staff, majority of them have attained the rank of Principal Superintendent. So, most of the time, I allow them to do their own thing but I come in when it becomes necessary. I don't impose things on them. I ask their views regarding anything concerning the school and particularly on students' progress to ascertain whether they are having problems in the classroom with their teaching. We all come together and take decisions on how to help the school progress. Mostly, I practice the laissez faire but when a teacher is trying to prove difficult, that is when autocratic leadership comes in. So, it depends on the situation.”*

From the responses, it is clear that headteachers in most basic schools in the Effutu municipality exhibit democratic leadership style by actively involving their staff members in decision making and school leadership. This finding reverberates suggestions by Mark and Printy (2003) that the active involvement of teachers in the development of instructional techniques and other activities in the school is an effective way of ensuring the smooth running of the school based on the fact that this develops a deep sense of responsibility in the teachers.

The finding further corroborates the views of Huong et al. (2020) and Hallinger et al. (2020) that a modern approach to management is expressed in McGregor's theory Y as discussed under the Behaviourist theory of Leadership. In line with the theory, Hallinger et al. (2020) noted that people frequently respond by reducing their effort or interest if they are directed to perform a task without first consulting them. Thus, wherever possible, the staff should be involved in how the job should be done (Sebastian et al., 2019).

When the head teachers were asked why they resorted to the inclusive and democratic style of leadership, they pointed out that their staff members were as qualified as they the heads and were well aware of how effective a school should be run. Halinger

(2003) opined that this approach is a form of transformational leadership which empowers teachers to give-off their best in ensuring that the goals and the objectives of the school are met. According to the above-mentioned scholars, the inclusivity approach can be referred to as shared instructional leadership where the headteacher is referred to as leader of instructional leaders. The findings therefore suggest that the practice of delegating leadership roles to teachers in the Effutu Municipality by headteachers is a way of promoting a good instructional leadership.

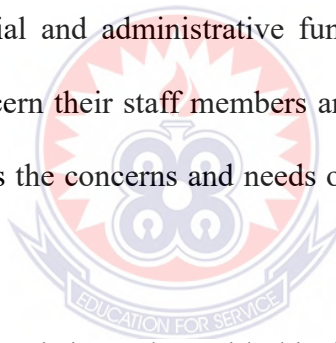
Findings based on data derived from the selected heads also revealed that although the democratic leadership style is preferred among basic school heads in the Effutu municipality, the autocratic style is used in rare and extreme cases. In accordance with the contingency theory, there is no exact leadership or management style that is most appropriate in organizing and managing a structured institution (Shala et al., 2021; Tsolka, 2020). In essence, a leader adopts a leadership style based on certain factors. A good leader thus must be willing to employ an appreciable dynamism in tackling specific circumstances and addressing particular needs in view of the times and other determining factors.

#### **4.1.3 Managerial and administrative functions**

The study found that instructional leadership is exhibited by school heads in the Effutu Municipality through their evident performance of managerial functions. The gathered data suggested that the headteachers superintend almost every activity of the school system. They are at the forefront in coordinating teaching and learning, teachers' and students' behaviour as well as ensuring the smooth functioning of the school. Through their performance of managerial and administrative functions, they ensure that teachers who are hired or posted to their schools show and uphold high

levels of professionalism in their attitude, teaching methodology, personality, relationship with students and relationship with other teachers and staff members, among others. Headteachers also perform administrative functions in the schools by their active decision making about budgetary and financial issues, exercising proprietary responsibility in soliciting for and providing teaching and learning materials for the school.

Additionally, as managers and administrators, the headteachers indicated that they reward teachers when there is the need for motivation especially after they have performed creditably and they offer rebukes in cases where there is an unpalatable performance or behavioural issue. The study also found that heads, in their performance of managerial and administrative functions, get to be instrumental in resolving issues that concern their staff members and the school at large. In essence, the heads work to address the concerns and needs of staff members in order to foster their productivity.



The excerpt by EH-5 below is in tandem with this theme;

*“The role of a leader such as headteacher in the school is to coordinate all administrative and managerial activities of the school. This involves supervising the activities of teachers, guiding teachers where necessary, meeting the needs of teachers such as teaching and learning materials and solving any administrative problem that may occur. With regard to the pupils, it is the duty of the headteacher to ensure that there is a serene learning environment that meets the needs of the pupils and makes them comfortable in the school.”*

IH-9 suggested that;

*Where I need to praise the teacher, I do. Where I need to draw the teacher’s attention to something I do that. But most of the time, the motivation is more, although not everything may be perfect. On the other hand, we meet every Wednesday to discuss certain difficult situations, certain things we are struggling as teachers. So, we assign a facilitator to guide us, to take us through. Teachers will bring their struggles and then we go through. If they think they have no struggles,*

*what I have also observed I bring it across and then we all discuss how best we can let it work for each of us in our various classrooms. So, we give in-service training, we offer in-service training once every week to equip us for our instructional learning activities and for leadership as well.”*

Additionally, PH-16 shared his view that:

*“My role as a head teacher is to ensure that teaching and learning is moving on well. Aside this, I ensure that everything that concerns the school including the safety of the school children are in place. Punctuality is also another area I check a lot. I make sure both teachers and students come to school on time. Again I ensure that I have a good relationship between the teachers and myself and so at times when you even come to the staff room, it is difficult for you to identify the head because we have a cordial relationship.”*

The comments from the head teachers indicated that the main roles of head teachers at the basic school level were managerial and administrative. The headteachers pointed out that they play the role as a coordinator to coordinate the activities of both teachers and pupils. The activities of teachers involve preparation of lesson notes, lesson delivery, in-service training, and remedial measures for pupils, conducting assessments etc. The activities of pupils were engaging in active learning and extracurricular activities.

Regarding the provision of high academic standards in schools, some of the headteachers indicated that they engaged both teachers and pupils in periodic seminars to pinpoint shortcomings and find solutions to how those issues could be resolved. In addition to that some headteachers suggested they offer remedial measures for struggling pupils to improve their academic performance.

In concordance with the findings of the study, Naidoo and Petersen (2015) hinted that school leaders are therefore expected to show dynamic leadership that matches with the tenets of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill sets. According to Bush (2015), there is a connection between the learning outcome to engagement with classroom practice and

Instructional leadership. Effective schools are seen as the ones that are able to promote a high level of student achievement.

Bush further states that there are effectiveness variables that substantiate the conceptual framework and instructional leadership. The following variables were related to school effectiveness. Strong administrative leadership; especially, in the areas of instruction and curriculum; Safe and orderly environment; Regular and systematic monitoring of student's performance; Systematic and broad-based reward system for students; Strong communicating support and a norm of academic press including a high expectation for student's performance and an emphasis on mastery of basic skills. In support of the study, headteachers of basic schools in the Effutu municipality underscored the need for strong leadership which they carry out to ensure academic excellence.

Again, in harmony with the findings of the study, Sergiovani (2007) summarizing what supervision entails, maintains that supervision is carried out for good reasons, allowing schools to be better, encouraging and supporting teacher growth. Sergiovani argues that supervision enhances the student's progress throughout their academic and developmental stages of learning experiences. The comments of the headteachers demonstrated that effective instructional leadership could only be attained from effective supervision of the work of teachers and monitoring of the academic progress of pupils.

In addition, Baffour-Awuah (2011) suggested that improving school supervision on some support systems needs revision to improve instructional supervision in schools. Baffour-Awuah further suggested that GES should put into consideration separate managerial and administrative duties from instructional supervision. The motivation

behind this approach is to enable headteachers to engage in regular supervision of instruction to promote effective teaching and learning (Baffour-Awuah, 2011). Even though, the findings of the current study show that at the basic level, the headteachers are burdened with administrative and managerial challenges of the school, they are able to handle it at the level which is in sharp contrast to the suggestion of Baffour-Awuah (2011). The findings of Baffour-Awuah (2011) are more profound in secondary schools where the workloads of the managers and administrators are large and specialized.

Also, in harmony with the findings of the study, Danso (2009) indicated the need to pay attention to the supervision of instruction which could be improved by means of regular pre-service and in-service training. Particularly, in-service training of Lead teachers, headteachers and supervisors on pressing issues relating to the best practices of school supervision is not a priority. Danso, (2009), supports the idea that offering regular in-service training, providing logistics and materials, and payment of allowances to circuit supervisors are great support needed to be given to promote effective supervision. Supervision can be effective only when officers and supervisors are from time to time-oriented with fresh related ideas on the job.

The study further showed that basic school heads in the Effutu municipality in many ways boost the motivation, commitment, and working conditions of their staff in a bid to improve teaching and learning. This finding is corroborated by Leithwood et al. (2008) who viewed the school leader as someone who is capable of motivating and influencing teachers towards the accomplishment of the goals of the institution (cited in Rodrigues et al., 2021).



## 4.2 Ways Basic School Heads Monitor Students' Progress

### **RQ.2 *In what ways do the basic school heads monitor students' progress for school improvement?***

Research question two sought to identify ways basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality monitor student's progress. The responses gathered are grouped under two main headings. These are constant monitoring of classroom activities and inspection of lesson notes and students' workbooks.

#### **4.2.1 Constant monitoring of classroom activities**

The participants indicated that they made regular and sometimes daily visits to classrooms to ensure that teachers were present and actively involved in the teaching process. According to the head teachers, the active presence of teachers in the classroom is an indicator that students are acquiring knowledge and will consequently make progress in their academic performances. The study participants insisted that monitoring the classroom activities of teachers is essential to their overall activity based on arguments that people put in more effort in performing their assigned tasks when they are well aware that there is a watchdog monitoring them. In effect, when classroom activities are constantly monitored, teachers are compelled to ensure that their students also perform creditably.

LH-12's statement below corroborates this finding:

*“Yes, very, very important. I know my teachers will do the work even when I am not there. But as natural human beings, if we are being monitored, it makes our work more efficient. Secondly, monitoring is one of my responsibilities as a head teacher.”*

Similarly, GH-7 commented that:

*“Almost every day I go round the classrooms, see which teachers are present or absent. I do this to ensure that every class has a teacher, the children are ready and learning, teachers are ready for teaching every day.”*

Again, CH-3 stated that:

*“Like I said earlier, there is the strictly formal one and the informal one. But whatever the case, I go to every class every day.”*

OH-15 also had this to say:

*“I monitor whatever is going on in the classroom every day. Sometimes I visit the classes unannounced. At other times, I pre-inform the teachers that I would be visiting their classes. That way, the teachers are not taken by surprise. When I visit a class, I make sure to sit at the back of the classroom to observe the teaching. But you know, monitoring is not only done in the classroom. Outside the classroom too, we do monitoring; going round the compound to make sure that everything is in order. So that is how I do monitoring in my school.”*

AH-1 stated that, as a way of monitoring students' academic progress, she goes to the classrooms to interact with the students. “I can take a topic from a text book and ask a student to read. I do so because reading has been a major problem for students in my school.”

The comments show that monitoring of teachers, pupils and other school activities were considered important by basic school heads in the Effutu municipality. This finding is in line with the tenets of the Effective School theory in which Lezotte (2010) indicated that school leaders ought to ensure that they routinely check classroom activities so as to ensure that happenings in the classroom are tailored to reflect the missions of the school. The finding is validated by Maponya (2020) who asserted that being particular and concerned about classroom activities is an essential trait of a good school leader. The aforementioned scholar indicated that this particular

feature is crucial to the development of the teacher, students and the school at large. Findings therefore indicate that headteachers in the Effutu Municipality are concerned about the intellectual development of their students hence the active monitoring of classroom activities.

#### **4.2.2 Inspection of lesson notes and students' workbooks**

Findings also indicate that headteachers regularly inspect teachers' scheme of work and lesson notes by way of indirectly monitoring students' progress. According to the study participants, when they inspect the scheme of work prepared by teachers, they get to find out items that have already been taught and new things that are yet to be taught. Additionally, by inspecting teachers' lesson notes, they ascertain the teachers' methodology of teaching and how they approach a specific subject matter. In essence, teachers' efficacy in the preparation of essential documents for teaching is a determinant and a yardstick for checking students' progress.

The finding also suggests that headteachers inspect the exercise books or workbooks of pupils in determining progress they have made in the teaching and learning process. First of all, the headteachers inspect the workbook of pupils to find out whether or not teacher have given them assignments that are in line with teaching objectives and items on the scheme of work. Secondly, these workbooks are inspected to verify the performance of the pupils; whether they perform good or poorly. In essence, the assessment and scores of students largely determine their progress. The interview excerpts below highlight these themes;

*“I monitor the progress of my pupils on a need to do basis. First of all, I check the weekly lesson notes of teachers to ensure that they are making progress with their scheme of work. Occasionally, I ask teachers to submit the books of some random pupils to check their academic progress.”*

*“Besides, I do take the students’ exercise books to see how many exercises they have been given and whether they do corrections when they get some of the questions wrong. So the exercise books are sometimes collected and looked through to know whatever is going on in the classroom. Apart from the exercise, sometimes I also do call some of the students to interview them about the teachers but without the teacher’s knowledge.”*

The comments from the headteachers showed that they regularly monitor the academic progress of pupils by checking the weekly lesson notes of teachers as well as randomly checking the marked exercises, class tests of pupils. Where the record and performance of pupils declined overtime, pupils were taken through remedial measures.

Similarly, the headteachers were asked to give some of the benefits of their engagement in the monitoring of pupils’ achievement and progress. One of the interviewees noted that:

*“Oh yes, it has yielded great benefits. For instance, if I go round and there is a pupil who is not in class, I will find out why he/she is not in class. Sometimes the teacher might have asked the pupil to go out, I will investigate to find out if there is the need to give any support to the child outside the classroom. And learners who have difficulties, through the monitoring I get to know how best to help them. For instance, I have been receiving complaints about students’ inability to read effortlessly. So, recently, we had to put the pupils into various levels of reading abilities. This is because I receive complaints about students’ inability to read and give them support, remediation kind of support, very early in the morning. And through that those who were in the lower level were moved to the higher level.”*

In a follow up question on how head teachers benefit from the engagement in monitoring of pupils’ achievement and progress. The response was that:

*“After a few weeks of putting the pupils into the reading ability groups, we have observed that there is an improvement. The starters and non-readers were getting promoted to ‘sounds’ and ‘syllables’ groups. Most of those whose reading ability was at the syllable level were also being moved to the level of reading of*

*simple sentences. So, it is beneficial. It helps us to know who and how to help. Then those who have problems with attitudes and behaviour, we have to let their parents come in. They come and we explain things to them and we discuss how we can handle the children and then support them to move on. If there is the need for the child to sign a bond of good behaviour, we make the child to do so. Some truant pupils who were made to sign bonds of good behaviour are now coming to school regularly.”*

The comment above, in a way, summarizes those of other headteachers and touches all aspects of the benefits of monitoring in the schools. Some of the benefits of monitoring the pupils’ academic progress were helping struggling pupils to read and also giving them remedial measures through the engagement of parents.

Finally, headteachers were asked to state the extent to which their monitoring contribute to the realization of the goals of the school. One of the participants, following the question asked, commented that:

*“In terms of the academic performance of the pupils, the regular monitoring of the pupils’ exercises and class test has significantly improved the performance of the school in the BECE. For the past two years, the school has progressively moved from the bottom-ten position to the top-ten position in the municipality. In addition, monitoring creates a good relationship between the students and me. It helps me to know them better. So sometimes I even look at this student and because you know the students very well I advise them to choose this course instead of the other course. So it is really helping. Going to the classroom sometimes to take the class myself and teaching them is helping me to know the students very well and also identify the problems they are having.*

The comments by the headteachers reveal that effective and regular monitoring have been very instrumental in achieving their organizational goals. While most of them indicated that the monitoring significantly improved the position of the schools in the Municipal school ranking especially for school who previous were at the bottom of the rankings.

In accordance with the findings of the study, Lezzotte (2001) indicated that pupils' progress correlate with routine examination and checks on the learning activities of the pupils. The outcomes of both processes are used to improve individual pupils' behaviour and performance, as well as the overall curriculum (Lezotte, 2001). Progress monitoring is a scientifically validated method of assessing students' academic performance and evaluating the efficacy of teaching and learning. Individuals or a whole class can be monitored for progress (NCSPM, 2012).

Teachers can use pupils' performance data to regularly evaluate the quality of their teaching and make more informed instructional decisions by monitoring students' development regularly (Safer & Fleischman, 2005). This assertion was highlighted clearly by headteachers in their monitoring procedure.

According to Luckner and Bowen (2010) monitoring varies from traditional evaluation in that it focuses on pupils' academic performance on a few key abilities using weekly or biweekly repeatable probes. According to the above explanation of frequent student progress monitoring, the procedure is used not only to make summative choices but also to guarantee that the student meets pre-determined goals. This is accomplished through keeping both the pupils and the teacher informed of progress toward the goal, as well as providing opportunities for teachers to adapt their teaching and students to adjust their learning.

According to Kgothule and Letsie, (2014) the tracking of pupils' progress is done in a variety of methods. In general, it entails determining the students' current levels of performance; identifying learning goals that will occur over time (weekly or monthly); measuring progress toward the goals by comparing expected and actual rates of learning, and adjusting teaching to meet the students' needs based on the

measurements. Implementation frequently entails a series of processes, including a judgment about the level of implementation (individual student, small group, classroom or grade).

In line with the findings of the study, Bowen (2010) conducted a study on teachers' opinions of pupils' progress monitoring and concluded that one of the major benefits was to the pupils, according to the teachers polled. Pupils become involved in documenting and charting their success because progress monitoring is pupil-centred, and they are thus more motivated to attain their goals and see their improvement. Teachers also stated that progress monitoring assisted them in defining lessons, monitoring the impact of interventions, and 'filling in the gaps' (Kgothule et al., 2014). These findings as presented by Kgothule et al., synchronizes with the outcomes of the current study in terms of the importance of monitoring as elucidated by the headteachers.



### **4.3 Measures Basic School Heads put in place to Ensure a Safe and Orderly Environment for Students**

#### ***RQ3. What are the measures put in place by the school heads to ensure a safe and orderly environment for students?***

This section presents the responses of headteachers in Effutu municipality on measures they adopt to ensure pupils' safe orderly environment in their schools.

#### **4.3.1 Mobilizing support to undertake maintenance and renovation works**

Another theme generated in view of measures adopted by headteachers in the Effutu municipality in ensuring the wellbeing of the students is the fact that the headteachers were effortful in trying to mobilize funds to resolve infrastructural challenges in their schools. Although the in-depth analysis of the responses of the headteachers indicated

that almost all the headteachers revealed that their school climate was friendly and pupils trusted and approached teachers more frequently for any academic related activities, they also suggested that there are some issues that need to be resolved. Some headteachers pointed out that there are issues of leaking roofs, large class sizes, and cracks in wall.

LH-12 explained that:

*“The school is an open one. That is one. The other thing is that. Hmmm, the average number of children we have in a class is 54. Yeah. The other thing is that with our leaking roofs, as soon as it starts raining, we have to stop everything. Otherwise the rain will destroy our teaching and learning materials.”*

The above excerpt suggested that there are issues that needed to be resolved. The headteachers were then asked about the measures they put in place to ensure that these needs are met. They indicated that they were making moves to collaborate with the municipal directorate in dealing with the situation. They also stated that they engaged in community partnerships. The interview data presented below illustrates the above discussion;

*“We inform the PTA, the Assembly man, the Municipal Education Director, the Municipal Assembly. We send letters around but all boils down to money. What they all say is that there is no money. It is only recently that the MP came to our aid to renovate the primary block. We still call on him from time to time. Meanwhile, the other classroom blocks have so many cracks and are still leaking. So, we hope that they will respond to our call sooner than later. (NH-14)*

CH-3 added that;

*“Sometimes when we have problem with our school buildings I discuss with the chief and assembly man for the area. Sometimes too NGOs and some benevolent individuals from the communities come on board to help us with our school building.”*



IH-9 commented that:

*“The community has in the past helped to construct some school projects”.*

Additionally, FH-6 commented that:

*“I remember the last time we called for PTA meeting and the problem of our leaking roof came up, the PTA came in and gave us the necessary support. Thanks be to God the problem is solved with their assistance. Teaching and learning is back to normal and the school has taken shape again. But for the PTA, we still would have been facing that issue. So whenever we have any problem in the school, we discuss it during our PTA meetings.”*

From the comments, the headteachers sought to give a vivid description of their schools' environment. Among the plethora of descriptions given by headteachers, some headteachers indicated open space, large class sizes, leaking roofing sheets and cracks in wall. The open spaced school environments and large class sizes were the top of complains from the headteachers. Even though they admitted the impact of the school environment on the academic performance of pupils, the headteachers concerned indicated that they have reported their school situation to the Municipal Education office for appropriate measures to be given to salvage the situation. The participants also mentioned that they are in talks with the Parent Teacher Association and the assembly man in mobilizing support to bring developments to the schools with the aim of ensuring safe and orderly environment for students.

This theme and the finding discussed under it suggest that the leadership of the school, particularly the headteacher is putting in measures to ensure that the school environment become a safe and conducive place for young learners as proposed by Lezotte (2010) in his theory of Effective School. In view of the theory, it is imperative to create a school environment where students feel emotionally, mentally and physically at ease in order to have an effective school. Therefore, through the lens of

the effective school model, it is in place to suggest that headteachers in the Effutu Municipality are proactive in ensuring a calm and orderly learning environment.

#### **4.3.2 Ensuring a school-parents-community partnership**

Findings from the study suggests that the headteachers are nurturing a warm partnership between the school, parents and the community in ensuring that a safe school environment is provided for the students. The headteachers revealed that the school's collaboration with the parents and the community results in the transmission of a unified orientation and culture to the children. In essence, because of intricate relationship between the school, the parents and the community, there is an agreement between them with regard to the upbringing of the children. In that, there is an effort to ensure that the orientation given to the child in the school is not so different from what is given them in the home and the community. Due to this, the students will feel safe in the school setting because they consider that environment as an extension of the home and community. The research participants indicated that this relationship is a way of ensuring a safe and orderly environment for students. These students tend to see teachers and school leaders as their parents and freely approach them to register their concerns. Accordingly, this partnership is also instrumental in imbibing good moral principles in the children based on the findings. The interview excerpts below corroborate this finding;

*“...pupils repose their trust in the teachers. Because of the trust, pupils are able to approach any teachers for extra help in their academic activities. Also, parents are able to share their wards issues with teachers so that they could be of help.” (JH-10)*

BH-2 had this to say;

*“Yeah, the community is always a partner to the school. We usually invite opinion leaders to our PTA meetings. In terms of the impact of the community influence on orderly environment in the school, the community helps by*

*sending back recalcitrant pupils from town back to school during school hours”*

Some of the headteachers indicated that the community were involved in a number of projects in the school while others revealed that the community were engaged in disciplining the pupils outside the school. Some of the opinion leaders are regularly invited to the schools’ PTA meetings to update them of the current developments in the school. The comments show that most headteachers put in extra effort and time to ensure positive climate in schools. Majority of them indicated that they do so by encouraging a healthy relationship between themselves, teachers and pupils. Headteachers do so by settling disputes among teachers to create a friendly climate in the school.

The efforts made by headteachers in the Effutu Municipality to ensure a positive school climate for students are in conformation with Lezotte’s Effective School theory. These findings reverberate the tenets of the theory which talk about the maintenance of home-school relations. According to Lezotte (2010), it is crucial to establish a good relationship between the school and the home in order to have an effective school climate. Based on the theory, if there is a connectedness between parents and the school, morality and disciplinary measures are likely to be entrenched in regards to the upbringing of the child. In this vein, it is in place to suggest that the Effective School theory is closely related to the findings of this study.

Finally, the last question sought to find out from headteachers on how supportive teachers and parents were in transforming their school into a positive learning environment. KH-11 indicated that:

*“Yes, teachers and parents alike are very supportive in creating a positive learning environment for the pupils. Parents through the PTA contribute financially to the development of the school.”*

Additionally, OH-15 commented that:

*“Yeah, the teachers are very supportive when it comes to lesson delivery and participation in extracurricular activities such as sports and debates. In addition to that they are also instrumental when it comes to maintaining discipline in the school. Maintaining discipline in school also involves inviting parents on a need to do basis.”*

Again, DH-4 also stated that:

*“Of course, teachers and parents are very supportive to the transformative agenda of the school. Parents contribute financially and morally to the wellbeing of their wards. In the schools, teachers ensure discipline among pupils.”*

The intuitions of the comments from the headteachers reveal that both parents and teachers have been very supportive in the transformative agenda of the schools in the Efutu Municipality. On the part of parents, they offered the schools financial and moral support through PTA meetings and disciplining the pupils in their homes respectively. The teachers’ major duty in the transformation agenda is the maintaining of discipline among pupils while in school.

As alluded to in the current study, most studies on the orderly and secured environment have identified some three key indicators: physical characteristics and safety features are tangible and visible elements that are found in or around schools and are intended to improve physical safety, orderly environment is characterized by organization and school discipline, and school staffing and relationships promote a sense of caring and community, which increases feelings of safety (Godstein et al., 2008; Bosworth et al., 2011). The findings of the study reveal that headteachers’ responses were consistent with the three key indicators of an orderly and secured environment.

Again, in contrast to the findings of the study, Bosworth et al. (2008) found that physical characteristics that secure school were, for instance, security cameras, fences around the school, and locked doors. Tiny school size was also seen as having a beneficial impact on safety in schools that were thought to be small. They pointed out that security features or equipment (such as cameras, visitor passes, fences, or monitors) were more important to students than faculty's feelings of safety. Climate (e.g., rules, discipline, fear) and personnel (e.g., monitors, faculty control) were the second most important areas for students. Faculty, on the other hand, mentioned relationships with colleagues and pupils, climate, and physical aspects (e.g., small size, proximity to danger) as important factors in making a school safe. In the context of this current study, basic schools in the Efutu Municipality were open spaces and therefore lack the requisite security that makes an ideal school secure.

In terms of school discipline and organization, Bosworth et al., (2008) found that pupils felt safer when they saw a clear and regular disciplinary structure. The pupils indicated that they felt comfortable when teachers broke up conflicts and enforced discipline, but that their safety was jeopardized by the lack of a behaviour control structure and accountability. In consistent with the findings of the study, the headteachers indicated that teachers were crucial in enforcing discipline in school whereas parents were the agents of discipline when the pupils are home.

#### 4.4 Strategies Basic School Heads Employ to Create Learning Opportunities for Students

##### RQ4. *What strategies do the basic school heads employ to create learning opportunities for students?*

The fourth research question discovered the following strategies. They are activity-based learning, ability groupings, access to learning materials, assessment and organizing extracurricular activities. These are further discussed below;

##### 4.4.1 Activity-Based Learning (ABL)

Activity-Based Learning involves active participation of students in the learning process thus enabling them to be continuously engaged other than being just listeners. During the interview, majority of the respondents reveal that activity-based learning is one of the strategies they employ in creating opportunities for students to learn. The respondents claimed that they ensure teachers make their lessons so practical for the purposes of increasing students' participation and competencies.

LH-12 stated;

*“When students learn through role play, they tend to easily remember whatever they have learnt. Besides, students become more interested in what the teacher is teaching and so they become eager to learn more. The reason I always tell my teachers to make lessons practical”.*

NH-14 also had this to say;

*“I have made the teachers aware that every lesson must be full of activities so, as they teach, they tell the students that whatever they learn will be applied in their daily lives. Even when you look at our rationale for the new curriculum, it talks about application of whatever the child has learnt and so making lessons practical has been one of the strategies that I ensure teachers use to create more opportunities for students to learn”.*

QH-17 declared that:

*“Mostly, my teachers use dramatization, role play. Yeah. Sometimes students are taught in a horseshoe formation, sometimes they group the students. These require a certain level of space. A significant level of space in the classroom....”*

In response to the same question, CH-3 revealed that he always told his teachers to infuse more activities into their lessons to make it easier for students to recollect lessons taught in class.

From the earlier responses, it is clear that head teachers of basic schools in an attempt to create learning opportunities for students insist that teachers make their lessons more practical by including a lot of activities. As averred by Watson et al. (2017), engaging in physical activity in the classroom may improve academic outcomes. Consequently, Head teachers believe that activity-based learning will help students who learn better through engaging in activities to remember lessons taught in class. These findings agree with the assertion of Lee et al. (2020) which is that group activities are significant in developing competency and expanding learners' capabilities. Churchill (2003) as cited in Anwer (2019) also holds a similar view, promoting the idea that activity-based learning helps students and learners build mental models that enable higher-order performance, including applied problem solving and the transfer of knowledge and skills. It is thought that when students participate actively in class and work well with one another, it fosters creativity and critical thinking, which improve performance (Anwer, 2019). The finding also aligned with the postulation of Neji et al. (2014) who state that, activity-based learning facilitates learning by making it more exciting, intriguing and relevant.

#### 4.4.2 Ability groupings

Ability groupings occur when students are put in groups based on their academic abilities. Haung (2009) believes that ability grouping helps to raise academic standards of learners. In fact, it is argued that the most common justification for homogeneous grouping is to enable teachers to effectively fulfil each student's unique or varied learning needs (Ansalone, 2009). Following the views expressed by head teachers during the interview on the strategies they employ to create learning opportunities for students, the researcher gathered that majority of the respondents make use of ability groupings.

For instance, PH-16 stated;

*“Through monitoring and observations, I realized that some of the students have high IQs, others have low IQ and the rest are average. So in my school, I have instituted what is known as remediation activities for those slow learners. So whether you're in the JHS, upper primary or lower primary, as soon as you have been identified as one of those slow learners, I quickly put you in groups and organize what we call remediation activities for you. These activities help students to catch up with the other learners”.*

MH-13 expressed that because each child is unique, it is important that children (students) are assessed in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses for necessary interventions. The respondent claimed that for an effective intervention, it will be necessary that students are put into smaller groups based on their academic capabilities.

*“I believe grouping the students based on their intellectual capabilities could improve learning outcomes which could also go a long way to make our schools better. This is because there will be healthy academic competitions which will eventually lead to school improvement. The reason I make sure it is practiced in my school”* (MH-13).



On the same question, HH-8 commented;

*“We put the children into various learning ability groups and we dedicate one hour every morning to the ones who are weak in reading so as to improve their reading skills, especially those in JHS 1”.*

These findings suggest that ability grouping is one of the strategies basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality are using to create learning opportunities for their students thus corroborating the views of Cooner (2010) who suggests that small groupings and inquiry-based learning (EBL) activities should form a major aspect of teaching and learning as they enable pupils to get active contact hours hence making learning effective. Supporting the views of Cooner (2010), Lezotte (1990) also asserts that students must not be rushed through their academic work but rather given extra time so that they can attain mastery of their tasks. Similarly, the findings of Matthews, Ritchotte, and McBee (2013) on the impacts of grouping on non-gifted and gifted kids in grades 2 through 6 across a three-year span corroborate the assertion that ability groupings are used to increase learners' performance. Furthermore, the finding of the study is supported by the finding of Abdulrazak (2020) which confirmed that ability grouping had an advantageous effect on instruction and learning for both high and low ability groups because it enables the teacher to direct his or her teaching towards a particular group of people.

In contrast to the findings above, Kaya (2015) claims studies have shown that students who are considered as weak are discouraged when grouped with like-achieving students. However, they become enthusiastic about learning when grouped with high achievers in mixed groups. Thus such weak students are only inspired to study harder when mixed with high achieving students. Kintz (2011) also found that ability groupings rather have negative effect on low ability groups because of the stigma attached to them. As a result of this stereotype, the right environment is not created

for the students to learn. Consequently, the purpose for which the group is created is defeated.

#### 4.4.3 Access to Learning Materials

Access to learning materials is also a strategy more than half of the respondents stated they employ to create opportunities for students to learn. Basically, access to learning materials implies making sure quality and enough learning materials are made easily available to students to encourage them to learn. The use of instructional materials, according to Kanwo (2010), gives students opportunity to hear, see, and discuss relevant activities. Students can readily comprehend what is being taught, and it also helps to make the teaching and learning process more meaningful, efficient, and clear. Besides, Adele (2015) makes a point that, encouraging students' learning in the classroom is closely related to accessibility and effective use of instructional materials. In effect, basic school head teachers in the Effutu Municipality believe that availability and access to quality learning materials can create learning opportunities for students.

FH-6 revealed that;

*“There is a community library that was built for the cluster of schools, so I insisted that there should be library on the school’s timetable. So during library periods, students are asked to go for cards that can make them borrow books from the library to read. Now, I have also tasked the teachers to take summary notes from students on all that they have read or learnt from the various books from time to time. I know this strategy has created an opportunity for students to learn and it is working”.*

*“When parents come to see me in my office, I always tell them to try and provide their wards with all the materials they will need to enhance effective learning. Making our school effective should be a collective responsibility and not one sided”. (EH-5)*

EH-5 gave this response when he was asked on the strategies he employs to create learning opportunities for students. KH-11 indicated he ensures that the small library the school has is stocked with relevant learning materials which are sometimes books from some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and individuals. The respondent claimed that students now want to visit the library to read, thus creating learning opportunities and improving learning outcomes.

These responses reveal that, access to learning materials by students is a strategy basic school heads use to improve learning outcomes. Lyons (2012) cited in Okongo et al. (2015) explains that, learning is a complex process that involves the interaction of the curriculum, instructional resources, physical facilities, and student motivation. Hence the availability of teaching and learning materials improves schools' effectiveness because they are the fundamental resources that result in good academic performance of students. The responses are in line with the studies of Read and Treffgarne (2011) and Read (2015) which disclose that when schools invest in reading books and libraries, there is a greater chance of increasing students' learning outcomes. Besides the finding is in line with that of Ibok (2016), who discovered that easy access to instructional facilities in the classroom is what ensures exceptional academic success. The findings are further corroborated by Ekpo (2014) who posits that instructional resources facilitate learning and teaching, and that learner-centered instructional materials encourage deep learning and make learning more enjoyable and lasting while also facilitating teachers' instructional efforts.

Ololobon (2013) concurred with the study, stating that the use of educational resources is the fundamental tools for enhancing quality and effectiveness in the educational system. Again, the findings agree with the views of Lezotte (2010) who

affirms that teachers and parents must work together to help the children get the most out of the educational system.

#### 4.4.4 Assessment

Generally, student assessment helps the teacher to identify students who are weak or lagging behind and provide them with swift remedial response. Mostly, head teachers in the Effutu Municipality have expressed that regular assessments through class exercises and tests have helped in creating learning opportunities for these students.

Some of the responses are stated below;

*“I make sure that teachers assess students more often so that those who are not doing well can be given extra attention.” (GH-7)*

*“You see, assessing students on lessons taught is a very good strategy that can create opportunities for students to learn. This strategy helps both the students and the teachers. I mean teachers could adopt new methods of teaching if they realize that old methods are not producing the necessary change in students’ performance. Moreover, slow learners can be identified and given the necessary assistance.” (DH-4)*

*“We assess them more often because it helps us to identify learners who are weak, so as to help them.” (PH-16)*

On the same question, IH-9 stated that assessment helps to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses for necessary interventions. He explained further that during instruction, teachers make use of assessment to get feedback from students in order to adjust teaching and learning to improve performance. Thus, it will be very difficult for teachers to know how well or poorly their students are performing without assessment.

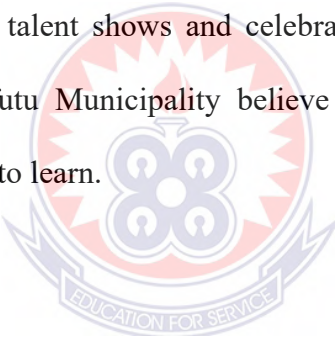
Corroborating the findings above, Safer and Fleischman (2005) reason that teachers can use student performance data to regularly evaluate the quality of their teaching and make more informed instructional decisions by monitoring students’ development regularly. Likewise, Lezotte (1990) asserts that authentic kinds of assessment can help

schools become proactive and learner-centred educational communities which could result in improved student accomplishment. Supporting these assertions, some researchers also believe that assessment provides valuable information that can be utilized to change teaching to improve a student's learning outcomes if other alternatives fail. Besides, assessment conveys progress to the student, parents, and colleagues (Luckner & Brown, 2010; Safer & Fleischman, 2005).

#### 4.4.5 Extracurricular Activities

Another strategy identified by the researcher during the interview is the introduction of extracurricular activities in the schools. Extracurricular activities are those activities which do not form part of the curriculum but are carried out in schools. They include excursions, talent shows and celebration of career day. Basic school head teachers in the Effutu Municipality believe that these activities also create opportunities for students to learn.

JH-10 said;



*“We sometimes take our students on excursions. We have ever visited Parliament House, Kakum National Park, Cape Coast Castle and Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum. When we were at the Parliament House for instance, I told the students that if they don't learn, they cannot work in a place like this. The excursions have helped a lot of the students to know more about these places.*

Another respondent, DH-4 mentioned that if not for Covid-19, the students would have embarked on another excursion as he had even spoken to the teachers regarding it.

*“We have put a hold on excursions for now hoping that the Covid will come down. Excursions have always been a strategy we employ to create opportunities for our students to learn but Covid-19 has destroyed everything. We are praying things bounce back to normal soon”. (DH-4)*

In addition to excursions, the respondent mentioned career day celebration as another strategy he employs to create opportunities for his students to learn, he stated that;

*“Last Friday for instance, we organized a career day for the students, where about four professionals came over to educate them on different careers. The professionals gave students more insight about their stories and how they got to where they are to make students realize that, it takes hard work, determination and dedication to get to the top and despite the struggles students face now, they will eventually get to the top, just as those professionals have also gotten to where they are now. The children had the opportunities to ask very, very intelligent questions, especially on fire, some of them wanted to know whether there are some kind of chemicals fire professionals use to douse fire. These activities exposed them to the things outside and created opportunities for them to learn. There are also plans underway to form fire safety cadet and then police cadet in the school. The intention is to whip up their interest in some of these professions and also to instil discipline into these students and encourage them to learn to become responsible people”.* (DH-4)

When asked on the same question, HH-8 stated that the school has set aside a day for talent exhibition to encourage students to show their God given talents.

*“Some students are not academically good but when it comes to sewing, they do it very well so during these activities the teachers help to identify this and many other talents in the students so as to encourage them to do more. This is also a way of creating an opportunity for students to learn”.* (HH-8)

Additionally, NH-14 commented that:

*“What we normally do is that, we invite people from the various professions to come and talk to the students. This is done at least once a year. Again, we do take the students on an excursion so that they can learn new things because it is not everything that can be taught in the classroom so the excursion helps a lot”.*

These comments indicate that although extracurricular activities do not form part of the curriculum, basic school head teachers in the Effutu Municipality use these activities to help create opportunities for students to engage their minds and learn. It is worthy of note that a few of the respondents indicated they use words of encouragement to create learning opportunities for students and it has worked for them perfectly so they continue to use it to improve learning outcomes.

Although, Garrison and Anderson (2003) underline the need for using technology in education as more than a means to 'convey knowledge' and provide students with more opportunities to learn, it appears it was not being used by basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality. Again, despite the fact that Ballantyne and Knowles (2007) made a strong point for how virtual case studies in a safe learning environment provided students with unmatched possibilities to participate in a training session which greatly boosted their learning, it was not mentioned anywhere in the interview by the participant as a strategy that helps to create learning opportunities for students.

#### **4.5 Summary of Chapter**

The chapter discussed the findings that were drawn from the data. The researcher identified and discussed the following themes as school improvement practices of basic school Heads in Effutu Municipality. They include instructional supervision, inclusivity approach, managerial and administrative functions. Constant monitoring of classroom activities and inspection of lesson notes and students' workbooks are ways head teachers use to monitor students' progress. Furthermore, mobilizing support to undertake maintenance and renovation works, ensuring a School-Parents-Community partnership are measures the head teachers put in place to ensure safe environment for students to learn. Finally, activity-based learning, ability groupings, access to learning materials, assessment and organizing extracurricular activities are strategies head teachers employ to create learning opportunities for students.

The next chapter which is the last chapter presents the summary of the entire research, keys findings of the study and draws conclusion, make recommendations as well as areas for further studies.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Overview

This chapter consolidates the principal findings and perspectives derived from the prior chapters in order to provide an exhaustive conclusion to the thesis. The chapter further emphasizes significant recommendations derived from the findings, acknowledges limitations encountered in the conduct of the study, and provides suggestions for subsequent studies.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Study

The study was conducted to investigate the school improvement practices of basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality. This was guided by four research objectives which sought to;

1. Find out the instructional leadership practices exhibited by basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality.
2. Identify ways in which basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality monitor students' progress.
3. Examine the measures basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality adopt to ensure a safe and orderly environment for students.
4. Assess the strategies employed by basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality to create learning opportunities for students.



To achieve these objectives, the study provided answers to the following research questions;

1. What instructional leadership practices do basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality exhibit?
2. In what ways do basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality monitor students' progress?
3. What measures do basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality adopt to ensure a safe and orderly environment for students?
4. What strategies do basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality employ to create learning opportunities for students?

On a theoretical front, the study was premised on Effective School Theory (EST) put forward by Lezotte (2010) and the Leadership Instructional Theories which was composed of the Behavioural theory of Leadership (BTL), the Trait Theory, and Situational/ Contingency Theory. Whereas the EST gauges educational institutions in terms of the essential characteristics and methods that enhance the effectiveness of learning institutions in relation to the scholastic attainment of students and a general boost in performance of the school. The Instructional leadership theories on the other hand, together give educational administrators an organized strategy for effectively leading and enhancing the overall quality of schooling. In this perspective, the BTL provides some insight into the procedures that are typically used by school heads to decide how schools could improve. The contingency theory, on the other hand, places more of an emphasis on how well the improvement techniques of school heads complement or it appropriate to their specific environment or school, in contrast to the trait theory, which holds that the personality of school heads is a significant factor in improvement results.

The study utilised a qualitative research approach following an interpretivist philosophy. This aided in exploring understanding from socially construed multiple realities. A case study design was adopted for the study to delve deeper into school improvement practices of the selected schools considered in the study. The population for the study was 40 basic school heads as the total number of basic schools in the municipality under investigation was 40. All 40 heads of basic schools, were targeted for the study bringing the target population to 40 basic school heads. Following Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommendation on sample size, 17 school heads were selected as a representative sample of the population. A purposive sampling technique was then employed to select individual participants of the study. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview employing an interview guide as the data collection instrument. Interviews was conducted in person by the researcher at scheduled time periods with the interviewees. The study was conducted in conformity with standard ethical principles relating to access, confidentiality, anonymity, and transparency. Data analysis was done with thematic analysis using the NVivo as the tool for data analysis. The key findings from the study are as follows;

## **5.2 Key Findings**

On the first research question which sought to investigate the instruction leadership practices basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality exhibit, it was revealed that the basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality exhibited three broad instructional leadership practices: Instructional supervision (see p.85);, Inclusivity Approach (see p.89);, and Managerial and administrative functions (see page 91);. School heads achieved instructional supervision by being actively involved in monitoring and supervising of classroom activities of teachers and by moving around regularly to observe the day-to-day activities that were carried out in their institutions. In terms of

inclusivity approach, head teachers or school leaders effectively collaborated with teachers and other staff members to run the school. In the management and administrative functions, school heads aided in the coordination of teaching, learning as well as teachers' and students' behaviour to ensure the smooth functioning of the school whilst performing their administrative functions which provides a strategic direction for the school.

On the second research question which addressed ways in which basic school head in the Effutu Municipality monitor students' progress, two broad themes; Constant monitoring of classroom (page 96) and Inspection of Lesson notes and Student's workbooks (page 98) were revealed as constant monitoring of classroom activities and inspection of lesson notes and students' workbooks. Constant monitoring of classroom activities involved school heads making regular visits to classrooms to ensure that teachers were present and actively involved in the teaching process. On the other hand, Inspection involved head teachers; regular inspection of teachers' scheme of work and lesson notes as a means of indirectly monitoring students' progress. Similarly, the examination of students' workbooks provided the administrators with the chance to validate the academic progress of the students.

On the third research question, what measures do basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality adopt to ensure a safe and orderly environment for students? it was revealed that the measures that head teachers in the Effutu Municipality adopted where mobilizing support to undertake maintenance and renovation works (page 102) and ensuring a school-parents-community partnership (page 105). Whilst the school heads mobilised funds to resolve infrastructural challenges such as leaking roofs and

crack in walls, they also nurtured a warm partnership between the school, parents and the community in attempts to provide a safe and orderly environment for students.

On the fourth research question which investigated the strategies do basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality employ to create learning opportunities for students, findings revealed four strategies; Activity-Based Learning (see p.109), Ability Grouping see p.110), Access to Learning Materials (see p.113), Assessment (see p.115), and Extra-Curricular Activities (see p.116).

### 5.3 Conclusion

Dwelling on the opinions of the participants and the findings of the research, it is evident that the basic school heads in the Effutu municipality play active role in the improvement of institutions they head. From the preceding discussions, the study concludes that;

- Instructional leadership practices exhibited by basic school heads in the Effutu Municipality, which includes instructional supervision, inclusivity, and management and administrative functions, are aligned with Lezzotes Effective School Theory (*see theory in chapter two, page 11*).
- The specific ways in which basic school heads in the Effutu municipality as revealed in the study, to monitor students' progress are conventional, yet out-dated. Nonetheless, it aligns with the contingency theory (*see chapter two, page 27*) which explains that schools can use the best means as available them or within their confines to achieve their objective.

The tactics implemented by school administrators in the Effutu municipality to guarantee the safety and organisation of pupils were highly successful in acquiring funding for the establishment of a secure educational setting.

Significantly, the aforementioned tactics (see chapter four page pages 102-108) methods mostly centred around the allocation of financial resources, since it has been demonstrated to be a significant barrier in maintaining a secure environment.

- The strategies employed by the basic school heads in creating leaning opportunities for students actually offer opportunities for students to by themselves, from their peers, and from instructors. Additionally, the strategies not only offer opportunity for cognitive development through classroom or mental teaching and learning, but also physical development through extra curriculum activities (see page 116).

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

In the conduct of the study, the researcher encountered limitations in time and finance. Ideally, such a study should include all basic schools in the district to get a comprehensive and generalisable view of school improvement practices in the district. However, owing to the limited time required to complete the study, selected schools were used as a representation of the entire population. To this end 17 out of 40 basic schools were included in this study. Again, including entire population of forty in the study would impose financial burden on the researcher in terms of logistics and other research expenses. Given the constrained budget for the study, the representative sample of 17 was deemed appropriate for the study. It is prudent to note that despite this limitation all study objectives were achieved.

Further, another limitation was encountered in data collection. Given that schools are not concentrated in a single premise the researcher was required to move around to different locations to and schedule interviews with head teachers. Whilst it was costly

moving to schools, it was also difficult in obtaining suitable time for interviews with school heads. Some interviews had to be cancelled and postponed only on the day when the researcher has travelled to the school premise. In some instance, the researcher had to wait for several hours before getting to conduct interviews with some school heads even after scheduling appointment in advance. This was due to the busy schedules of head teachers. Nonetheless, all the interviews were successfully carried out for the purpose of the study.

### **5.5 Recommendations**

The study proffers the following recommendations founded on the findings from the data analysis;

- It emerged from the study that basic school heads often take action part in school administration by regularly moving around to observe the day-to-day activities that are carried out in their institutions. Being overall heads of the school, it would be more appropriate to have more time for strategic involvement than operational involvement. On this score, the study recommends that basic school heads should have well instituted structures which allows teachers to take operational duties and report to the head. The school head here should occasionally and not regularly move around to monitor students and teachers. Rather teachers in charge should regularly report to the schools' heads. This can be achieved by preparing a schedule for 'teachers on duty' on weekly basis.
- Again, it emerged from the study that basic school heads and teachers solely take responsibility of school improvement. Despite having a critical role to play, school improvement should not only be a responsibility of school heads and teachers. On this score it is recommended that parents through PTA in the

municipality are incorporated into school improvement practices. The basic schools periodically organize PTA meetings to meet with parents and involve them in school improvement. Again, Effutu Municipal Education Directorate can institute policies for parental involvement in school improvement through numerous forms for instance funding.

- Also, it emerged from the findings by way of monitoring students' progress; head teachers inspect students' workbooks and also teachers' lesson notes. On this premise, it is recommended that the basic schools should incorporate the use of technology in teaching and learning. Particularly on monitoring, basic schools should develop an internal platform where teachers can upload their lesson notes on weekly basis and schools can assess them intermittently without the presence of the teacher to ensure that the right thing is at all times and not when there is a call for inspection.
- In ensuring a safe and orderly environment for students, it came out that basic school heads rely on community support as well as ensuring a warm relationship with parents especially for infrastructure challenges. On this score it is recommended that whilst school heads continue their partnership with parents, they should put is request for government support through their district education directorate as well as the assembly.

### **5.6 Recommendations for Further Studies**

The current study looked at school improvement practices of basic schools in the Effutu municipality using a qualitative approach. The findings may not be generalisable to other districts as the physical financial and human resources available may differ. By employing the same or a similar approach, future research can also investigate school improvement practices of basic schools in other districts in order to

gain a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of the school improvement practices of basic schools in different districts.

Further, this study placed emphasis on the heads of basic schools. Nonetheless, school improvement practices involve the efforts of both school heads and teachers who are at the fore of the teaching activity. On this score, future studies can focus on the role of teachers in the improvement of basic schools.





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## **APPENDICE(S)**

### **APPENDICE A**

#### **Interview Guide**

#### **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADS IN THE EFFUTU MUNICIPALITY**

##### **Instructional Leadership Practices of Heads**

1. How do you ensure the effectiveness of your school?
2. Would you describe yourself as a strong leader? Why?
3. What is your role as an instructional leader of your school?
4. Please tell me about how you create high academic standards in your school.
5. In what ways do you provide your teachers with sound instructional leadership?
6. What instructional practices do you engage in to improve student performance?
7. What relevant instructional skills do you practice?
8. Do your teachers use a range of approaches during teaching? If Yes, please me about them.
9. How do you promote the culture of collaborative learning during teaching and learning?

##### **Ways of Monitoring Students' Progress**

10. How important is monitoring to you?
11. How often do you carry out monitoring in your school?
12. What procedures do you employ to monitor the performance and progress of pupils, classes, and the school as a whole?
13. Would you say your monitoring mechanisms focus on teaching and learning? Why?
14. Please tell me about some of the benefits of your engagement in the monitoring of pupil achievement and progress.
15. To what extent does your monitoring contribute to the realization of the goals of the school?

### **Ensuring a Safe and Orderly Environment**

16. Do you think the school environment mostly influences students' performance? Why?
17. In your opinion, how does a positive learning environment motivate students to be the best that they can be?
18. How would you describe your school's climate?
19. How do you create and ensure the sustainability of a positive learning environment?
20. Do you partner with the community to promote a safe and orderly environment in your school? If yes, please tell me about it.
21. How do you ensure that your classrooms are designed to accommodate students' learning, social and physical needs?
22. Please tell me about your class sizes.
23. How much time and effort do you invest in creating a positive climate in your school?
24. How supportive are teachers and parents in transforming your school into a positive learning environment?

### **Creation of Learning Opportunities for Students**

25. What strategies do you implement to generate learning opportunities for students?
26. How do you promote deeper learning among students?
27. In what specific ways do you organize instruction to maximise learner initiatives?
28. What measures have you put in place to support students' learning strategies?
29. In what ways do you provide opportunities for students to apply their day-to-day learning?
30. How do you ensure that students possess autonomy and show initiative in learning processes?
31. Do your students get the opportunity to improve competences important for their future career?
32. How do you identify and deal with different student personalities in your school?
33. Do you have any other comments pertaining to this study?

## APPENDICE B

### Introductory Letter



UEW/EAM/INT/27

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2021.

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

We write to introduce **Saratu Abu-Sadat**, a student on the M.Phil Educational Administration and Management programme of the Department of Education Administration and Management.

**Saratu Abu-Sadat**, is currently working on a research project titled:

***“SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES OF BASIC SCHOOL HEADTEACHERS IN THE EFFUTU MUNICIPALITY”.***

Please, give her the necessary assistance and co-operation.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith Bampo".

Dr. Judith Bampo  
Ag. Head of Department