

# The Oguaa Educator (*TOE*)

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# The Oguaa Educator (*TOE*)

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# The Oguaa Educator

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## **Editorial Comment**

The Oguaa Educator is a peer reviewed journal that provides the platform for tutors of Colleges of Education, school teachers, headteachers and educational researchers to disseminate their insights into innovative teaching and learning as well as educational leadership practices at the pre-tertiary level. The journal therefore publishes original research on innovative and best practices in teaching and learning in all school subjects as well as school management and leadership. Four (4) well researched topics from seasoned and well experienced academics make up this volume. The articles discuss various issues that relate to curriculum delivery at the school level. They provide great insight into the issues raised, whilst the authors bring their rich and varied backgrounds to bear in their respective articles.

Ernest Ampadu used the survey research design to examine Ghanaian Junior and Senior High School mathematics teachers problem-solving strategies and their professional development needs about problem-solving in the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana. The results of the study showed, amongst others, that, although teachers appreciate the importance of problem-solving in improving mathematics teaching and learning, there has not been the needed problem-solving training to support teachers in this regard. The author provides the implication of the findings of the study for professional learning programmes for mathematics teachers

Ernest Kofi Davis, Mark Owusu Amponsah, Christopher Yaw Kwaah and Christopher Beccles report on a study that draws on conceptualization of levels of curriculum as planned, implemented and attained curriculum to explore the alignment between the planned and implemented English Language, Mathematics and Science curricula in Ghana. The authors used the survey research design to carry out their investigation. The results from their study revealed amongst others that gaps existed between the planned and the implemented English Language, Mathematics and Science curricula. The authors provide implications of the findings from their research for practice, policy and research in Ghana and countries that share similar situation as Ghana.

Donusem Yao Asamoah and Godwin Kwame Aboagye used the survey research design to examine how practical work is integrated into the teaching and learning of physics at the senior high school level in the Volta Region of Ghana. Results from the study showed that though

teachers accept practical work as an essential ingredient for students' understanding of concepts, they are not up-to-date on how practical work should be integrated into the teaching and learning of physics as prescribed by the syllabus for physics. Also, the teaching of practical work is done via group work, hands-on activity, interactive demonstrations, discussion and lecture. The authors recommend the need for teachers to integrate practical work into lessons instead of separating them from theory.

Amadu Musah Abudu reports of a study that examined the effects of curriculum planning activities of heads of senior high schools on students' academic performance in Ghana using a cross-sectional survey research design. The results from the study revealed that of the eight predictors of high academic performance, four predictors emerged as significant. Based on the findings of the study, the author argues that the curriculum leadership roles played by heads of schools contribute to the academic performance of their students directly and recommends that only competent and committed people should be appointed as heads of schools.

**Eric Nyarko-Sampson, PhD**  
**(Editor-in-Chief)**

# **Curriculum Planning Activities of Heads of Schools and Academic Performance of Senior High School Students in the Northern Region of Ghana**

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## **Abstract**

The study examined the effects of curriculum planning activities of heads of senior high schools on students' academic performance in Ghana. The cross-sectional survey design was used in the study. The sample size was 445. The proportionate stratified random and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions. Analysis of data involved the use of binary logistic regression, cross-tabulation and thematic analysis. It was found that of the eight predictors of high academic performance, four predictors emerged as significant. Thus, the study concludes that the curriculum leadership roles played by heads of schools contribute to the academic performance of their students directly. The study recommends that only competent and committed people should be appointed as heads of schools.

**Key words:** School Head, Curriculum Leadership, Academic Performance, curriculum planning, senior high school

## **Introduction**

Leadership is a high priority issue of concern to stakeholders of any organisation (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006). This is because it is the leader who provides the direction regarding what is to be done, how it should be done and eventually, the expected outcomes. According to Bramlett (2010), leadership is the

ability to develop a vision that motivates others to move with a passion. Grimmet (1996) argues that a leader is one who has the capacity to influence others to use their expertise and skills to move an organisation toward established goals as well as assist individuals in adjusting to an organisation's environment.

In an educational institution, leadership rests on the bosom of the head who plays the role of leading and managing the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom. Udoh (2002) contends that the academic performance of students in any educational set up lies mainly with how competent the head of a school is in managing the human, material and financial resources at his/her disposal. In curriculum enactment, heads of institutions of learning are regarded as curriculum leaders. Handler (2010) perceives a curriculum leader as a person who has not only a comprehensive understanding of the pragmatics of curricular design and instructional practice but also a global understanding of education as a societal system to be able to lead the instructional process. By extension, curriculum leadership is a process of encouraging and helping teachers and learners to work enthusiastically toward the realisation of educational outcomes.

Heads of schools, as curriculum leaders, are expected to influence the behaviours of teachers and students, among other stakeholders, to achieve the objectives and goals of their schools. It is, therefore, the role of the head to lead and manage the school curriculum for effective teaching and learning to bring about high the academic performance of students (Musungu & Nasongo, 2008). As a corollary to this, Cole (2002) and Maicibi (2003) have intimated that a school with all kinds of facilities and teachers without a well-informed leader to manage the affairs of the school will not yield good results. Cole (2002) emphasises that even if an institution has all the financial resources to excel, it may perform dismally if the leader does not motivate the rest to accomplish their task effectively. Maicibi (2003) concludes that if heads of schools fail to play their roles in leading and managing curriculum enactment, student performance cannot be realised, though the school may have all the needed instructional materials and financial resources.

Accordingly, Dunklee (2000) also indicates that the differences in student behaviour and academic outcomes are influenced *inter alia* by the head. This is so because the activities of the school are determined by what the head does. In an organisation like the school,

students and teachers tend to live up to the image of the head because no school is highly performing without an effective and efficient head (Ramsey, 1999). Buttressing this claim, Dunklee (2000) contends that head influences everyone else's behaviour: his or her values are contagious, his or her good sense of ethics instils respect and trust in the system.

Based on this, Tshabalala and Khosa (2014) argue that people and for that matter parents, place a very high premium on curriculum leadership roles of heads of schools as these culminate in the quality of teaching and learning as well as student success. Consequently, parents will not send their wards to schools perceived to be performing poorly. Rather, they will seek for schools known for their high quality of teaching and learning. Quality learning, therefore, is about how students can use the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired in all spheres of the economy. However, quality learning does not come about like manna from heaven. It is brought about deliberately through effective leadership (Tshabalala & Khosa, 2014).

In this regard, it is important that students are connected to a curriculum that provides opportunities for them to be able to learn what is taught, how it is taught, and how it applies to the world at large. The promotion of healthy development of all students, as well as enabling all students to reach their full potential is a priority for schools in developing countries and across the world for which the head of the school is entirely responsible (Departments of Education of New Brunswick, 2005). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2009) posits that students' academic performance is link to quality leadership. This requires leaders to acquire new knowledge, competencies and attitudes to be able to play their roles effectively.

To this end, heads of senior high schools (SHSs) in Ghana play key roles in the delivery of quality instruction in the classroom with implications on student performance. According to Ghana Education Service [GES] (2010), one of the responsibilities of heads of senior high schools involve ensuring that the school has qualified teaching staff and adequate teaching and learning materials to be able to enact the school curriculum efficiently and effectively for the achievement of the desired goals of education. The head of a senior high school is also responsible for making sure that appropriate instructional strategies are in place that support effective learning for all students (Darling-Hammond,

LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007). To attain such a goal, the head of senior high school needs to manifest curriculum leadership by having a working knowledge of effective instructional strategies and understanding the needs of his/her teachers and students to be able to lead the instructional process effectively. To sum up the roles, Oyedeji and Fasasi (2006) intimated that the head of a school is responsible for all that happens in the school.

The interest in the relationship between curriculum leadership roles of a head of a school and students' academic performance is because of the desire of policy makers to reduce the persistent disparities in students' achievement among educational institutions, and their belief that school leaders play a vital role in doing so (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). In spite of the relevance of heads of schools' curriculum leadership roles in the enactment of the school curriculum, Blase and Blase (2000) asserted that only a few studies have focused on heads of schools' everyday curriculum leadership roles and their impact on learning. Most studies on the academic performance of students have tied such performance to socioeconomic status, parents' educational level, single parenting, student attitudes to learning, school environmental factors, housing and residential experience (Abdallah, Fuseini, Abudu & Nuhu, 2014; Abudu & Fuseini, 2013). Equally, studies linking heads of SHS curriculum enactment roles to academic performances are limited in Ghana. Yet, the role of the head of a school is to promote academic performance (Musungu & Nasongo, 2008). Additionally, academic performance at the SHS in the Northern Region from 2014 to 2016 has lagged behind that of the national level even though the national figures are quite appalling as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: West African Senior School Certificate Examination Performance Statistics for the Core Subjects**

Subjects		2014		2015		2016	
		GRADES A1-C6		GRADES A1-C6		GRADES A1-C6	
		Northern Region	National	Northern Region	National	Northern Region	National
English	No	3,171	108,633	4,551	135,186	5,315	145,869
Language	%	17.8	45.2	19.5	50.29%	20.9	53.19
Integrated	No	2,000	68,965	2,398	63,520	5,567	132,953
Science	%	11.2	28.7	10.2	23.63%	22	48.48
Mathematics	No	2,001	77,882	1,796	67,983	3,110	90,034
(Core)	%	11.2	32.4	7.7	25.29%	12.4	32.83
Social	No	6,846	137,714	5,674	139,352	7,371	150,669
Studies	%	38.6	57.4	24.3	51.84%	29.1	54.93

Source: West African Examination Council, Headquarters, Accra

It is against this backdrop that this study examines the influence of heads of SHS enactment of the curriculum in the Northern Region of Ghana on students’ academic performance.

**Research Questions**

1. What roles do heads of SHS play in teachers’ planning of activities for the enactment of curriculum in the classroom?
2. How do the curriculum leadership roles of heads of SHS in Northern Region of Ghana affect students’ academic performance?

**Literature Review**

The situational leadership theory (Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory) proposes that leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational conditions or circumstances (Graeff, 1997; Grint, 2011; Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololub, 2015). Thus, an effective leader adapts his or her style to the demands of a situation (Sevkusic et al., 2014). The claim of this theory is that different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for different types of decision-making (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Bass, 1990). This is because people’s skills and motivation differ over time and leaders should change the degree to which they are directive or supportive (Bass, 1990; Sevkusic et al., 2014). According to Sevkusic et al. (2014), leaders must first identify

the willingness to perform given tasks and apply the most appropriate leadership style to fit the given situation. This is what is referred to as situational theory.

This theory argues that a successful leader is one who is able to take a decision based on the situation (Team FME, 2015). McCleskey (2014) indicates that the situational leadership theory describes leadership style and stress the need to relate the leader's style to the maturity level of the followers. McCleskey adds that the theory portrays effective leadership as contingent on follower maturity. Yukl (2010) points out that a high-maturity subordinate has both the ability and confidence to do a task, whereas a low-maturity subordinate lacks ability and self-confidence. As such, the theory promotes flexible leaders that are able to match their style to the experience and ability of those they are leading (Khan et al., 2016; Team FME, 2015). This calls for the leader to change their style to the abilities of their followers (Penn, n.d.).

Some researchers have pointed out that heads of schools' leadership in curriculum enactment take three forms, namely: directly, indirectly and reciprocally (Hallinger & Heck, 1999; UNESCO, 2009). According to Hallinger and Heck (1999), learning-centred leaders directly influence school outcomes, some leaders affect outcomes indirectly through other variables and finally, leaders influence reciprocally. This is when the leader affects teachers, teachers affect the leaders, and through these processes, students' outcomes are affected. However, Bendikson, Robinson and Hattie (2012) have stated that heads of schools' instructional leadership can be direct (focused on improving teaching) or indirect (focused on creating the conditions for optimal teaching and learning). Bendikson, Robinson and Hattie add that in secondary schools, heads of schools are more likely to focus on indirect instructional leadership than they are in primary schools because heads of secondary school work through heads of department.

In terms of direct instructional planning roles, literature suggest that heads of schools perform this role by supplying teachers with teaching and learning materials, going through teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans and ensuring that teachers use appropriate teaching strategies to influence students' learning and subsequently students' performance (Cuban, 1985; Garner & Bradley, 1991; Grimmitt, 1996). In this regard, Cuban (1985) said that the very origin of the position of the head, heads of schools were teaching and helping

teachers improve their instruction. This, however, is beginning to disappear as only a few heads of schools continue to take over classes when a substitute fails to show up or to teach a demonstration lesson.

Vidoni and Grasseti (2008) adduced that heads of schools' engagement in curriculum planning take the form of time spent on instructional issues entailing teaching, supervising teachers, and instructional leadership (i.e., giving demonstration lessons, discussing educational objectives with teachers, and initiating curriculum revision). Garner and Bradley (1991) have indicated that during the instructional process the heads of schools play an assisting role by helping teachers to select instructional materials and equipment as well as to construct evaluative instruments. Olembo (1992) also suggested that the provision of quality education requires that heads of schools be involved in reducing the subject matter and educational objectives into viable instructional materials within the classroom. For Nike (2014), the roles of the head of a school include coordinating curricular activities such as the scheme of work, lesson notes, and continuous assessment towards achieving high academic performance. These activities go to support the fact that heads of schools participate directly in curriculum enactment in the classroom.

Regarding the indirect role heads of schools engage in curriculum planning, the literature shows that they do that through creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning. For instance, the Wallace Foundation (2012) has indicated that shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement are tasks performed by school heads. In a similar vein, Robinson (2007) pointed out that curriculum leadership entails establishing goals and expectations, strategic resourcing, planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, promoting and participating in teacher learning and development, and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

Furthermore, in-service training provision came up as one of the ways through which the heads of schools participate in curriculum planning (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Garner & Bradley, 1991; Grimmett, 1996; New Leaders for New Schools, 2010; Trump, 1981). In connection with this, Trump (1981) stated that heads of schools should make sure that in-service programmes address areas of teachers'

concern. Blasé and Blasé (1999) on the other hand, reported that heads of schools execute the curriculum leadership roles by talking with teachers to promote reflection, making suggestions, giving feedback, modelling, promoting professional growth, supporting collaboration among teachers, developing coaching relationships among teachers, encouraging and supporting redesign of programmes and implementing action research to inform instructional decision making. Other researchers (Farnham, 2000; Hoffman, 1996; Meltzer & Sherman, 1997) have shown that heads of schools participated in curriculum enactment by encouraging teachers to be creative and to apply technology when teaching. This indicates that through in-service training of teachers, the heads of schools are able to participate in the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom.

Other roles that head of schools play in planning activities for curriculum enactment include gathering and dispersing information, scheduling classes, grouping of students, completing reports, and dealing with the conflict between varied participants (Cuban, 1985; Trump, 1981). In the same vein, Vidoni and Grasseti (2008) noted that the head of a school spends time on non-instructional issues consisting of internal administrative tasks, representing the school in the community, representing the school in official meetings, talking with parents, counselling and disciplining students, and responding to education officials' requests. The heads of schools do this to pave the way for the school to run effectively. The literature on effective schools also shows that effective heads of schools are more powerful over making decisions regarding curriculum and instruction planning than those in ineffective schools (Leithwood, Strauss & Anderson, 2007).

Emphasising the importance of monitoring, Yang (2014) opines that heads of schools need to monitor more when the teachers are not very reliable or when the classes have bad performance. Yang claims that monitoring can significantly explain some of the variations in students WASSCE test scores in 2011. It is on this basis that De Grauwe (2001) asks national authorities to hold heads of schools accountable for any laxity in the monitoring of the enactment of the school curriculum. Many researchers (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Musaazi, 1985; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2002) believe that monitoring of the enactment of the curriculum in the classroom has the potential of improving classroom practices, and contributing to student success through the professional growth and improvement of teachers. Levine and Lezotte

(1990) concur this assertion and indicate that personal monitoring of school progress by the head of a school has been shown as a predictor of students' achievement. Consequently, most researchers (Elmore, 2000; Fink & Resnick, 2001; McCallum, 1999) are of the view that heads of schools who routinely visit and observe the interactions between the teacher and the learner in the classroom, participate in team planning of curricular activities, and pay close attention to student performance within their school will eventually lead to high academic performance of students.

Boggan (2014) finds in a study that monitoring and evaluation is one of the most important leadership practices. For Marzano et al. (2005), out of 21 identified leadership responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation emerge a statistically significant factor. Hatta (2009) points out that the monitoring of student progress, maintaining high visibility, developing and enforcing academic standards are some of the roles played by the head of a school. Similarly, Musungu and Nasongo (2008) indicate that the head of a school's instructional role included regular checking of teachers' professional records, regular class supervision, and management plan for carrying out curriculum goals.

Another related role that the head of a school plays that has an influence on students' outcomes is the professional development of teachers. Staff development is not just for beginning teachers but also even for those who are experienced. According to Petrie and McGee (2012), a professional development programme for teachers is recognised as a key vehicle that has consequential effect on how teachers teach and, in turn, influence student achievement. These teacher professional development support services may include induction programmes, a delegation of duties, motivational activities, and training and workshop programmes (Knezevich, 1984). The most effective head of a school is the one who can motivate and sustain teachers to put up their best even under deplorable conditions (Rebore, 1992). Researchers (Cheng, 1994; Evans, 1999; Sergiovanni, 1993) are of the view that though it is teacher performance that directly affects student performance, quality of leadership matters in determining the motivation of teachers and the quality of their teaching. It is on this basis that Range (1977) and Garner and Bradley (1991) called upon heads of schools to assist in the professional development of their teaching staff. This has become necessary because of the need to improve academic performance in schools as the performances in many

schools are on the decline (Garner & Bradley, 1991). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and *New Leaders for New Schools* (2010) have noted that effective school leaders establish conditions that support teachers' professional growth, offer intellectual stimulation, encourage reflection and challenge their staff to examine assumptions about their work, and provide information and resources to help people see discrepancies between current and desired practices.

Some studies have found that heads of schools' leadership have a positive impact on teachers' professional development (Shabaan & Qureshi, 2006; Wallace Foundation, 2012). The study by Wallace Foundation (2012) showed a strong relationship between the head of a school's leadership and the professional development of teachers, though this had an indirect effect on student' academic performance. Similarly, Shabaan and Qureshi (2006) reported that the experiences of carrying out leadership tasks through their involvement in the process of planning and developing different activities for teacher development had a positive impact on teachers' work.

One of the key roles the head of a school plays in the enactment of the curriculum is the provision of support services to students that would contribute to the excellent performance of students. Waweru and Orodho (2013) posit that the head of a school should provide the best school climate to entice students to complete schooling by making school free from violence, threats, intimidations, hatred, and witch-hunting and develop rich co-curriculum, remedial interventions for slow learners to avoid repetition, frustration and dropout. The head of a school should take up their roles as quality assurance officers in their schools and ensure that there is adequate departmental supervision (Mobegi, Ondigi & Oburu, 2010). Lydiah and Nasongo (2009) observe that the heads of schools' use of quality improvement measures influenced results of schools.

According to Bush (2007), there was great interest in curriculum leadership in the early part of the 21st century because of the widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes. Robinson (2007) reports that school leadership promoting learning tends to have a large effect on students' outcome. Witziers, Bosker and Krüger (2003) reported that while the overall impact of leadership on students was negligible, they discovered that the direction-setting role of the leader had more impact that is direct on student outcomes. Contrarily, Heck et al. (1990),

acknowledge that the head of a school behaviours aimed at improving student achievement does not have the same direct impact on learners as do instruction by the classroom teacher. Quinn (2002) concludes that since heads of schools are removed from the classroom, they can only influence student achievement indirectly by working through teachers.

## **Methodology**

The study employed a mixed methods research design. Mixed methods enquiry merges qualitative and quantitative research approaches (Creswell, 2003; Zohrabi, 2013). The strategy allows the usage of numerous approaches in answering research questions instead of limiting researchers' choices (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which serves as the motivation for its use. Moreover, it permits the combination of methods to enhance the validity and reliability of the data and their explanation of the effects of heads curriculum roles on students' academic performance (Zohrabi, 2013). A cross-sectional study design guided the study. The cross-sectional survey refers to a type of study design that produces a "snapshot of a population at a particular point in time" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 213). Kumar (2009) concurs and adds that a cross-sectional survey is the kind of study design that is best suited to finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon or problem by taking a cross-section of the population. It was, therefore, appropriate to use this design to collect data about current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices from heads of schools and teachers at one time to facilitate the determination of the relationship between curriculum leadership and student academic performance.

The sample size which comprised 445 teachers was arrived at using Yamane's (1967) statistical method, which is:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

where n = the desired sample size?; N = the population size (1230); and e = the acceptable sampling error (.05). In selecting the sample for my study, I set criteria for eligibility and those schools, which qualified and accepted to participate in the study, were selected. I set two eligibility criteria for the selection of the schools. One was based on the number of years the head of a school had served in the school. For a school to qualify for selection, the head of the school should have served for more than four years at the time data collection commenced. This is because a person posted to head a school needs one or more academic years to

be able to understand the ethos of the school. It will also enable him/her to understand curriculum leadership roles and be well exposed to the challenges of the job as a head. The second criterion was acceptability. It is a fact that a study can be undertaken at a place where the people have agreed and willing to give information about the phenomenon been studied. The public SHSs in Ghana are put into three categories according to performance and availability of facilities (GES, 2010). They, therefore, exist in strata: Category 1, Category 2 and Category 3. In this study area, there were 31 schools under Category 1, 5 schools under Category 2, and 4 in Category 3. At the time of the study, all the heads of schools in Categories 2 and 3, had served for more than four years and the heads of Category 1 who had served for more than four years were 10. This shows that out of the 40 SHSs in the Northern Region, only 19 SHSs met the criteria I set for my study. I selected six from the 10 SHSs. The reason being that all the 10 SHSs in Category 1 have similar characteristics and are likely to give the same responses. The population of teachers in each of the categories is 527 for category 1, 356 for category 2 and 345 for category 3.

The teachers were selected using proportionate stratified simple random sampling. The stratification was based on the type of school category (i.e., category 1 high performing schools; category 2 average performing schools; and category 3 less performing schools). This was done to ensure that each school category had a representation in the sample. Consequently, the sample distribution was 191 for category 1, one hundred and twenty-nine respondents for category 2 and 125 respondents constituted the sample for category 3 SHS. For the heads of the SHS, six of them were selected using purposive sampling as they had adequate knowledge of the effects of their curriculum leadership roles on their students' academic performance in their schools.

Data were collected via questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion. The teachers responded to issues on the questionnaire, which covered the acceptability of heads performance of curriculum planning roles; linkage between heads' curriculum leadership roles and academic performance; and the extent to which heads of schools curriculum leadership roles contribute to the academic performance of students. The heads of the SHS also responded to similar issues on the key informant interview guide. Data were collected from 1st to 30th October, 2019. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. The quantitative data was inputted into

Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS Version 21) before the analysis entailing utilisation of descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations and binary logistic regression were done. For the qualitative data, its analysis was manual, and it involved the application of thematic analysis.

Data was collected on four-point Likert type scale. However, in the analysis of the data, the four-point was reduced to a dichotomous. This is to ensure easy calculation and interpretation.

**Results and Discussion**

The section presents results and discussion on the effects of curriculum leadership roles played by heads of schools on students’ academic performance in SHS in the Northern Region of Ghana. The particular issues presented here cover heads involvement in curriculum planning, linkage of curriculum leadership roles to academic performance and effects of heads’ curriculum leadership roles on academic performance.

**Heads Involvement in Curriculum Planning**

Heads of SHS are expected as leaders of the institutions to perform certain curriculum planning activities. On this account, the respondents were asked to indicate the curriculum planning activities the heads of their schools carry out. The details of these results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Teachers’ Perception about Head Teachers’ Curriculum Planning**

Curriculum Planning Roles	Response Category			Total (%)
	SA/A	U	D/SD	
The head of my school participates with teachers to develop termly scheme of work.	231(51.9)	55 (12.4)	159(35.7)	100
The head of my school participates with teachers to develop lesson plans.	189(42.4)	48 (10.8)	208(46.7)	100
The head of my school participates with teachers and students in the	153(34.3)	67(15.1)	225(50.6)	100

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construction of teaching/learning materials.				
The head of my school distributes and directs practice in the use of instructional materials for effective curriculum delivery	216(48.5)	60(13.5)	169(38.0)	100
The head of my school helps teachers locate reference books, journals and other learning resources.	205(46.1)	62(13.9)	178(40.0)	100
The head of my school helps teachers to develop test items.	176(39.6)	66(14.8)	203(45.6)	100
The head of my school helps teachers to organise appropriate learning experiences properly for students.	281(63.2)	32(7.2)	132(29.6)	100

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Source: Field Data (2016) N=445 Note: SA/A=strongly agree/agree; U=undecided; D/SD=disagree/strongly disagree

As shown in Table 2, out of the seven curriculum planning roles of the head, four of them were supported by a modal group or majority of the respondents as they *strongly agreed or agreed* (SA/A) on them. Specifically, of the 445 respondents, 31.9 percent SA/A that the heads of their schools participate with teachers to develop termly schemes of work, 48.5 percent of the respondents stated that the heads of their schools distribute and direct practice in the use of instructional materials for effective curriculum delivery, and 46.1 percent SA/A that the heads of their schools help teachers locate reference books, journals and other learning resources. Also, over three-fifth (63.2%) of respondents' SA/A stated that the heads of their schools help teachers to organise appropriate learning experiences properly for students.

Similarly, both the focus group discussants and key informants noted that heads of their schools participate in the development of schemes of work of teachers as they vet them. It equally emerged that heads of schools distribute and direct the usage of teaching and learning aids as well as assist in locating reference materials for teachers. For

instance, in one of the focus group discussions (20th October, 2019) a respondent said ‘the head of our school normally vets our scheme of work and make his inputs’. Also, a Key Informant (19th October, 2019) noted, ‘I assist teachers to organise materials they are going to deliver to students through the vetting of their lesson plans and examination of the scheme of work’. Another respondent said ‘heads involvement in teachers’ development of schemes of work and directing on usage of teaching and learning materials will ensure that areas covered by teachers in their lessons are comprehensive and feasible. It will again ensure that students understand better what is taught in the class as lessons are accompanied with teaching and learning aids’.

Nonetheless, a modal group or majority of the respondents also *strongly disagreed or disagreed* (SD/D) that some curriculum planning roles were performed by their school heads. Particularly, 46.7 percent SD/D that the heads of their schools participate with them to develop their lesson plans; over half (50.6%) SD/D that the heads of their schools participate with them and students in the construction of teaching/learning materials and 45.6 percent SD/D that the heads of their schools help teachers to develop test items. The limited or lack of execution of the roles mean that lessons that might have deficiency will not be noticed and that test items set might not be of standard. Also, the teachers might use inappropriate or may altogether not employ teaching and learning materials where such materials are not available, and they cannot be improvised. Students will be negatively affected as they would not easily understand lessons delivered. However, the focus group discussion and key informant interviews revealed that heads of schools assist teachers in the development of their lesson plans and in the construction of teaching and learning materials.

Heads’ engagement in curriculum planning is approached from a general perspective and later disaggregated based on school category, which is finally followed by the reasons for the position taken. From respondents’ general perspective on the acceptability of heads of schools’ involvement in the planning of activities for the instruction of the curriculum, the results showed that out of the 445 respondents, over two-thirds (82.6%) of them noted it was acceptable while 17.4 percent of them indicated it was not acceptable. This illustrates that most of the respondents supported heads of schools’ participation in the planning of activities for instruction. The disaggregation of the results according to school category is in Table 3.

**Table 3: Acceptability of Heads' Involvement in Planning of Activities for the Enactment of Curriculum by Category of SHS**

Category of SHS	Acceptability of Heads' Involvement in the Planning of Activities for the Enactment of the Curriculum				Total	
	Acceptable		Not acceptable		N	%
	N	%	N	%		
1	168	88.0	23	12.0	191	100
2	101	78.3	28	21.7	129	100
3	102	81.6	23	18.4	125	100
Total	371	82.6	74	17.4	445	100

It is shown in Table 3 that of the 191 respondents in category 1 SHS, more than two-thirds (88%) of them stated that it was acceptable for heads to be involved in the planning of activities for the instruction of the curriculum. Equally, the results in category 2 schools reveal that about 78 percent of the respondents indicated that it was acceptable for heads to be involved in the planning of activities for the instruction of the curriculum. The results also illustrate that more than two-thirds (81.6%) of the 125 respondents in category 3 SHS said that it was acceptable for heads to be involved in the planning of activities for the instruction of the curriculum. Generally, a majority of the respondents in all the three SHS categories defended the need for heads of schools' involvement in planning activities for the instruction of the curriculum. Respondents adduced varied reasons for their standpoints on the heads involvement in curriculum planning. Those that noted it was acceptable for heads to get involved in curriculum planning advanced that the assistance got from the heads of schools help them address some of their professional deficiencies, heads of schools know much about the school environment, and heads personal interaction with students help them to know their problems and to address them. Furthermore, heads of schools should be involved because they are aware of those activities that would benefit students and it would ensure that teachers go by the syllabus. The rest is that it enables heads of heads to make informed decisions, ensure effective teaching and learning as well as ensure effective and judicious use of instructional time. The key informants shared similar sentiments. On the contrary, those respondents that did not support heads' engagement in curriculum planning activities

indicated that it was an intrusion of their privacy and that it suggested their competence was in doubt.

**Linkage of Curriculum Leadership Roles to Academic Performance**

Previous research shows that there is uncertainty as to head’s curriculum leadership role relationship with academic performance. This is because while some argue it has a direct nexus with the academic performance, others rather think it has an indirect linkage. As heads of schools perform their curriculum leadership role, it is vital to ascertain the kind of effects they have on academic performance of students. Relating to the heads of schools’ curriculum leadership roles linkage with the academic performance, the results illustrate that a little more than three-fifths (62.9%) of the respondents said it had direct effect, 13.3 percent were *not sure* of the effects on the academic performance of students whereas the rest (23.8%) noted it had an indirect effect. These results depict that heads of schools’ curriculum leadership roles have a direct connection with the academic performance of students. Therefore, heads must execute their roles properly to achieve the desired impact. The finding corroborates that of Hallinger and Heck (1999) and Bendikson et al. (2012) that heads of schools’ curriculum leadership roles have a direct linkage with student’s academic performance.

Concerning the disaggregation of heads of schools’ curriculum leadership roles linkage with academic performance according to school category, the results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Category of SHS by Heads of schools’ Roles Linkage to Academic Performance**

Category of SHS	Head’s roles linkage with academic performance						Total	
	Direct		Indirect		Not sure		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1	113	59.2	24	12.6	54	28.3	191	100
2	81	62.8	24	18.6	24	18.6	129	100
3	86	68.8	11	8.8	28	22.4	125	100
Total	280	63.6	59	13.3	106	23.1	445	100

The results in Table 4 show that irrespective of the school category nearly three-fifth of the respondents acknowledged that heads

of schools' curriculum leadership roles have a direct effect on the academic performance of students. This implies that heads of schools must take their curriculum leadership roles seriously, as the non-performance of their roles might cause poor academic performance of students in their schools.

While some of the respondents advanced reasons supporting that curriculum leadership roles of the heads of schools had a direct linkage with the academic performance, others presented reasons to refute that claim. In terms of those that noted that curriculum leadership roles have direct linkage with academic performance they said this was because heads of schools monitor teaching and learning, heads of schools ensure that teachers were present in school and actually teach, and they provide teaching and learning materials. Additionally, curriculum leadership roles have a direct connection with academic performance because the heads of schools give pep talks to students, they organise fora for students to meet with chief examiners and they create a conducive environment for effective learning to take place and because heads constantly remind under-performing teachers that they would be released for reposting. These presupposed that heads of schools have a direct contact with the student in the lesson delivery process. The remaining reasons are that heads are passionate about students' academic performance, they provide advice to both teachers and students, organise in-service training for teachers, and ensure discipline. Key informants held related views. For instance, a key informant (17th October, 2019) has indicated that "I spend between 50 to 80 percent of my time on the academic work of my students." This illustrates that heads spend a lot of time directly working on issues that will improve the academic performance of their students.

As regards those that noted that curriculum leadership roles have no direct linkage with the academic performance they put forth different reasons. The respondents claimed that heads of schools do not teach in the classroom, so they have no direct contact with the students and as such, their roles cannot have a direct linkage with academic performance of students, but that it is the teachers' roles that have direct connection with students' academic performance as they are in direct contact with them. It was further indicated that heads of schools were noted for not monitoring teachers and students, did not motivate teachers, and showed lack of interest in disciplinary issues of the students. As a result, heads of schools cannot have a direct linkage with

academic performance. These reasons tend to illustrate that curriculum leadership cannot be totally noted to have a direct effect on academic performance. Wallace Foundation (2012) and Robinson (2007) advanced similar reasons.

**Effects of Heads’ Curriculum Leadership Roles on Academic Performance**

With academic performance at the SHS in Ghana being appalling, it becomes crucial to identify the extent to which the curriculum leadership roles of the heads contribute to academic performance. In order to examine if heads of schools’ curriculum leadership roles predicted performance in the WASSCE, a binary logistic regression was conducted using eight predictor variables. The predictor variable included heads of schools’ involvement in the planning of activities, heads of schools’ monitoring of teachers’ lesson delivery, heads of schools’ monitoring of students learning, heads of schools’ monitoring of teaching and learning, heads of schools’ motivation of teachers, heads of schools’ promotion of teachers professional development, heads of schools’ provision of student support services, and learning environment created by heads of schools. When all eight predictor variables were considered together in the model, they significantly predicted high academic performance in WASSCE ( $\chi^2 = 42.249$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $n = 445$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

The Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> value of .17 suggests that about 17 percent of the variation in students’ academic performance in WASSCE is accounted for by the eight predictor variables in the model. Of the eight predictors in the model, only four emerged significant. These included heads of schools’ involvement in planning of activities, heads of schools’ monitoring of teachers’ lesson delivery, heads of school’ monitoring of students learning and learning environment created by the heads of schools. These four variables affect academic performance of students as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Logistic Regression Predicting Academic Performance in WASSCE**

Variable	B	SE	Odds ratio/Exp(B)	P
Head’s involvement in planning of activities	-1.200	.359	.301	.001*

Head's monitoring of teachers' lesson delivery	1.158	.429	3.182	.007*
Head's monitoring of students learning	-.967	.469	.380	.039*
Head's monitoring of teaching and learning	-.775	.492	.461	.115
Head's motivation of teachers	.389	.532	1.476	.465
Head's promotion of teachers' professional development	.024	.474	1.025	.959
Head's provision of student support services	-.049	.476	.952	.917
Learning environment created by head	-.910	.373	.402	.015*
Constant	3.105	.333	22.310	.000*

Cox and Snell  $R^2 = .09$ ; Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .17$ ;  $\chi^2 = 42.249$ ;  $df = 8$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $n = 445$

Similarly, one of the heads stated that the curriculum leadership roles of the heads of schools contribute to the academic performance of their students. For example, headmaster (12th October, 2019) stated, "my roles in ensuring effective teaching and learning in the school have for a long time raised the academic performance of the students." This signifies that the performance of curriculum planning roles by the heads of schools contributes to academic performance. As such, heads of schools must show a high level of commitment in the performance of these roles. The finding that heads curriculum leadership role contribute to students' academic performance is consistent with that made by Leithwood et al. (2007), Dambudzo (2013) and Yang (2014)

### Conclusions and Policy Implications

Generally, a majority of the respondents supported heads of schools' participation in the planning of activities for instruction and the same finding emerged from all the school categories. The prime reasons for accepting heads of schools' involvement in the planning of activities for instruction in the classroom included heads helping to tackle professional deficiencies of teachers and using their personal interaction with students to address student-related challenges.

Equally, it surfaced that heads of SHSs schools' curriculum leadership roles have a direct linkage with students' academic performance and similar views were held in all the school categories. Finally, heads of SHSs' curriculum leadership roles were able to account for 17 percent of the variation in students' academic performance in WASSCE, thereby, illustrating that heads' roles are critical factors influencing academic performance.

Since heads of schools' curriculum leadership roles largely have a direct connection with students' academic performance, it is critical that the kind of person that is selected to head a school has all the necessary qualification and competence to handle such a position. Such appointed heads must be given regular in-service training to keep them abreast with current issues. This is because only a competent and committed head will be able to discharge his/her duties diligent to achieve the academic performance desired by the school. In addition, as heads of schools' curriculum leadership roles play a vital role in the academic performance of students, this variable should, therefore, be given prominence when factors influencing academic performance are considered. When issues of heads curriculum leadership roles are taken into account when addressing issues of poor academic performance, it will help to ensure that a comprehensive approach, which is workable, is arrived at.

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