

Empowering Teachers in Ghanaian Basic Schools: Prospects and Challenges

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ABSTRACT: Whilst teacher empowerment is not new in literature, it appears that its practice is novel to many head teachers of basic schools in Ghana. The study sought to investigate the prospects and challenges of teacher empowerment in Ghanaian Basic Schools. Using the convergent parallel design, a total of 282 teachers were randomly sampled from 32 basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana for the study. Whereas all 282 teachers answered the structured questionnaires, six (6) of them were further sampled to provide responses for the semi-structured interviews. The study revealed that the extent of teacher empowerment in the basic school is high. With regard to the prospects of teacher empowerment, the study established that teacher empowerment makes teachers more effective and helps to create the school's vision for students' success. The study further found that the main challenges facing teacher empowerment include: the hierarchical school structures, lack of trusts for teachers and favouritism from the part of head teachers. In view of the findings, the study recommended that head teachers of the basic schools should trust and respect teachers, support staff development and teachers' decisions. Additionally, head teachers of the basic schools should allocate adequate time for the development of collaborative relationships among teachers.

KEY WORDS: *Empowerment, teacher, head teacher, basic school*

I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher empowerment is one of the key ingredients in school reformation (Afful-Broni, 2004, Hirsch, Emerick, Church & Fuller, 2006). Teacher empowerment can be defined as teacher autonomy to make decisions (McGraw, 1992), to make professional judgments regarding teaching (Bolin, 1989), and to have a professional voice (Simon, 1987). It is further seen as promoting collegiality, providing quality professional learning, and acknowledging the impact that teachers have on students' academic life (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005). Teachers who are empowered are classroom-based professionals who have been given the mandate by the school leader to create and improvise their teaching and learning materials, administer their own lessons as well as evaluate students' performance. According to Bogler and Somech (2004), teacher empowerment is premised on the belief that teachers have both the skills and knowledge to improve the conditions in which they work.

Studies (Lintner, 2008; Jacobs, 2014) have shown that when classroom-based teachers are empowered, they claim ownership of their own professional development which eventually improves schools. The nature of Ghanaian basic schools requires head teachers and other school leaders to invest in teachers the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and the right to exercise professional judgment about the content of the curriculum and means of instruction. This means that teaching is fundamentally a moral activity, and as such, it requires teachers to have expertise to engage in thoughtful deliberations and professional authority to participate meaningfully in decisions about the school and their classroom.

Despite the benefits associated with school empowerment, research seem to indicate that basic school teachers in Ghana are least empowered in their schools (Dampson, 2015 & 2017, Dampson, Antor, Eshun, 2018). For instance, in the United States of America, a study conducted by Jacobs (2014) revealed that apart from creating a positive school culture, the head teachers do not empower the teachers in principal training, principal leadership and teacher leadership. In Jordan, a study conducted by Hamadneh (2016) revealed that teachers are highly empowered. On the other hand, Al-Mahdi's (2007) study established that the level of teacher empowerment was moderate in Egypt. Whereas in Kenya, Kimwaley, Chirure, and Omondi (2014) intimate that head teachers need to empower teachers with the right knowledge, skills, attitudes and development of competence that would enable the teachers to respond adequately to challenging and demanding needs of the modern society. This demands that teacher empowerment should be a continuous process where individuals are developed, a journey where people gain lifelong experiences which would enable them exercise power over their own practices and circumstances. Nonetheless, the level at which basic school teachers in Kenya are

empowered is very low. In Ghana, it appears there is paucity of research with regard to the level, prospects and challenges to teacher empowerment. Besides, studies (Al-Mahdi, 2007; Jacobs, 2014; Dampson, 2015; Hamadneh, 2016) that have been conducted on teacher empowerment mostly employed the quantitative or qualitative approach. In view of the identified geographical and methodological gaps, this study sought to answer the following research questions.

1. To what extent are the Basic School Teachers in the Central Region of Ghana empowered?
2. What are the prospects for empowering teachers in the Basic Schools in the Central Region of Ghana?
3. What challenges are faced by Basic School teachers in the Central Region of Ghana with regard to teacher empowerment?

II. THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

Teacher empowerment is premised on the assumption that teachers have the skills and knowledge to improve the conditions in the school (Bogler & Somech, 2004). Melenyzer (1990) defined teacher empowerment as the opportunity and confidence for teachers to act upon one's ideas and to influence the way one performs in the teaching profession. Thus, teacher empowerment involves the effective use of leader's power by school head teacher to empower teachers. According to Short, Greer and Melvin (1994), teacher empowerment is the process where teachers develop the competency to assume responsibility for their own growth and development while solving ongoing problems as they emerge. This means that teacher empowerment renders teachers effective in the school system by ensuring that they possess the knowledge and skill to deal with problems that emerge in the school. Dierking and Fox (2012), suggest that perceptions of power, support, autonomy and efficacy each interlink and shape each other. They, therefore, propose that for teachers to feel empowered, they must believe they can influence all aspects of their students' lives through active engagement in decision-making that impact their classrooms, teaching and student learning. In support of the essence of teacher empowerment in the school. In this regard, Lee and Nie (2014) postulated that teacher empowerment is connected to improved classroom practices and school effectiveness because of its impact on various work-related outcomes of teachers (e.g. job satisfaction, organisational commitment, professional commitment). Greenman and Dieckmann (2004) maintain that teachers are critical to cultural change in their school communities, believing that teacher empowerment is crucial for impacting the change and providing the highest quality education to students.

Short and Rinehart (1992) describe six dimensions of teacher empowerment: decision-making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. Short (1994) intimates that teacher decision-making must impact practice if it is to be effective and revolves around teachers actively engaged in important decisions that relate to all aspects of their work in schools. Professional growth is related to continuing professional development and teachers' perceptions that schools provide them with access and opportunity to become engaged in their own learning whilst improving their professional practice. Status is present in the school when teachers believe they have respect and professional support from their administration and colleagues as a result of their knowledge, expertise and practice. Self-efficacy which plays an important role in teacher empowerment refers to the teachers' perceptions of self and whether they have developed the ability to facilitate student learning through their teaching practices and curricula which they have developed to meet student needs (Tannehill & MacPhail, 2017). Autonomy which is also a component of empowerment results from teachers' beliefs that they are in charge of critical features of the teaching and learning process in their setting.

Prospects of Teacher Empowerment

According to Kimwarey, Chirure, and Omondi (2014), teachers need to be empowered so that they can develop the competence to take charge of their own growth and be able to resolve the problems they encounter in their field of work on daily basis. This would enable teachers to develop skills and competence needed in making important collaborative decisions and a display of commitment that in turn will create room for significant collaborative participation and democratic understanding. Dampson and Frempong (2018) posit that when Basic school teachers are empowered, it would further enable them exercise power over their educational lives and even resist controls that are detrimental to their own work.

Teacher empowerment is paramount in the school because it enables teachers to generate and amplify their voice in educational affairs, develop and improve their pedagogical know-how, enable them to understand how, why, what they do which increases their competence in their areas of specialization (Kimwarey, Chirure, & Omondi, 2014). Studies in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and other developed countries (Dampson & Frempong, 2018, Olorunsola, & Olayemi, 2011, Kimwarey, Chirure, & Omondi, 2014, Greenman & Dieckmann, 2004) have shown that through empowerment, teachers are transformed personally and in collaboration with others in an effort to achieve the objectives of the school. It creates a situation where teachers are able to work closely with the school administration especially on matters that affect them collectively and individually and develop a

sense of appreciation which eventually trickles down to personal activities at classroom level. As agents of curriculum implementation, their empowerment enables them discover themselves, be updated on new knowledge which when utilized would help to transform teachers' every day practices in accomplishing educational objectives. Furthermore, it enable teachers to undertake critical and transformative actions towards every day issues and in the process take charge of situations hence establish the nexus between theory and practice. Teachers are able to develop the capacity to reflect and evaluate their academic progress in order to keep abreast with the societal needs when they are empowered.

Challenges to Teacher Empowerment

Studies (Duttwieler, 1990; Blasé & Blasé, 2001) posit that organisational limitations, such as lack of definition and clarity regarding change efforts, inadequate or inappropriate resources, lack of hierarchical support, sources of resistance from school personnel, including the head teacher's office, fear of losing power and other forms of teacher resistance as the key challenges facing teacher empowerment. In Ghana, studies by Oduro (2007) and Dampson (2015) established that some of the common challenges facing teacher empowerment in most Ghanaian basic schools are: head teacher's inability to tap teachers' expertise and experiences to facilitate enlightened decisions, the hierarchical school structures, teacher's isolation and outside experts/influence.

These challenges emanate from the procedure through which Ghanaian basic schools, head teachers are selected and appointed based on long service in the teaching profession (Afful-Broni & Dampson, 2008). This situation coupled with favouritism and politics has paved way in selecting head teachers who are not academically qualified to lead basic schools in Ghana. Afful-Broni & Dampson (2008) argue that the effect of this process has resulted in many basic school leaders leading and managing schools from their past experiences which has gone a long way to stagnate the improvement of schools and teacher empowerment. According to them, majority of these basic school head teachers lack the needed leadership skills and knowledge to create a conducive atmosphere for teacher empowerment. It is perceived by Afful-Broni and Dampson (2008) that these head teachers may lack the expertise and experience in leading schools, hence may find it difficult to tap the expertise and rich experiences of teachers. Theory X lies at the heart of their leadership style and for that reason they perceived majority of the basic school teachers as lazy and gullible who need to be forced to work, hence, no need to empower them.

In Ghana, basic school teachers exist within a hierarchical bureaucracy (Oduro, 2007), where the Ghana Education Service (GES), who are perceived as holding powers and managing schools often do not pay heed to the voices of teachers. With regards to the needs of teachers, the GES seldomly solicit for teachers input, however, the controlled climate that exist between them and the teachers makes their input not always adhered to. Truly, the hierarchical structure of the GES coupled the bureaucratic nature of basic school makes it impossible for teachers to exhibit their talents and skills (Dampson, 2015). These situations go a long way to impede the creativity and innovative skills of teachers as they do not work in an open-school-climate to empower themselves and other staff members. These situations make teachers feel reluctant and coil back into their shelves. For example, the circuit supervisor from the educational office in Ghana may implement a new way of writing lesson notes without consulting teachers regarding its effectiveness or whether the school needs it. Teachers are then asked to implement it. This situation creates an illusion of teacher empowerment through leadership.

Teacher isolation is another roadblock to teacher empowerment in most Ghanaian basic schools. Dampson, (2015) and Dampson & Edwards, (2017) argue that in many basic schools, teachers are in a single classroom and rarely have opportunities to interact with other teachers. The issue of teacher isolation is nothing new as Oduro (2007) echoed that in most Ghanaian basic schools, teachers worked in isolation and were not encouraged to discuss and make inputs in the curriculum. Tye and Tye (1984) also observed a lack of connection between teachers, who often worked in a self-contained environment. The very structure and nature of basic schools in Ghana promote teacher isolation. The nature of the school climate that exists in most of the basic schools in Ghana ranges from paternal to a closed type of climate where the head teacher ensures that all staff members work hard and there is hardly any time for social needs (Dampson, 2017). In addition, majority of them seem to be dominative, directive, ego-centred and delegates few responsibilities to their favourites. This situation breeds conflicts and confusion among teachers which eventually leads to isolation of teachers.

Futrell (1994) described problems in professional development within schools that are yet to be resolved almost twenty years later. She explained that "outside experts" lead professional development workshops and ignore the localised and individual needs of teachers and students. This does not allow teachers to cultivate professional development programmes that could address their school needs and allow them to become activists for change. For instance, in Ghana, because most of the workshops organised for teachers are funded by NGO's, these outside experts usually ignore the professional expertise of the Ghanaian basic school teachers, assuming that one-size-fits-all, additionally, expensive programmes by so-called experts (NGO's) with no knowledge of community educational needs, can somehow reform a school with a few workshops. When

NGO's programmes are accepted, they hire outside "experts," they convey their own teachers that are not experts, and, therefore, are not professionals. It appears, therefore, that is a mismatch between the activities of these NGOs and the support systems needed by the teachers. In some cases, Dampson (2015) argued their activities reduce teacher empowerment which often leads to unfortunate consequences for students as well as the individuals who teach them. In his study, Dampson interviewed 15 basic school head teachers from rural and urban schools from the Central Region of Ghana and found that head teachers in urban schools in the Central region of Ghana constantly receive training from Non-governmental Organisations such as the United States Agency for International Development and the Leadership for Learning Programme (LFL). While, such trainings are rarely organised for head teachers in rural schools. The trainings provided by these institutions seem to have impacted positively on the professional development of the head teachers in the urban schools while their counter parts who received similar training in the rural areas seem not satisfied. Almost all the head teachers complained about the content and context in which such workshops are packaged and delivered to them (Dampson, 2015). The assumption of one-size-fits all does not apply in educational society where culture and school climate are valued as essential commodity for the survival of the school. It is, therefore, important that the NGOs take the pain to understand the context and culture within which teachers are prepared for their professional practices in Ghana in order to ensure that the support system they provide for the teachers commensurate with their professional needs.

Strategies for Empowering Teachers

In Ghana, studies conducted by Oduro, (2007), Esia-Donkoh, (2014) and Dampson (2015), have shown that to overcome hierarchical structures the (GES) in collaboration with the district education offices should regularly organize teacher-led professional development programmes which can help transform the hierarchical structure of schools by implementing programmes that are teacher-driven, rather than administratively driven. Teach Plus represents a model for this transformation. Studies in Ghana have shown that decentralization of authority by the GES through shared leadership and decision-making with teachers can restore their professional autonomy. It is also important to note that the Ghana Education Service should endeavour to transfer decision-making power, assignment of accountability and responsibility to the schools and communities. This should also be accompanied by delegation to commensurate authority to individual teachers and school leaders at all levels of the school decision-making. In this context the administrative decentralization model perhaps might be the key to overcoming hierarchical structures in order to empower teachers.

To overcome teacher isolation in Ghanaian basic schools, head teachers at the basic schools should be encouraged to practice a distributed leadership style where teachers are empowered to take active teacher-participation in school decision-making and other extra-curricular activities. This will help unearth the talents of teachers, enhance creativity and develop ownership among teachers. In addition, head teachers and teachers need to be encouraged to practise a continuum of an open-school-climate where the teachers and leaders will be genuine in their behaviour, motivated to overcome their difficulties and work together without infighting or complaints. It is also evident in research findings that it is equally important for head teachers to collaborate, encourage problem-solving approach and build trust among teachers (Blase & Blase, 2001; Jacob, 2014). In building trust, head teachers need to be honest, open, fair, consistent, and supportive to all teachers irrespective of age, gender, race or qualification.

Finally, teacher empowerment is associated with a greater sense of professionalism which is acquired from working with school leaders and teachers. In a collegial, collaborative environment, head teachers consistently concentrate on enabling others to examine and redesign schools for improved learning, and teachers learn to share power and work as a team (Blasé & Blasé, 2001; Jacob, 2014). This approach to teacher empowerment enhances teachers to be creative and be willing to become experts in their own field of study. In addition, teacher-led professional development which enables teachers to grow and gain experiences in their profession should be encourage by school leaders. Professional development such as relevant workshops, in-service training, and other academic programmes should be regularly organised for teachers to become experts in their subject areas. This will inspire respect for teacher leaders from colleagues within the school and develop them to become experts.

III. METHODOLOGY

The approach to this study was the mixed method. Specifically, the study employed the convergent parallel design (QUAN + qual). This design was considered the most appropriate as the researcher sought to compare findings from qualitative and quantitative data sources. It involved the collection of both types of data at roughly the same time. The rationale for this design is that one data collection form supplies strengths to offset the weaknesses of the other form, and that a more complete understanding of a research problem results from collecting both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2009). The data was, however, analysed separately. The results from the two data sets were compared side-by-side in a discussion. The two types of data

provided validation for each other and created a solid foundation for drawing conclusions. Thirty-two (32) basic schools were randomly sampled from 102 basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana.

Geographically, the 102 basic schools were grouped under Southern and Northern sectors. Using the random sampling technique, 16 schools each were sampled from both sectors. A total of 282 Basic School teachers comprising of 141 each from both sectors were also randomly sampled for the quantitative phase of the study. Out of the 282 teachers, 6 were purposely interviewed by the researchers. The High School Teacher Perception of Empowerment Survey developed by Spreitzer (1995) was adapted for the quantitative phase of the study with modifications made to suit the Ghanaian context, whilst a semi-structured interview guide was designed by the researcher. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. The quantitative data was analysed into mean of means whilst the qualitative data was analysed thematically. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were ensured.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section deals with the demographic characteristics of the teachers who participated in the study. The demographic characteristics of the respondents considered in this section included gender, age and teaching experience. These characteristics were considered vital as they would enrich the study and further shape the understanding of the readers with regard to the category of respondents who participated in the study. These demographic characteristics are presented in Figure 1 to 3.

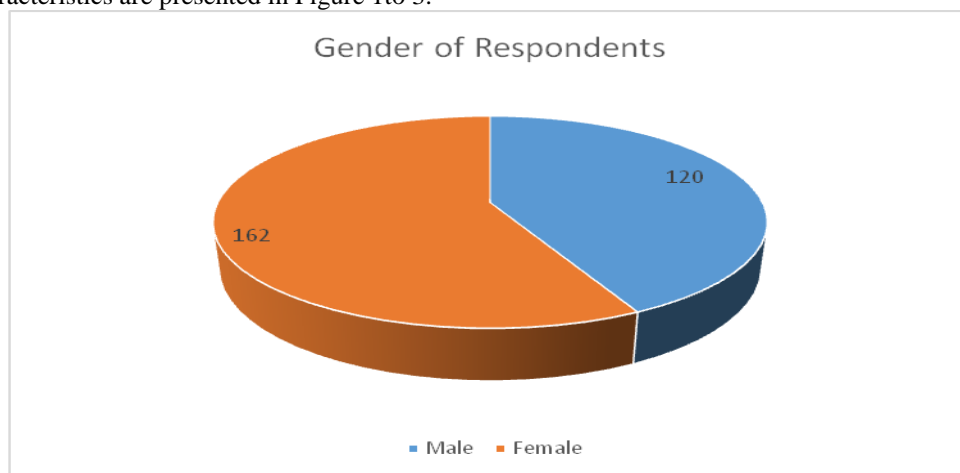


Figure 1: *Gender of Respondents*

Figure 1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents who participated in the study. The Figure shows that 120 (42.6%) of the respondents were males whilst 162 (57.4%) were females. This means that more females participated in the study than males. The relatively large number of female participation in the study seems to challenge the assumption that males outnumber females in the teaching profession.

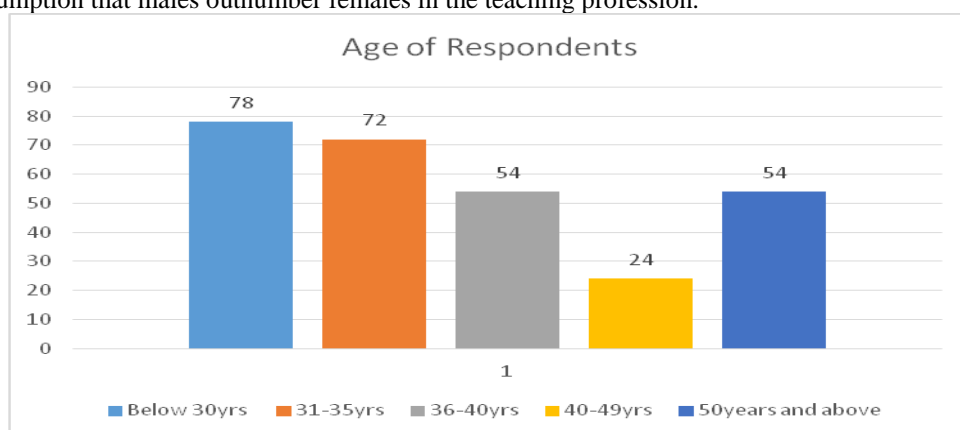


Figure 2: *Age of Respondents*

Figure 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents who participated in the study. As evident from Figure 2, majority (78%) of the respondents were below 30 years whilst few (24.0%) were between 40-49 years. This means that majority of the respondents who participated in this study were in their youthful stage of development. This finding implies that, as young as they are, the teachers who answered the questionnaire are in the right position to deliver in the school system if they are empowered. It is, therefore, expected that they may use their energy to effect changes in the school system. The information in Figure 3 confirms that the

respondents have the requisite experience having spent relatively long period in the teaching profession. This presupposes that given the right opportunities in the school, they may be able to utilize the experiences they have acquired throughout their period of teaching to impact positively on the school.

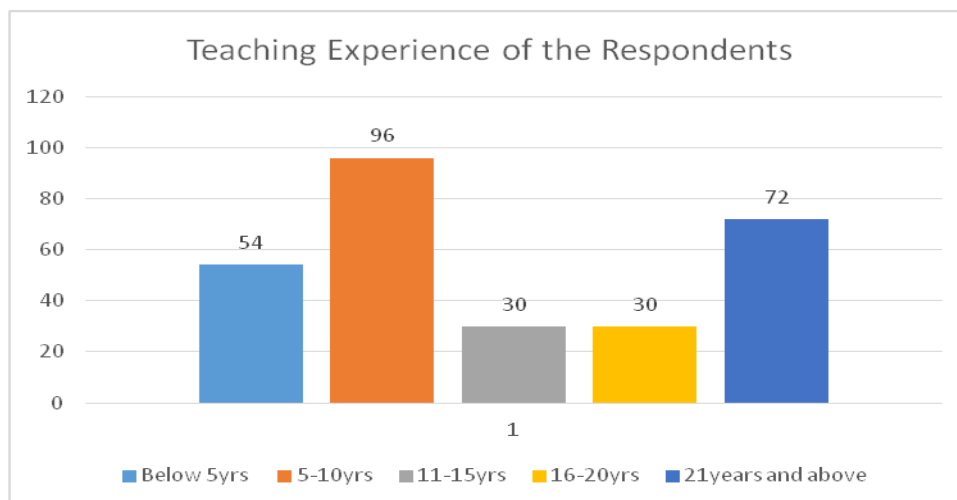


Figure 3: *Teaching Experience of the Respondents*

IV. MAIN DISCUSSIONS

This section deals with the discussion of the data from the field to address the research questions that were formulated to guide the study. The five-point Likert scale questionnaire that was administered was analysed using mean of means and standard deviations. From the analysis, a mean of 3.50 and above showed the agreement of the respondents to the statement whilst a mean of 2.40-3.40 meant the respondents were not sure of the statement. However, a mean of 2.40 and below showed disagreement of the respondents to the statement. A standard deviation below 1.0 showed that the responses from the respondents were homogeneous and heterogeneous when it was above 1.0.

Research Question One: To what extent are the Basic School Teachers in the Central Region of Ghana empowered?

The intent of the first research question was to find out the extent to which the Basic School teachers are empowered in their field of work. The views of the teachers in response to this research question is presented in Table 1. Table 1 presents the extent to which teachers are empowered in the Basic schools. Empowerment here refers to the urge of understanding, identifying, and describing processes through which people create alternative ways to overcome domination through both personal and organizational change (Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Table 1: *Extent of Teacher Empowerment in Basic Schools*

	Mean	SD
My head teacher		
Principal Training	4.1	.83
Principal Leadership	4.1	.81
Teacher Leadership	4.0	.74
School Culture	4.0	.80
Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation	4.1	.80

Source: Field Data, 2018

The overall means = 4.1 and SD = .80 gives a clear sense of direction that the extent to which Basic School teachers are empowered is high based on the four conditions of teacher empowerment which included principal training, principal leadership, teacher leadership and school culture. From the responses, it is evident that the school heads provide principal training by offering instructional leadership, good planning and organizational skills and prudent management of school finance. In the provision of instructional leadership, the head teachers ensure that teaching and learning remains on top of their priority list on a consistent basis. While leaders cannot neglect other duties, teaching and learning should be the area where most of the leaders' scheduled time is allocated (Desimone, 2011). The school heads are well informed of scientific based research and effective reading instruction that enables them to assist in the selection and implementation of instructional materials and to monitor implementation. The school heads provide released-time for teachers to attend relevant training. They also follow up by monitoring and providing the support that sustains the new learning. Since student achievement is the goal of teaching and learning which is measured by standards-based assessments, the

curriculum, instruction, and assessments must be aligned with the standards. If there is a disconnect among these elements, student achievement will not be evident. Alignment is an ongoing process as standards, curriculum, and assessments cycle through improvements. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the school head to align the various components of the school system.

In addition, the results show (Mean = 4.1, SD = .81) that the head teachers empower their teachers through principal leadership. Principal leadership concerns how leaders in the school sets examples for the teachers to follow and ask for inputs from the staff and faculty. This means that the empowerment of the teachers depends on the extent to which they follow the path of their school heads and take decisions that may inure to the benefit of the school. It is from this finding that the researcher presumed that once school heads ask for inputs from staff and faculty, they may have developed some trust in their teachers. Trust is quite crucial in the development of empowerment in teachers. Furthermore, as the head teachers trust the teachers, they are likely to respect and understand the teachers. Such occurrences may even help in the development of teachers attitude of voluntarism and loyalty towards the authority of the head teachers.

In the domain of teacher leadership, the study established that head teachers empower their teachers (Mean = 4.0, SD = .80). Teacher leadership implies a set of skills demonstrated by teachers who continue to teach students but also have an influence that extends beyond their own classrooms to others within their own school and elsewhere. This means that the head teachers allow the teachers to mobilize and energize others with the goal of improving the school's performance of its critical responsibilities related to teaching and learning (Danielson, 2006). Mobilizing and energizing does not occur because of the role of the leader as boss (as might be the case with a principal), but rather because the individual is informed and persuasive (Danielson, 2006). Therefore, an important characteristic of a teacher leader is expertise and skill in engaging others in complex work. It also entails an unwavering passion for the core mission of the school and the courage to confront obstacles to achieving that mission.

Lastly, the findings of this study indicate that the school heads empower their teachers through the creation of a congenial school culture that promotes the development of the teachers (Mean = 4.0, SD = .80). This means that the school heads provide an environment that is physically and emotional safe for students, orderliness in the classroom and public spaces. This also means that the culture created by the school heads in their schools celebrates ethnic as well as cultural diversity in school. The creation of such positive school culture may result from both conscious and unconscious perspectives, values, interactions and practices. This would bring about an environment that is conducive to professional satisfaction, morale, and effectiveness as well as students learning, fulfilment and well-being for the teachers.

Research Question Two: What are the prospects of empowering teachers in the Basic Schools in the Central Region of Ghana?

Research question two sought to establish the prospects of teacher empowerment in the Basic Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The views of the teachers in response to this research question is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Prospects of Teacher Empowerment*

Statement	Mean	SD
I become more effective in the school when the head teacher shares his/her leadership with the teachers	3.9	.83
We attain school goals when the head teacher works with us	4.2	.77
Teacher empowerment is key in producing educational reform	4.5	.54
Teacher empowerment enhances the school as a whole	4.5	.65
Teacher empowerment helps to create the school's vision for student's success	4.4	.76
Teacher absenteeism reduces when teachers are delegated to work for the school	4.0	.92
I become highly motivated when the head teacher demonstrates trust in me and allows me to take risk	4.3	.62

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 2 presents the views of teachers with regard to the prospects of teacher empowerment. As evident from the Table, teachers become more effective and efficient in the school when the head teachers share their leadership with the teachers (Mean = 3.9, SD = .83). Teachers may give their best in the school when they realize the head teachers' belief in their capabilities. From the interviews with the teachers, one teacher maintained:

"I go the extra mile to give my best when the head teacher solicits for input from staff members or ask me to do something that would benefit the school".

It is evident from the results that the capabilities may come to the fore as head teachers delegate the teachers to perform certain tasks in the school. The success of teaching and learning, therefore, rests to a large extent on the level of empowerment that teachers receive in the school. As indicated by the teachers, they attain school goals when the head teachers work with them (Mean = 4.2, SD = .77). This implies that without collegiality, it would be extremely difficult for the attainment of the institutional goals. For instance, one of the respondents during the interview said:

"We normally work with the head teacher on major projects at the school level. Without the support of the head teacher and my colleagues, we cannot achieve anything as a school".

Another teacher postulated:

"I feel very comfortable when I work with my colleagues. It enhances my performance whilst I also take advantage to learn the skills I do not have from them".

The results further revealed that teacher empowerment is key in producing educational reform (Mean = 4.5, SD = .54), enhances the school as a whole (Mean = 4.5, SD = .65), create the school's vision for students' success (Mean = 4.4, SD = .76), reduces teacher absenteeism (Mean = 4.3, SD = .62) and allows teachers to take risk (Mean = 4.3, SD = .62). It is clear, therefore, that the whole essence of teacher empowerment is to ensure that teachers become instrumental in the achievement of institutional goals. Thus, the creation of a collegial and collaborative environment enables teachers to examine and redesign schools for improved learning and learn to share power and work as a team (Blasé & Blasé, 2001). The findings of this study confirm that teacher empowerment is paramount in the school because it enables teachers to generate and amplify their voice in educational affairs, develop and improve their pedagogical know-how, enable them to understand how, why, what they do which increases their competence in their areas of specialization (Kimwarye, Chirure, & Omondi, 2014).

Research Question Three: What challenges are faced by Basic School teachers in the Central Region of Ghana with regard to teacher empowerment?

The third research question that guided the study sought to investigate the challenges faced by Basic School teachers in the Central Region of Ghana with regard to teacher empowerment. The views of the teachers in response to this research question is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Challenges to Teacher Empowerment*

Statement	Mean	SD
I normally work in isolation and do not get the opportunity to interact with other teachers	2.6	6.3
The head teacher delegates responsibilities to his favourite teachers in the school	2.1	1.2
Majority of the works that are organised in this school were led by resources persons outside the school	2.5	1.0
Ghana Education Service heed to the voice of teachers	1.6	1.2
There are too many hierarchical bureaucracies in Ghana Education Service	3.5	1.3
Most of the head teachers that I know lack leadership to skills to manage schools	3.0	1.2
My head teacher trusts the teachers in this school	2.4	1.4

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 3 presents the views of the teachers with regard to the challenges to teacher empowerment in their schools. From the responses, it is evident that the main challenges to teacher empowerment are lack of space for the voice of teachers by Ghana Education Service (Mean = 1.6, SD = 1.2), favouritism (Mean = 2.1, SD = 1.2) and lack of trusts (Mean = 2.4, SD = 1.4) by school heads. These challenges were subsequently confirmed in the interview with the teachers. On the issue of trusts for instance, one of the teachers said:

"My head teacher does not trust my capabilities. He finds fault with everything that I do for him".

Another teacher concurred:

"My head master hardly asks me to do anything for him. It appears he doesn't trust me".

This finding imply that without trust, it is impossible to delegate responsibility to subordinates. Presumably, it is the lack of trust that accounts for head teachers delegating responsibilities to their favourites. This may, however, stifle the creativity and intellect in the staff as majority of the teachers may prefer keeping their knowledge to themselves at the expense of the development of the school. To facilitate teacher participation in decision-making processes, basic school head teachers should make sure that teachers and staff feel comfortable by providing an open, trusting school climate (Dampson, 2015). The trust relationship between teachers and head teachers and/or their colleagues is the important foundation of shared governance, which provides impetus for teacher empowerment (Wan, 2005). As indicated by Newcombe and McCormick (2001), teachers are likely to become highly involved in school-based decision-making, only if the level of trust in the decision-makers and decision-making processes is high and the actual involvement in decision-making is positively associated with trust. Moye, Henkin, and Egley (2005) concurred that teachers who perceived that they were empowered in their work environments had higher levels of interpersonal trust in their principals.

It appears that the hierarchical bureaucracies in the Ghana Education Service have reduced over time, however, there is still lack of space for the concerns of the teachers (Dampson, 2015). It is therefore, perceived that teachers may keep their concerns to themselves than to report them to the district or national level. This was also reiterated in the interview with the teachers. For instance, one the teachers affirmed:

“It is better to keep your information to yourself than report to the Education Office. The bureaucratic processes alone would frustrate you”.

Another teacher echoed:

“There are too many frustrations at the Education Office due to hierarchical bureaucracies. You have to go through many people before you can see the Director. It is quite frustrating”.

These concerns may be attributed to the fact that most of the professional development programmes implemented by Ghana Education Service (GES) are administrative driven rather than teacher driven. Although decentralization of authority by the GES through shared leadership and decision-making with teachers can restore their professional autonomy, the centralized system of administration seems to be a hindrance. It would not be out of place if the Ghana Education Service transfer decision-making power, assignment of accountability and responsibility to the schools and communities. Equally, it will be of importance for NGO's and other bodies who facilitate workshops and training for teachers, headteachers and other stakeholders in education to understand and familiarize themselves with the Ghanaian educational structure coupled with it bureaucracy to enable them organize effective and efficient workshops that will benefit all.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study have shown that although the degree of teacher empowerment in Ghanaian Basic Schools is high, however, trust, head teacher favouritism and lack of space for the concerns of teachers by the Ghana Education Service impede effective practice of teacher empowerment. The results have further established, however, that teacher empowerment makes teachers effective, produces educational reforms and enhances the school, reduces teacher absenteeism and motivates the teachers.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the Ghana Education Service should transfer decision-making power, assignment of accountability and responsibility to the schools and communities. This should also be accompanied by delegation to commensurate authority to individual teachers and school leaders at all levels of the school decision-making. In this context the administrative decentralization model perhaps might be the key to overcoming hierarchical structures in order to empower teachers. In addition, in-service training should be organized periodically for the head teachers to be educated on how they can effectively empower the teachers in their school. Especially, those workshops and in-service training from NGO's shouldn't be one-size-fits all but facilitators and organizers should take into consideration the cultural context, school climate as well as the educational needs of headteachers, teachers, students and all stakeholders. Furthermore, head teachers of the basic schools should trust and respect teachers, support staff development, and support teachers' decisions. Finally, head teachers of the basic schools should allocate adequate time for the development of collaborative relationships among teachers.

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