



## **Headteachers Leadership Styles and Students' Academic Performance in Selected Schools in The Ahafo-Ano South District in Ghana**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The goal of this study was to see how the influence of School heads' leadership styles on students' academic achievement in a sample of chosen primary schools in the Ahafo-Ano South region. Three hundred and sixty-six (366) respondents completed a questionnaire, which comprised six (6) head teachers, twenty-four (24) instructors, and three hundred and thirty-six (336) students. The study found out that democratic and transformational leadership were the main styles of leadership that headteachers employed to ensure improvement in the academic performance of students as they gave room for followers (students and teachers) to express themselves and encouraged them to go beyond their self-interest and embrace the school's established objectives. Again, the study found out that about 72 per cent of respondents explained that the leadership style of headteachers greatly influenced students' academic performance. Democratic and transformational leadership styles were the main ones for improving students' academic performance rather than autocratic leadership styles. To ensure effective and appropriate usage of leadership styles and practices in schools, the study recommends compulsory continuous professional development in leadership for headteachers by the Ghana Education Service; teachers should be able to assess and suggest the performance of headteachers in order to keep checks on them on a nearly daily basis; to become a Headteacher, training and other academic achievements should be considered and not only the length of service. Headteachers should identify teachers with potentials for effective and efficient school leadership training and mentorship in their respective schools.

**Keywords:** headteachers' leadership styles, students' academic performance, continuous professional development

## INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, the District Assemblies and District Directors of the Ghana Education Service (GES) oversee quality education by ensuring high academic performance standards for students in the various districts (Kugblenu, 2012). However, schools' academic performance in public education tests, notably at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) level, has not been spectacular in recent times in the Ahafo Ano South area. For instance, in 2009, 1807 students sat for the exam, and only 665 students representing 36.8%, passed. In 2010, 1614 students sat for the exam, and 32.8% passed. In 2011, 1577 students were presented for the exam, and 740, representing 46.9%, passed. In 2012, 1705 students were presented, and 928 students representing 54.4%, passed, which was the best in many years, according to the District Director.

Moreover, the pass rate has kept on falling, as indicated by 43.3 per cent in 2014 and 32.0 per cent in 2015. The District Director of Education for Ahafo Ano South, in his report on the analysis of 2015 BECE results, noted that some schools even got zero (0%) per cent. The falling education standards in Ghana have become a significant concern confronting our society. Various attempts to identify the causes and address them have become a daunting challenge to stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, policymakers, and researchers. The various government policies, such as school feeding programmes, free school uniforms, and capitation grants implemented to promote high academic performance through quality education in Ghana, have not yielded the intended results. Stakeholders have also attempted to halt this trend of poor academic performance through research, injection of instructional materials, teacher quality, remuneration, motivation, and improved discipline, but without much success (Nsubuga, 2009). According to AASDA (2015), the district's BECE performance is below average. Researchers have identified various factors affecting academic performance in schools, including school leadership.

Bass (1985) advanced the transformational leadership theory, a school of thought associated with a contingency. This school of thinking places a higher premium on interpersonal relationships at work, which are inextricably linked to the leader's authentic style and attitude. It refers to the leader's role in modifying employees' attitudes to enhance their commitment to the company. The leader demonstrates empathy for his or her employees, reduces monitoring, and promotes employee involvement. In turn, his employees see him with admiration and excitement from an inspiring standpoint. The personal character of leaders is

their ability to convince and influence their subordinates to work toward the organisation's established objectives. They convert all the people around them into willing followers by using their talents, expertise, beliefs, honesty, and trust. Their efficacy is contingent upon the worker's circumstances. That is, do the circumstances justify the leader's characteristics such as kindness, involvement, and self-control? It will evaluate the leader's emotional and spiritual dimensions and the leader's and employees' physical and mental characteristics, whether they are favourable.

Additionally, they influence the employees' thinking by using their histories. Their knowledge of the cultural traditions of individual employees enables leaders to take them into account, which is particularly important when the group is diverse. Acceptance of the leader by the employees is also critical. The employees' faith and confidence in their leaders result in their acceptance. Consequently, the leader's self-actualisation and acceptance of reliance on others occur. Additionally, the leader may meet the requirements of the employees, i.e., both separate groups' needs. They must balance work requirements, group requirements, and individual requirements.

Transformational leaders are synergistic in that they enhance almost every scenario in which they find themselves since they battle for the organisation's and workers' best interests. Workers have confidence in a leader who demonstrates his or her expertise, efficacy, and outcomes. These factors contribute to employees developing confidence and trust in their boss. Leaders should be laser-focused on achieving their objectives. According to this idea, leaders demonstrate various methods for changing employees, including direct and personal contact with employees. The leaders engage with the employees in a pleasant, face-to-face manner. He listens to them and either solve their issues or engages them in problem-solving techniques. They are approachable, friendly, pleasant, and optimistic in attitude. By promoting employee involvement and distributing responsibilities, leaders demonstrate to employees the critical nature of their contribution to their wellbeing. These leaders elicit emotional responses from their subordinates by striking the appropriate balance between the employees' demands and objectives in every given scenario.

Additionally, these leaders use informal leaders to rein in wayward workers by providing social, emotional, and other support to the informal group, which aids in dealing with troublesome employees. Moreso, the transformational leader, leverages the employees' high degree of excitement and dedication to the objective by demonstrating care for and belief in

the workers' hidden potential by engaging with them and requesting assistance on their behalf. As a result, the transformational paradigm emphasises the connection that the leader cultivates with the employees as they strive toward the established objectives with dedication and passion. Thus, the idea demonstrates that a headteacher (leader) cannot be successful without his or her teachers (workers). It is up to them to earn students' dedication and confidence via the transformational theory's stated methods, thus improving students' academic performance.

To improve students' academic performance, there is the need to examine the roles of the leader in the school (Kugblenu, 2012). Leadership styles and their effects on academic achievement in Ghanaian primary schools were studied. The Ahafo Ano South District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana served as the study's focus.

## **METHODS**

This is exploratory research using a descriptive survey methodology to examine the headteacher's leadership styles and their effect on pupils' academic achievement. In early and exploratory investigations, descriptive survey designs were used to collect data, summarise, present, and analyse it for clarity (Orodho, 2003). Thus, the researchers conducted a descriptive survey to determine the impact of headteachers' leadership styles on students' academic achievement in a sample of chosen Basic Schools in Ghana's Ahafo Ano South District. Six elementary schools were chosen for the study by the researchers. Three hundred and sixty-six respondents were drawn from the six elementary schools. There were six principals, 24 elementary school instructors from 117 teachers, and 336 pupils from 1652 students. To choose teachers and students for the research, simple random selection was used since it ensured that everyone had an equal chance of being chosen and eliminated bias (Opoku, 2002). A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the respondents.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 was used to analyse the collected data. They were first inputted into a spreadsheet file using Epi-Info, a data collection and analysis programme. The Epi-Info interface was identical to the questionnaire and guaranteed that all data were captured entirely and correctly as they appeared on respondent surveys. Also, the Epi-Info software interface was used to eliminate errors in data entry. The statistical method employed was descriptive statistics (percentages) for examination sources, primary leadership styles, and academic achievement in Ahafo Ano South District primary schools. Cross-tabulations were used to elucidate the study's independent variables (leadership styles), mainly the respondents' personal and job profiles. The open-ended

questions from the questionnaire and the interview schedule provided in-depth detailed content and thematic analyses and conclusions drawn.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Leadership Styles of Headteachers

The researcher interrogated the leadership styles employed by headteachers in improving the academic performance of students. The following are the leadership styles as remarked by the study respondents (Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1:** Leadership Styles of Headteachers

Leadership Style	Headteachers		Teachers		Students		Total	
	N= 6	%	N= 24	%	N= 336	%	N= 366	%
Autocratic	0	0.0	4	16.7	10	3.0	14	3.8
Democratic	2	33.3	5	20.8	140	41.7	147	40.2
Transformational	2	33.3	10	41.7	120	35.7	132	36.0
Visionary	1	16.7	2	8.3	25	7.4	28	7.7
Distributed	0	0.0	1	4.2	20	5.9	21	5.7
Servant	1	16.7	2	8.3	21	6.3	24	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field survey, 2017

From Table 1, 4 out of 6 headteachers representing 66.6% hinted that democratic and transformational were the main styles of leadership that headteachers employed to improve students' academic performance. Whereas 10 (41.7%) teachers supported transformational leadership as the main style of ensuring academic improvement, 140 students representing 41.7%, believed that democratic leadership effectively enhances students' performance. They indicated that democratic leadership and transformational leadership styles give room for followers (students and teachers) to articulate themselves and inspire people to go beyond their immediate self-interest in order to advance corporate objectives, as noted by Ross and Gray (2006) and Rautiola (2009). However, 4 (16.7%) teachers and 10 (3%) students stated that autocratic leadership style, when employed by headteachers, produced fear and feeling of insecurity since there is very little communication, coercion and the use of threats and punishment as indicated by Afful-Broni (2004).

**Table 1.2:** The Use of a Particular Leadership Style

Leadership Style	Headteachers		Teachers		Students		Total	
	N= 6	%	N= 24	%	N= 336	%	N= 366	%
Yes	1	16.7	9	37.5	122	36.3	132	36.1
No	5	83.3	15	62.5	214	63.7	234	63.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field survey, 2017

The study also sought to determine whether headteachers needed a particular leadership style to improve students' academic performance. 132 (36.1%) of respondents agreed that the headteachers needed a particular leadership style to improve academic work. They explained that leadership style such as transformational is multidimensional. The leaders become flexible, open-minded, sensitive to other people's needs, encourage sharing and decision-making, and are highly tolerant of diversity. This corroborates Lin's (1999) assertion that regardless of the management style currently employed by headteachers, transformational or facilitative leadership has emerged as an effective leadership style in the current public education system and the only viable method for school restructuring and reform. However, 234 (63.9%) respondents disagreed that headteachers needed a particular leadership style to improve academic work. They highlighted that improving students' academic performance did not need only a particular style of leadership but rather a combination of them so that leaders and followers can collectively achieve the organisation's desired goals.

### **Influence of leadership style on academic performance**

This section examined how headteachers' leadership styles influenced pupils' academic achievement in the Ahafo Ano South District.

**Table 1.3:** Does the leadership style of headteachers affect student academic performance?

Leadership Style	Headteachers		Teachers		Students		Total	
	N= 6	%	N= 24	%	N= 336	%	N= 366	%
Yes	5	83.4	17	70.8	243	72.3	265	72.4
No	1	16.6	7	29.2	93	27.7	101	27.6

Total	6	100.0	24	100.0	336	100.0	366	100.0
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Source: Field Survey, 2017

The study revealed that 5 (83.4%) headteachers and 17 (70.8%) teachers agreed that headteachers' leadership style influenced students' performance. Also, 243 (72.3%) students shared a similar view. Generally, about 265 (72.4%) of the total respondents explained that students' academic performance was greatly influenced by the leadership style practised by the headteachers in discharging their duties. They stated that democratic and transformational leadership styles helped improve students' academic performance more than autocratic leadership styles. This confirmed Achieng (2000) and Kimacia (2007) findings that headteachers rated as democratic and transformational had higher academic performance than autocratic headteachers.

However, 101 (27.6%) respondents revealed that students' academic performance was not solely influenced by leadership styles headteachers practised when discharging their duties. They explained that headteachers could exhibit good practices to ensure improvement in the teaching and learning standards in the school. However, when students were not self-disciplined and determined, the intended results of improving academic performance would not be achieved. They advised that the practice and behaviour of students in the school also needed to be considered to improve their academic performance because teaching and learning become more effective when done concurrently. There was also a correlation between the mean score of national examinations and the number of democratically elected headteachers, as reported by Wangui (2007). While some schools structured the learning process for their students to enhance their performance, others left it up to chance.

## CONCLUSION

The research examined headteachers' leadership styles and the academic performance of primary schools in Ghana's Ahafo Ano South district. The researchers recognised from literature and experience from the leadership styles questionnaire in primary schools in Ahafo Ano South district that headteachers adopted one or more leadership styles. However, the researchers noted that most of them practised the democratic and transformational leadership styles. Also, according to the research, while respondents believed that the headteacher's leadership style could influence academic achievement, students' attitudes and

behaviour needed to be included to provide effective teaching and learn to the children in the district.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the conclusions mentioned above, the following recommendations were consequently made.

1. That compulsory continuous professional development in leadership is institutionalised in the Ghana Education Service for all headteachers at all levels by the Ghana Education Service.
2. Teachers, students, and employees must be motivated concerning wages and material compensation to get excellent academic performance as the free working condition improves performance. As such, the Ghana Education Service should strive to improve the working conditions of teachers and as well provide appropriate learning materials for pupils in all schools.
3. The Ghana Education Service should allow teachers to review and recommend headteachers' performance to ensure that they are held accountable regularly.
4. To become a Headteacher, training and other academic achievements should be considered, not only the service length.
5. Headteachers should identify teachers with potentials for effective and efficient school leadership training and mentorship in their respective schools.
6. Headteachers should collaborate with other teachers to run schools daily since this is a significant influence on academic achievement.



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