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## The Role of Effective Supervision on Academic Performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana

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### **ABSTRACT**

In all facets of life, supervision has become a cross-cutting edge tool and a pivot around which performance revolves. There are widespread and on-going debates centred on the influence of effective supervision on academic performance in our academic institutions. This study examined the role of supervision on academic performance in Senior High Schools (SHS) in Ghana. The study was based on the collegial model of educational management and the supervision model, Theory Y as proposed by Douglas McGregor. This study employed the descriptive research survey design. Through a questionnaire, data analysed was collected from 963 respondents who were purposively selected from randomised schools in each region comprising of headmasters, their assistants and heads of department of 155 SHSs across Ghana. The WAEC results (2006-2009 and 2011) of the sampled schools were analysed. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.826. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 18 software was employed in the analyses of data using, mean, standard deviation, correlation and independent t-test. The study revealed that there was a positive weak significant relationship between supervision roles of heads and academic performance of students. Moreso, there was a positive weak significant relationship between gender of heads and their supervision roles. The study recommended that supervision should be intensified in SHS. Heads of SHS should be re-orientated in the new trends of supervision in schools.

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**Keywords:** Academic performance, educational management, gender, Heads of SHS, supervision.

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.01 Background to the study

The educational delivery system in Ghana is fraught with myriad of challenges. These challenges include teacher deficit, inadequate infrastructure, wobbling educational policies and high cost of quality education. In the midst of some of these challenges, a lot of stakeholders have always focused more on the academic performance of students, failing to have a spot on the other processes through which excellent students' academic performance is achieved. Other processes that are usually overlooked are school-community relationship, stakeholders' commitment, leadership and supervision styles of school managers. Researchers have always maintained that leadership and supervision styles as a rule reflect the academic performance in schools. Educational supervision is not only sensitive but also, a very broad subject. According to Bamroongraks (1996:253), supervision, is understood as "the instructional improvement of schools and teachers".

History of education in Ghana points it clear that supervision existed in our schools before independence (Ghana-History and Background, n.d.). Supervision in Senior High Schools (SHS) has become topical as people have attempted to draw strong relationships between effective supervision of heads and the academic performance of students. Discourse in the supervisory roles of heads in SHS must not be treated lightly due to its consequences on academic performance. Many studies have been conducted on supervision in schools but, none of them touched on the role of its effectiveness on academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana. It is against this background and its associated consequences that this study was undertaken.

Supervision is an intervention that is provided by a senior member of a profession to a junior member or members of that same profession. This relationship is evaluative, extends over time, and has the simultaneous purposes of enhancing the professional functioning of the junior professional(s), monitoring the quality of professional services offered to the clients she, he, or they see, and serving as a gatekeeper of those who are to enter the particular profession (Bernard & Goodyear, 2004).

The heads in the Senior High Schools do not only serve as senior professionals providing intervention to their teachers. They are also mandated to superintend over all other activities of the school but academic work being the central activity. Supervision is viewed as a means or process to an end. This is supported by Brinker (1983) and Landers and Myers (1977) who opined that supervisors are expected to assess the extent to which educational objectives are actually being realized, to collect some data in terms of previously stated objectives in which some judgment can be assessed.

Research shows that often times in Ghana, parents have worked hard to get their wards into certain particular schools such as mission and private schools because of their sterling academic performance which is an outcome of vigorous and effective supervision. Even though the fact remains that effective supervision is arbitrary, its end effect affects society. Neagley and Evans (1980) conceived that effective supervision requires a high level of leadership. It is, therefore, worth to undertake such a study. For the purpose of this study, heads include Headmasters, Assistant Headmasters and Heads of Departments of Senior High Schools in Ghana.

This research is uniquely positioned to address gaps in effective supervision issues in Senior High Schools in Ghana. Research and discussions on effective supervision are only addressed to either show commitment of a government or when an educational issue crops up. In 2015, a Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Alex Kyeremeh addressed an issue on supervision due to an eminent issue on

performance evaluation (*The Ghanaian Times*, 2015). Other similar studies have also reported differences in terms of supervision and other constructs (Apenteng 2012; Anderson & Donkor, 2016; Azure, 2016; Sackey, Amaniampong & Abrokwa, 2016).

The research made use of a descriptive survey research design to answer three research hypotheses. One hundred and fifty-five questionnaires were distributed across randomly selected Senior High Schools in Ghana. The respondents who were purposively identified covered Headmasters, Assistant Headmasters and Heads of Departments.

The main research findings include a weak but positive influence of supervision on academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana. Again, it was revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between supervision and gender of heads of Senior High Schools in Ghana. Finally, the research analysis indicated no statistically significant difference among the category of school heads (i.e. A, B, C, D & T) and academic performance Senior High Schools in Ghana.

The rest of this paper is organised under the following headings Problem Statement; Hypotheses; Review of related literature (Collegial Supervision, Effective Supervision, and Academic Performance); Methodology (Research Design, Population, Statistical Analysis Tool); Analysis (Hypotheses); Conclusions and Recommendations.

## 1.02 Problem statement

In spite of the efforts by the Ghana Education Service in improving general supervision in schools, most especially in SHS, a large amount of work needs to be done. Informal discussion among people in the community and related research findings (Oduro, 2008; Opere, 1999) suggest that poor student performance in public schools, in part, is the result of ineffective supervision of teachers. Till date, there is no empirical evidence about the effectiveness of supervision in Ghanaian Senior High Schools. Generally, the claim that there is poor supervision of teachers in public schools in Ghana is based on assumptions. This study sought to find out the role of effective supervision on academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana from 2006-2009 and 2011.

## 1.03 Hypotheses

- i. There is no statistically significant influence of supervision on academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana.
- ii. There is no statistically significant relationship between administrative task of supervision and gender of heads of Senior High Schools in Ghana.
- iii. There is no statistically significant difference among the category of school heads on academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana.

## 2.0 Review of related literature

### 2.01 Theoretical framework

The study was premised on two key theoretical frameworks: Collegial Supervision and Theory Y.

#### 2.1.1 Collegial supervision

Heads cannot work in isolation; heads cannot have a field day supervising all other things without having to supervise their staff, especially, teachers. More than a few authorities in the area of supervision recommend collegial processes as options for supervision of teachers (Glatthorn, 1990; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; Sullivan & Glanz, 2000). Sergiovanni & Starratt (1993) believed that promoting collegiality among teachers is an important way to help schools change for the better. According to them, collegial supervision refers to “the existence of high levels of collaboration among

teachers and between teachers and principals and is characterised by mutual respect, shared work values, cooperation, and specific conversations about teaching and learning” (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993:103). Again, Glatthorn (1990) explained the cooperative professional development as a process of fostering teacher growth through systematic collaboration with peers and includes a variety of approaches such as professional dialogue, curriculum development, peer observations and feedback, and action research projects.

Furthermore, Glatthorn affirms that this process includes a 39 variety of approaches such as professional dialogue, curriculum development, peer observations and feedback, and action research. One key question that remains is how collegiality can promote effective academic performance. It is one thing having teachers and heads to work together and another thing channeling that cooperation into best practices and good academic output. A well practiced collegial supervision can involve a sort of action research between the supervisor and the teacher whereby they pose a hypothesis experiment and implement strategies towards reasoned solutions (Gebhard, 1990). Time and again, some heads have been seen as very autocratic in their supervision, making all other players, including students taking the ‘back seat’. Comparing notes can be very helpful since supervision is primarily concerned with improving classroom practices for the benefit of students regardless of what may be entailed (Bays, 2001). In his assertion, Kelechukwu (2011) stated that an effective and efficient principal must be a learning officer, a coach, an architect and ideal person, a leader of leaders and a teacher. He continued to buttress his assertion by confirming that:

The principal must possess certain qualities to reach the acme of success...The secondary education needs a lot of changes and the school principal is likely to be the key agent that such changes are introduced and sustained. He is responsible for the smooth running of the school. His challenge therefore, is to ensure that all children reach the levels of academic achievements. This he achieves by setting instructional methods for the attainment of school goals (Kelechukwu, 2011:20).

In Nigeria, principalship of schools has evolved from the position and performance of teachers (Aderounmu & Ehiamentor, 1985). This position of Aderounmu and Ehiamentor goes to confirm later citations by Kelechukwu (2011) and Bays (2001) as far as Collegial supervision is concerned.

Even though this model may have its inherent weaknesses having to work in a group, Goldhammer (1980) stood by the conjecture that the most telling mark of any practitioner’s commitment and fitness to perform professional work is the readiness to have such work examined and critiqued by other competent workers.

### 2.1.2 Theory Y

Generally speaking, Douglas McGregor’s Theory X and Y were not developed for the educational area, they were propounded for the industrial sector. However, it is not misplaced to make use of his theoretical concepts in educational management. The theories can be modified to suit the educational situations based on the assumptions that the student cannot be considered as a worker and secondly, the classroom cannot be considered as a factory. Additionally, there are differences between teacher-student relationship and a manager-worker relationship.

#### 2.1.2.1 Assumptions of Theory Y

With these assumptions, management's role is to develop the potential in employees and help them to release that potential towards common goals.

- i. Work is as natural as play and rest.
- ii. People will exercise self-direction if they are committed to the objectives (they are NOT lazy).
- iii. Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement.
- iv. People learn to accept and seek responsibility.

- v. Creativity, ingenuity, and imagination are widely distributed among the population. People are capable of using these abilities to solve an organizational problem.
- vi. People have potential (McGregor, 1960).

In adapting Theory Y to the educational settings, “people” can mean “students” and hold that students will exercise self-direction if they are committed to the objectives, students learn to accept and seek responsibility, etc. These assumptions when considered for effective supervision by heads and seen as the roles and position(s) of SHS students will support Ukeje (1992) view that roles as the image is held for an individual’s relational behaviours when that individual is operating in a particular position. Role describes a set of expectations that people in the organisation have of an individual in his or her job (Kelechukwu 2011). To spice it up, there are levels of supervision and others believe the purpose of supervision is helping teachers to be aware of their teaching and its consequences for their learners (Glickman, Gordon & Gordon, 1998; Nolan, 1997). Some researchers have also hypothesised that supervision is an act of encouraging human relations (Wiles & Bondi, 1996) and teacher motivation (Glickman, Gordon & Gordon, 1998) and enabling teachers to try out new instructional techniques in a safe, supportive environment (Nolan, 1997). These authorities failed to see the student (supervisee) factor in supervision. In effect, supervision of teachers is meant to yield positive results in the learning outcomes of students.

## 2.02 Effective supervision

Nolan and Francis (1992) saw supervision to provide a mechanism for teachers and supervisors to increase their understanding of the teaching-learning process through collective inquiry with other professionals. The purposes of supervision provided by these researchers can be grouped under the following themes: improving instruction; fostering curriculum and staff development; encouraging human relations and motivation; and encouraging action research and supporting collaboration (Baffour-Awuah, 2011). According to Baffour-Awuah, supervision was initially described as inspection, which has the connotation of direct control of teachers by school inspectors. The term supervision has gradually taken over inspection, but both terms are sometimes used together. Marzano, Frontier and Livingston (2011) maintain that the clergy were among the first supervisors used in schools and these individual supervisors or supervisory committees were charged with monitoring the quality of instruction. These supervisors had nearly unlimited power to establish criteria for effective instruction and to hire and fire teachers (Burke & Krey, 2005). Because there was no necessary agreement as to the importance or nature of pedagogical expertise, the quality and type of feedback to teachers was highly varied (Marzano, Frontier and Livingston, 2011).

Effective supervision as explained by Gordon (2004), requires well trained personnel with knowledge, interpersonal skills, and technical skills who are prepared to provide the necessary and appropriate guidance and support to the teaching staff. Effective supervision should result in growth and learning by the teacher (Duke, 1993). Some researchers have defined effective supervision in many ways. Jones (1993) saw effective supervision as vital to look at what actually happens within the classroom. In corroboration, Brennen (2008) said that an effective supervisor who links interpersonal with technical skills will be successful in improving instruction. In effect, not all supervisors can be effective in all supervisory processes.

## 2.03 Academic performance

Ali *et al.* (2009), contented that students’ performance (academic performance) plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leaders and manpower for the country thus responsible for the country’s economic and social development. Since academic performance is an object of interest and sometimes used as a measure of making certain critical decisions in life, a lot of research work have been done on it.

A lot of factors including supervision go to affect academic performance but these factors vary from person to person and country to country (Shachar & Neumann, 2010) sometimes based on the administrative styles of school heads. Students' performance depends on many factors such as learning facilities, gender and age differences, etc. that can affect student performance (Hansen, 2000). Mushtaq and Khan (2012) identified four factors that affect students' academic performance. These factors are students' communication skills, learning facilities, proper guidance and family stress. Some other researchers used test results or previous year results since they were studying performance for the specific subject or year (Hijazi & Naqvi, 2006; Hake, 1998). Furthermore, research studies show that learners' academic accomplishments and activities, perceptions of their coping strategies and positive attributions, and background characteristics (i.e., family income, parents' level of education, guidance from parents and number of negative situations in the home) were indirectly related to their composite scores, through academic achievement in high school (Noble & Sawyer, 2006). In sum, there are a lot of factors that potentially pose treat to academic performance of students but none of them touched on the effective supervision on academic performance on SHS.

#### 2.04 Empirical predictions

There numerous studies in this field fail to focus on nationwide descriptive studies to address the gaps in effective supervision issues in Senior High Schools in Ghana. According to a Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Alex Kyeremeh; "Effective supervision by circuit supervisors can help reduce teacher absenteeism in the Ghana" (The Ghanaian Times, 2015). Earlier on, Apenteng (2012) found no effect of supervision on performance once staff members were dissatisfied. The gap here is that, Apenteng only focused her study on the "Effect of Supervision on Staff Performance in one of the Municipal Directorate of Education".

There are countless research work on supervision, nonetheless, they fail to address the role of effective supervision in Senior High Schools. Recently, attention on supervision has only being on teaching and learning in Basic Schools (Anderson & Donkor, 2016); discipline in Senior High Schools (Sackey, Amaniampong & Abrokwa, 2016). Azure (2016, p.163) also looked at the "elements of effective supervision from Ghanaian graduate students' perspective" and found no significant difference between effective supervision and gender. His findings run consistently with findings from the third hypothesis of this research.

In their research which sought to find "strategies for improving the Academic Performance of Students in Botswana Primary Schools", Maimela and Monyatsi (2016) only found "parental involvement, infrastructure provision and human resources" as factors influencing academic performance. This research therefore wish to address this confusion, where earlier research work cited effective supervision as very important to academic performance contrary to Maimela and Monyatsi (2016) who never found this.

### 3.0 Methodology

#### 3.01 Research design

A descriptive survey research design was used and data was collected through questionnaire from 155 Senior High Schools across Ghana which were randomly selected from all the 10 regions of the country based on the Category of School the belonged to. Best and Khan (1998) explain descriptive research to be concerned with the conditions or relationships that exist, such as determining the nature of prevailing conditions, practices and attitudes; opinions that are held; processes that are going on; and/or trends that are developed. The sample size of 963 participants comprised of Headmasters, Assistant Headmasters and Heads of Departments who were purposively selected. A total of 1085 copies of questionnaires were distributed out of which 963(88.75%) were returned.

### 3.02 Population

All the 10 regions in Ghana were used in the study. Again, respondents' schools were categorised into five namely, Category A, Category B, Category C, Category D, Category T. Males respondents were 617(64.1%) while 346(35.9%) were females. Respondents were in the age brackets of 20 to 50 years. Most of the respondents hold Bachelors's Degree. They represent 630(65.4%) while 330(34.3%) had their Master's Degree with 3(0.35) have the Ph.Ds. In terms of location, there 788(81.8%) of the respondents were located in the urban areas with the remaining 175 (18.2%) located in the Rural areas.

### 3.03 Statistical analysis tool

The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 18 software was employed in the analyses of data using percentages, mean, standard deviation, correlation and independent t-test. A pilot test conducted on the questionnaire returned a reliability coefficient of Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) = 0.826.

## 4.0 Analysis

### 4.01 Hypotheses

**Hypotheses 1:** *There is no statistically significant influence of supervision on academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana.*

**Table 1:** Inter-correlation matrix table of relationship between academic performance and administrative task of Supervising

S/N	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.	Number of participants	963										
2.	Fair appraisal of staff	.055										
3.	Frequent staff meetings	.025	.448**									
4.	Evaluation for effective performance	.140**	.418**	.383**								
5.	Achieving set Targets	.056	.297**	.432**	.388**							
6.	Supply of teaching and learning materials	.081*	.372**	.404**	.412**	.447**						
7.	Ensures punctuality of staff	.153**	.333**	.297**	.366**	.421**	.428**					
8.	Pays visits	.064*	.381**	.401**	.436**	.377**	.431**	.525**				
9.	Holds regular meetings	.034	.259**	.421**	.295**	.307**	.327**	.554**	.466**			
10.	Assesses progress of work	.140**	.431**	.381**	.462**	.330**	.308**	.382**	.460**	.352**		
11.	Constant communication	.066*	.463**	.512**	.472**	.450**	.468**	.439**	.506**	.404**	.556**	
	Total rating on Supervising	.138**	.568**	.577**	.584**	.495**	.581**	.641**	.631**	.609**	.568**	.635**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 revealed the following on how supervision (independent variable) relates to the dependent variable, Supervision:  $r(963) = 0.138, p > 0.05$ . In relation to hypothesis one (H1), since it was observed

that academic performance had a weak but positive relationship at 0.138 with a  $p < 0.05$  and that the relationship is significant, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was therefore rejected but the alternate hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) maintained. This means that there is a positive influence of supervision on academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana. This also means that, based on the results, decisions based on supervision can affect academic performance of students. Since the overall effect of supervision in schools must result in academic performance, it is likely that heads do not really understand their roles as supervisors because the results contradicts Nolan and Francis (1992) assertion that supervision provides a mechanism for teachers and supervisors to increase their understanding of the teaching-learning process through collective inquiry with other professionals. Though respondents are very qualified in their capacities as heads, on the flip side, one may agree that they lack the requisite training or professional skills in supervision and this is consistent with Gordon (2004) who posits that supervision requires well trained personnel with knowledge, interpersonal skills, and technical skills who are prepared to provide the necessary and appropriate guidance and support to the teaching staff.

**Hypotheses 2:** *There is no statistically significant relationship between administrative task of supervision and gender of heads of Senior High Schools in Ghana.*

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare relationship between administrative task of supervision and gender of heads of Senior High Schools in Ghana.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Supervision	Male	617	4.61	.604	-2.602	.009
	Female	346	4.71	.515		

As proven in Tables 7 there was a statistically significant difference in the administrative roles of heads as far as gender is concerned Male ( $M=4.61$ ,  $SD=.60$ ) and Female ( $M=4.71$ ,  $SD=.52$ );  $t(963)=-2.602$ ,  $p=.009$ . From the results, there is a statistically significant relationship between supervision and gender of heads of Senior High Schools in Ghana. Gender base difference was noted in the supervision roles of heads in the Senior High Schools. Female supervisors who are heads perform better than their male counterparts hence the hypothesis 2 is rejected. This finding is inconsistent with previous studies by Cole (1996) which found no differences between male and female leadership behaviours in motivation, attitude to work ability to motivate team and general work performance. Currently, in Ghana, most of the category A and B SHSs are headed by females. The academic performance in these schools has been very good. This can be the basis of concluding that female heads are very particular with their supervisory roles.

**Hypotheses 3:** *There is no statistically significant effect of the category of school heads on academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana.*

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	94314.970	2	47157.485	1.702	.183
Within Groups	2.660E7	960	27706.683		
Total	2.669E7	962			

According to Table 8, there is no statistically significant difference among the various categories of heads  $F(2, 960) = 1.702$ ,  $p = .183$ . Hence, we failed to reject the null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant difference among the category of school heads and academic performance Senior High Schools in Ghana. This further implies that the being a headmaster, an assistant headmaster or a head of department does not affect the academic performance of Senior High Schools in Ghana.

## 5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

The study revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between supervision roles of heads and academic performance of students. Furthermore, the study established that there is a statistically significant relationship between gender of heads and their supervisory roles. Female supervisors who are heads perform better than their male counterparts. Finally, it was found out that, there is no difference in terms of the supervision roles among the category of school heads and the academic performance of SHS students.

We recommend that supervision should be intensified in all SHS. Heads of SHS should be re-orientated in the new trends of supervision in schools. Pre-headship Training must be emphasised by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and Conference of Heads of Assisted Secondary Schools (CHASS). Again, there should be collaboration between Ministry of Education, GES, CHASS and other stakeholders in designing a standardised Handbook for heads of SHS. Conscious efforts must be made to encourage females in taking up headship positions. Attributes that make female heads perform better than their male counterparts should be studied further to help build capacity of their male counterparts. Finally, a lot more females should be encouraged to rise to the headship positions.

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