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The Missing Hub in the Wheel: Improving Ghanaian Basic Schools through Teacher Empowerment

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Abstract

The study adopted the explanatory sequential Mixed Method design approach. Using the proportional stratified random sampling technique, the study sampled 325 respondents made up of 260 teachers and 65 headteachers from the four categories of basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana for the quantitative phase of the study. Subsequently, 15 teachers and 5 headteachers from 4 categories of schools were sampled purposely for the qualitative phase of the study. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive (Means and Standard Deviation) statistics whilst the qualitative data were analysed thematically. It was evident from the results that teachers in the improved and dynamic schools are highly empowered than their counterparts in the trapped and failing schools. The teachers in the trapped and failing schools missed elements of empowerment such as decision making, professional growth, status, self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. The study further found that teacher empowerment affects school improvement significantly. It is recommended per the findings that headteachers should invest in teachers the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and the right to exercise professional judgement the content of the curriculum and the means of instruction.

Keywords: Teacher Empowerment, Trust, Autonomy, Innovation, Creativity, missing hub, headteachers, teachers

1. Introduction

The level of development of any country depends to an extent on the level and quality of education of its citizens. It is against this background that Governments of Ghana over the years have attempted with varying degrees of success to provide quality basic education for all children through various acts of parliaments and reforms. These acts and legislative instruments include the 1951 Accelerated Development Plan for Education, the 1961 Education Act, Kwapong Education Report (1967) and the 1973 Dzobo Education Report. Other efforts include the 1987 Education Review, the 1988 University Rationalisation Committee Report and the 1996 Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). FCUBE in particular represented efforts to ensure that all school-age children received free and compulsory quality primary education by 2005. More recently, the government of Ghana has passed the 2000 Education Act 581, Anamuah-Mensah Education Review of 2007 and the 2008 Education Act. All these efforts were intended to provide for the creation of an educational system designed to produce well-balanced people with the requisite knowledge, skills, values, aptitudes and attitudes needed to be functional and productive citizens for the overall development of the nation (Amoah, 2017). However, the realization of the objectives of these acts depends largely on how well schools have been improved to achieve their goals.

School improvement is a general term used to explain how schools can improve their performance over a period and is especially concerned with activities that bring about this improvement. As Gray et al. (1999) point out that school improvement "gives particular salience to efforts towards change which focus on student achievement and the classroom and organisational conditions which support it" (p. 5). Hopkins and Lagerweij (1996) suggest two distinct usages of the term school improvement: one is in terms of "the efforts to make schools better places for students to learn (and) … "as a strategy for educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change" (p. 32). This description illustrates the significance of school improvement as a method of changing school culture (Harris, 2002). Therefore, two assumptions regarding school improvement are first, those who run the school from inside are the essential agents of change and second, in order to motivate and maintain the school's effort to change, internal conditions in terms of management, ethos, support system, etc. are essential. Literature also raises the importance of multi-level action to facilitate school improvement in addition to mobilizing progress at the school level (Harris, 2002). School improvement reforms, on the one hand, have aimed to shift the professional and organisational culture of schools to encourage a more collegial environment that focuses on teamwork and professional relationships between teachers and the local community. School improvement has also given considerable attention to teacher development activities as a way to improve student behaviour, learning and achievement (Hopkins, 2003). Change is needed at all levels of the school: classroom, teacher level, involving teachers in professional dialogue and development and changing school culture with the support of external professional agencies (Harris, 2002). Thus, as the unit of change, the focus is on the school.

The role of headteachers in school improvement cannot be overemphasized. Blase and Blase (2001) argue that the role of school leaders has changed over the years. These days, they are

seen as the core in improving schools through the development of cooperative relationships by recognizing teachers' educational expertise. Given this, they are required to move out from behind their management desks and go beyond conventional leadership positions in teaching by creating a modern, inclusive and consistent curriculum aligned with professional standards (Ylimaki, 2014) whilst maintaining a collaborative culture (O'Connor, Stevens, & Gonzalez, 2014). Headteacher empowerment remains a key catalyst for teachers to unleashing the knowledge and skills acquired from their institutions of training. Steyn (2001) indicates that teacher empowerment is a managerial buzzword often used to whip up the positive commitment and participation of teachers in school activities. Schools cannot be improved when teachers have not been empowered.

Teacher empowerment is described as the practice of recognising teachers as experts in their field and allowing them to make instructional decisions (Squire-Kelly, 2012). Palmleaders (2004) indicates when teachers are empowered it often results in fundamental changes to the core of the school system in a positive direction. Extant literature suggests that teacher empowerment has six dimensions that impact teacher effectiveness in the school and the classroom. These dimensions include decision-making (Hirsch, Emerick, Church & Fuller, 2006), professional growth (Short & Johnson, 1994), status (Klecker & Loadman, 1998), self-efficacy (Short & Johnson, 1994), autonomy (Hirsch et al., 2006) and impact (Martin, Crossland & Johnson, 2001). Globally, studies have shown that schools improved when these dimensions of teacher empowerment are applied in schools. For instance, in the United States of America, Squire-Kelly (2012) reports a study conducted by the Centre for Teaching Quality and found a positive correlation between teacher empowerment and school improvement. In Africa, it appears that studies report contradictory findings concerning the application of the concept of teacher empowerment in schools. In Namibia for instance, Shaimemanya (2017) demonstrated through a review of literature and policy documents that teacher empowerment has not been fully functional in schools, thereby, creating loopholes in the quest to improve schools. Similarly, Dampson (2019) found from his research that the extent of teacher empowerment in Ghanaian basic schools is low. Dampson (2015) further argued that the extent of teacher empowerment differs from one category of school to another. Whilst teachers in dynamic and improved schools are well empowered to bring forth the desired improvement in the schools, teachers in failing and trapped schools struggle to make positive impact in their schools. The question that often begs for answers is whether teacher empowerment is the missing link in school improvement among the categories of schools.

The study was grounded in the Empowerment Model designed to equip people such as teachers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enhance successful participation in both school and classroom activities (Moran, Taliaferro & Pate, 2014). These key elements of every professional are considered as "tools" that cannot be downplayed in every professional field. Arguably, the field of every professional teacher requires the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are deemed essential for effective classroom practice and which is why the National Teaching Standards in Ghana mandate every teacher to acquire and demonstrate Professional values, attitude, knowledge and practices (NTS, 2017). Therefore, school improvement requires that teachers are empowered effectively with the knowledge,

skills and attitudes that would make them functional in the classroom. This model operates on the premise that every teacher requires three essential but unique elements comprising programming (continuum of opportunities), support (helping hands) and training (strategies for success). Interestingly, all three elements must interact to achieve true empowerment at the school level (Moran, Mernin & Gibbs, 2017). As a lens for this study, it is argued that school improvement hinges on the creation of three essential elements. Firstly, headteachers are expected to provide opportunities that align with the physical, cognitive, and social abilities of the teachers in the staffroom. The creation of such opportunities would give teachers a continuum of options that suit their abilities. To this end, the creation of specified opportunities might restrict the development of the teachers and further limit their participation in school activities. Secondly, schools would only improve when headteachers provide some level of support for the teachers. Lastly, headteachers need to provide teachers with a series of training modules to enable teachers to acquire the necessary knowledge and essential skills. The creation of these essential elements of the Empowerment Model would transform schools that are classified as trapped and failing into dynamic and improved schools whilst their absence would affect the quality of education provided in these schools.

2. Statement of the Problem

Over the past decade, the Government of Ghana (GoG) has undertaken a concerted campaign to improve the quality of its educational system. Although considerable progress has been made in decentralizing responsibility and authority within the educational system, improving educational quality remains a challenge. Reports from national large-scale assessments (National Education Assessment [NEA], Early Grade Reading Assessment [EGRA] and Early Grade Mathematics Assessment [EGMA]), national examinations (Basic Education Certificate Examination [BECE] and West Africa Secondary School Certificate Education [WASSCE]) and international large-scale assessments (TIMSS) show a decline in the performance of the students annually. Impliedly, the educational reforms undertaken by governments over the years have only been able to address the problems of educational accessibility and participation whilst the problem of school improvement persists. Unsurprisingly, studies (Mujis & Harris, 2006; Dampson, 2019) have questioned and raised issues about school improvement, although they seem partially satisfied with accessibility and participation stemming from the educational reforms.

In my 25 years as a professional teacher at various levels of the Ghanaian educational system, I have come to realize that the 'top-down' policy implementation approach often affects teachers at the classroom levels. Whilst research (Dampson, 2015, 2019) has shown that teachers are not empowered, anecdotal records coupled with informal interactions with most of the teachers in the basic schools indicate varying degrees of teacher empowerment depending on the school a teacher finds himself. Evidently, studies by Dampson, Havor & Laryea (2019); Harris, (2002); Blasé & Blasé (2001) and Hopkins, 2003 argue that teachers in dynamic and improved schools feel a lease of empowerment, whilst their colleagues in failing and trapped schools feel not empowered at all. This turn of events is often exhibited in the performance of the students in their examinations. Unsurprisingly, the Ghanaian public and other stakeholders in education have raised concerns about the kind of schools their

children enrolled in vis-a-vis their performance. Whiles teachers in failing and trapped schools are criticized for not teaching well, they argue that headteachers have failed to empower them to improve their schools.

Meanwhile, Dampson (2015) is of the view that for basic schools in Ghana to improve headteachers should invest in teachers the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and the right to excise professional judgment about the content of the curriculum and means of instruction. Arguably, that the missing hub in school improvement in Ghanaian basic schools in the democratic value where teachers are regarded as concerned citizens, protector of the truth, participants in the school improvement, and be allowed to voice their opinions about educational policy as enshrined in the National Teaching Standard. However, it appears there is a dearth of information regarding the missing hub in school improvement in Ghanaian basic schools. To fill the identified gap, the following research questions were considered:

1. What is the missing hub in school improvement among the four categories (Improved, Dynamic, Trapped and Failing) of basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana?

2. To what extent does teacher empowerment predict school improvement in basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana?

3. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 provides the conceptual basis for this study. It is argued that there are four types of basic schools in Ghana. These schools are Failing Schools, Dynamic Schools, Trapped Schools and Improved Schools (Afful-Broni, 2006). Failing schools in this study refer to schools that are characterized by a low level of development and maintenance. Such schools tend to be reactive rather than proactive in problem-solving and decision making and often lack leadership. There is, therefore, a culture of fragmentation among the teachers which often makes it difficult for the teachers to have articulated goals, plans and visions. Dynamic schools on the other hand tend to approach innovation with great enthusiasm and are viewed externally in high regard. However, such schools often drive forward innovation at the expense of maintenance activities. In relation to Trapped schools, they undertake all the necessary maintenance activities but neglect developmental works. These schools are not failing as they appear to be effectively run. Their reluctance to develop or take on new ideas means that they will, at best, remain where they are and, at worst, gradually deteriorate. Such schools have the potential to make an enormous contribution to student performance and achievement but need to unlock this potential by investing in development and change. Contrarily, Improved schools tend to be well organised with efficient systems for recording and reviewing progress. These schools place a high emphasis on maintenance and are good on the day-to-day routine management tasks and requirements. In such schools, teachers are offered the opportunity to develop themselves and bring on board innovative ideas that can aid the school to constantly improve. In this study, therefore, it is conceptualized that for schools to improve, teachers have to be empowered along the six dimensions in the teacher empowerment model. Without empowerment, Trapped and Failing Schools would remain where they are whilst Improved and Dynamic Schools will continue to attract the attention of

policymakers and stakeholders due to their enviable records in school improvement. A pictorial view of the conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

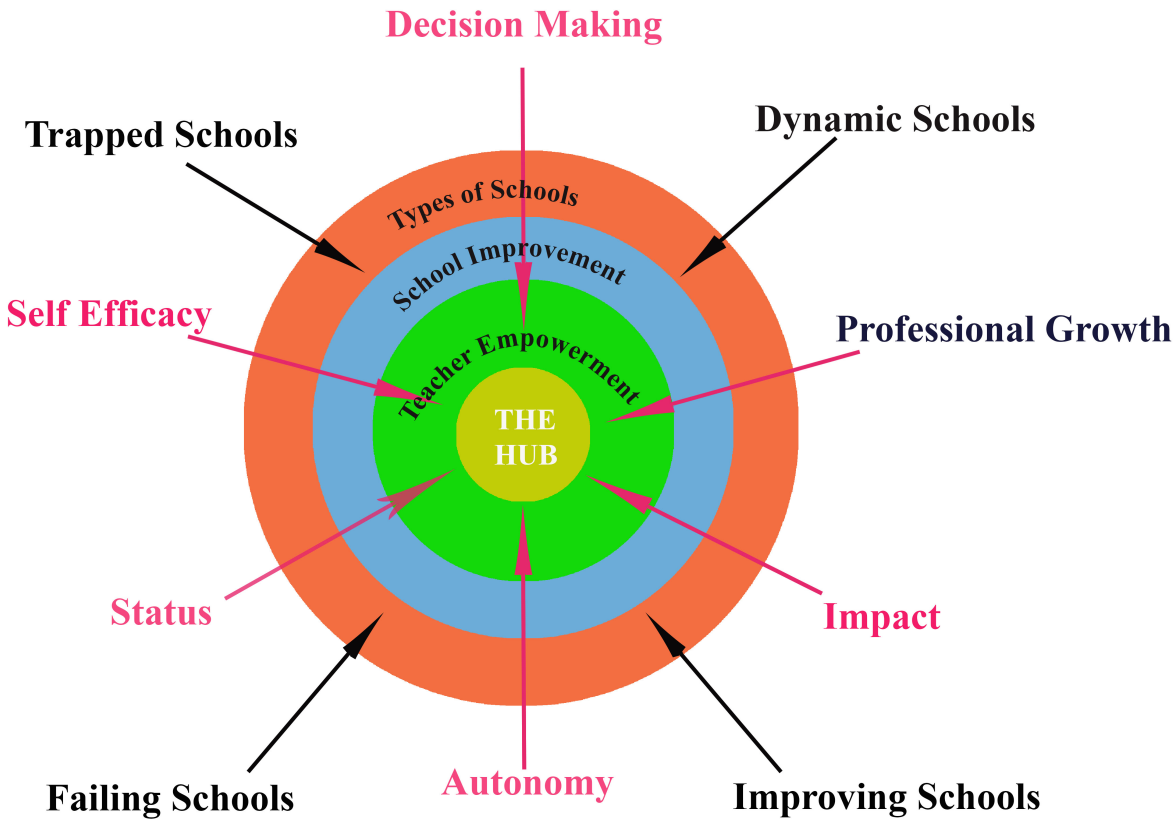

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Adapted from Blasé and Blasé (2001)

4. Methodology

The study employed the pragmatic research philosophy drawing data from the quantitative and qualitative paradigms to help evaluate and explain the results obtained from one source via another (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, the study adopted the explanatory sequential design of the mixed-method approach where the results obtained from the quantitative data were supplemented and explained with data from the qualitative source. The population of the study included teachers and headteachers in the four categories of basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana. According to the data from the Human Resource Division of the Ghana Education Service (2020), there are 5324 basic school teachers and 863 headteachers in the Central Region of Ghana. Using the proportional stratified random sampling technique, the study sampled 325 respondents made up of 260 teachers and 65 headteachers from the four categories of basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana for the quantitative phase of the study. Subsequently, 15 teachers and 5 headteachers from the 4 categories of schools were sampled purposely for the qualitative phase of the study.

A researcher-designed Likert-type questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide were used to gather data from the teachers and headteachers. The validity of the quantitative instrument was ascertained by given to an expert to check for double, confusing, and leading questions. It was subsequently pilot tested among 100 teachers in the Western Region of Ghana who share similar characteristics to the respondents involved in the study. The pilot test yielded a Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient of 0.84. Regarding the semi-structured interview guide, it was designed based on the findings of the quantitative analysis. Its trustworthiness was determined through checking for credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The questionnaire was administered from June 2020 to September 2020. During this period, the COVID-19 was still peaking in Ghana. The researcher, therefore, has to create a digital version of the questionnaire using Google Forms. The digital form (online survey) of the questionnaire was administered first and submitted instantly through the digital mode. Subsequently, a semi-structured interview guide was designed based on the findings of the quantitative data to collect in-depth data explanation from participants. The interview was conducted via telephone and recorded for transcription. The quantitative data were analysed using Means and Standard Deviations. Regarding the qualitative data, the researcher studied the field notes, transcribed the audio interview data, and analysed them into themes based on the framework for thematic analysis suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

5. Results and Discussions

This section of the study deals with the results of the data collected from the field. The presentation of this section was done in two aspects. The first aspect presented the data collected on the demographic characteristics of the respondents whilst the second aspect deals with the results of the data collected to answer the research question that guided the study

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

In this section, data collected on the background characteristics of the teachers and the headteachers who participated in the study were reported. Table 1 presents the results.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Sub-scale	Teachers N (%) *	Headteachers N (%) *
Sex	Male	143(55.0)	36(55.4)
	Female	117(45.0)	29(44.6)
Age	Between 25-30yrs	19(7.3)	4(6.2)
	Between 31-35yrs	48(18.5)	12(18.5)
	Between 36-40yrs	72(27.7)	14(21.5)
	Between 41-45yrs	49(18.8)	15(23.1)
	Between 46-50yrs	42(16.2)	17(26.2)
	Between 51-55yrs	23(8.8)	3(4.6)
	Between 56-60yrs	7(2.7)	
Experience	Below 1yr	17(6.5)	7(10.8)
	Between 1-5yrs	62(23.8)	12(18.5)
	Between 6-10yrs	84(32.3)	26(40)
	Between 11-15yrs	70(26.9)	12(18.5)
	Between 16-20yrs	27(10.4)	8(12.3)
Qualification	Cert A	15(23.1)	3(4.6)
	Diploma	198(74.7)	32(49.2)
	Degree	42(15.8)	26(40.0)
	Master's	5(1.9)	4(6.2)
Type of Schools	Improved	38(14.6)	6(9.2)
	Dynamic	42(16.2)	11(16.9)
	Failing	101(38.8)	25(38.5)
	Trapped	97(37.3)	23(35.4)

Source: Online Field Survey, 2020 *Percentages in Parenthesis

It is seen from Table 1 that 143(55.0%) of the teachers that participated in the study were males whilst 117(45.0%) were females. On the part of the headteachers, 36(55.0%) were males whilst 29(44.6%) were females. It is therefore evident that more males participated in the study than females. This also implies the teaching profession in Ghana remains a male-dominated profession. It further buttresses the long-held perception that admission into Colleges of Education is mostly male dominated. The results further show that the majority (27.7%) of the teachers who participated in the study were 36-40 years whilst the majority of the headteachers were between 46-50 years. Arguably, teachers at these prime stages of their lives possess enormous experiences and exuberance energy that can transcend into their classroom practices of they are well empowered. The ages of the headteachers only confirm the long-held notion that leaders in the Ghana Education Service are appointed based on years of service and not qualification (Dampson, Havor, & Laryea, 2018). It is however surprising to note that majority of the teachers (74.7%) and headteachers (49.2%) have not upgraded themselves ever since they graduated from their institutions of training. However, the results seek to imply that educational authorities need to provide the avenue for teachers

to upgrade their knowledge domains to sharpen their instructional delivery. The Table further shows that the majority (38.8%) of the teachers teach in failing schools whilst 25(38.5%) of the headteachers also find themselves in same category. It is therefore evident that the majority of the teachers find themselves in schools that are poor in the day-to-day management task. According to Afful-Broni (2006), such schools tend to be reactive rather than proactive. Even though such schools have leaders, there may lack leadership in carrying out the necessary actions in running the schools.

Research Question One: What is the missing hub in school improvement among the four categories (Improved, Dynamic, Trapped and Failing) of basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana?

This research question sought to investigate the missing element in school improvement among basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana. To do this, a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire made of 36 items measuring the various dimensions of teacher empowerment as well as the characteristics of the classifications of types of schools were administered. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using Means and Standard Deviations where a Mean of 3.0 and above was considered Above the average Mean, whilst a Mean below 3.0 was considered below the Average Mean. The result of the data analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Classification of Schools and Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment

Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment	Types of Schools							
	Improved schools		Dynamic schools		Trapped schools		Failing schools	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Decision Making	4.6	1.1	4.4	1.2	2.1	1.1	1.9	1.1
Professional Growth	4.3	1.2	4.2	1.2	2.3	1.1	1.6	0.8
Status	4.2	1.2	4.1	.84	2.5	1.2	1.5	0.7
Self-Efficacy	4.7	1.7	4.3	1.2	2.2	1.1	1.7	0.8
Autonomy	4.7	1.2	4.4	1.1	2.4	1.2	1.8	1.2
Impact	4.6	.98	4.2	1.1	2.5	1.3	2.0	1.2
Mean of Means/Average Standard Deviation	**4.5**	**1.2**	**4.2**	**1.1**	**2.3**	**1.2**	**1.8**	**1.0**

Source: Online Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 presented the results of the data collected from teachers and headteachers on the missing hub in school improvement among the four categories (Improved, Dynamic, Trapped and Failing) of basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The Means of Means for the various dimensions of teacher empowerment = Mean = 4.5, SD = 1.2 for Improved Schools, 4.2, SD = 1.1 for Dynamic Schools, 2.3, SD = 1.2 for Trapped Schools and 1.8, SD = 1.0 for Failing Schools means that the Trapped and Failing Schools missed out on the various elements of teacher empowerment. This was further evident from the teachers' respondents to the various elements. For instance, regarding teacher involvement in decision making, the

teachers in Improved Schools were highly involved (Mean = 4.6, SD = 1.1), followed by teachers in Dynamic Schools (Mean = 4.4, SD = 1.2). However, the mean scores of the respondents in Trapped (Mean = 2.1, SD = 1.1) and Failing Schools (Mean = 1.9, SD = 1.1). show that they were not involved in school decision-making. This finding was further corroborated through the interview with the teachers and headteachers from the four categories of schools. For instance, a teacher from a Dynamic School said:

In this school, both the teachers and the headteachers agree on policies before they are implemented. The headteacher alone does not decide what must be done to make the school a successful one (Amoah, a basic school teacher at Mpontua Basic School).

Another teacher from an Improved School concurred:

We are all involved in deciding what should happen to both teachers and students in this school. We don't leave everything in the hands of the headmaster and the assistant (Appiah, a basic school teacher at Mpontuo M/A JHS).

To affirm the above quotation, a headteacher in an improved school had this to say:

Here, both teachers and I make decisions about how we expect the school to be. I don't make unilateral decisions (Armstrong, a headteacher at Mprensa L/A JHS)

These submissions from the teachers and headteachers buttress the view regarding decision making in Improved and Dynamic Schools. On the contrary, the teachers from the Trapped and Failing Schools revealed that they were not involved in the decisions of the school. For instance, one of the teachers said:

The headteacher does not involve us in any of the decisions concerning the teachers and the students. We are only informed after the decision has been taking. (Mansa, a teacher at Akrodie Presby Primary A).

Surprisingly, a headteacher confirmed this assertion from the teacher by saying:

I normally make decisions alone. Sometimes I think it takes too much time to consult all my teachers. I always take the best decision for the school. I only inform the teachers to implement whatever I have decided. (Menka, a headteacher at Akron Methodist School A).

Teacher participation in school decision making is a critical element in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the schools in delivering their core mandate (Wadesango, 2012). As suggested by Hirsch et al. (2006), teachers are the ones most prepared to make choices on what happens in their classrooms. The lack of it therefore in the Trapped and Failing schools presupposes that the teachers miss out on making instructional decisions in the classroom. Unsurprisingly, the teachers in the Improved (Means = 4.7, SD = 1.2) and Dynamic Schools (Means = 4.4, SD = 1.1) have more autonomy than their counterparts in Trapped (Mean = 2.4, SD = 1.2) and Failing Schools (Means = 1.8, SD = 1.2). Autonomy in this sense refers to the teachers' sense of freedom to make instructional decisions. The Trapped and Failing Schools might stifle the creativity and innovation that teacher participation in school decision making would offer. The occurrence of this practice in such

schools would directly continue to affect the performance of the students in the various disciplines taught by these teachers.

Table 1 also shows that opportunity for professional growth is high in Improved (Mean = 4.3, SD = 1.2) and Dynamic Schools (Mean = 4.2, SD = 1.2) than Trapped (Mean = 2.3, SD = 1.1) and Failing (Mean = 1.6, SD = 0.8) Schools. The mean scores presuppose that teachers in Improved and Dynamic Schools have opportunities to grow professionally than their colleagues in the Trapped and Failing Schools. From the interview with the participants, it was clear that the Improved and Dynamic Schools always give teachers the opportunity for professional growth. For instance, one teacher said:

You are allowed to go for further studies anytime you are due. Besides, resource persons are always invited to share with the teachers' new dimensions of knowledge in their subject they have to know (Alberta, a teacher at Amoah Memorial Basic School)

Another teacher submitted:

Every year, we need to present to the headteacher our readiness to upgrade our knowledge domains. From there, those who are due are allowed to go for further studies in so far as it will benefit our teaching practices. (Nelson, a teacher at Abaasa M/A Basic School).

From this submission, it is clear that in improved schools there are opportunities for teachers to grow professionally. On the contrary, the teachers from the Trapped and Failing schools maintained:

Here, we don't normally attend sandwich programmes and other educational significant programmes to upgrade ourselves even if you are done (Martin, a teacher at Alberta Memorial School).

A headteacher from these categories of schools explained why teachers are not allowed to participate in programmes that would improve their classroom practices:

My brother, when a teacher leaves the class for three months to just attend a sandwich programme, who is expected to take over? In this school, the moment you leave your class for a week without approval from the District Director it means you have forfeited your position as a teacher (Maclean, a headteacher at Mpransa Roman Catholic Basic School).

It is clear from these responses that the teachers in the Trapped and Improved schools wish to have the opportunities to develop themselves, however, they are mostly denied these opportunities.

The lack of opportunities for teachers to develop the knowledge and skills they graduated from the institutions of training might prevent the teachers from meeting the diverse needs of the learners they have in their classrooms (Hirsch et al., 2006). The 21st century has seen the promotion of constructivist philosophies that advocates for the use of constructivist-inspired pedagogical strategies that are new teachers (Peers, Diezmann & Watters, 2003). This, therefore, places a herculean task on teachers to constantly improve their pedagogical practices to meet the changing needs of the students in their classrooms. Again, it was

therefore not startling that the Means of the teachers from the Improved (Means = 4.7, SD = 1.7) and Dynamic (Mean = 4.3, SD = 1.2) Schools on the self-efficacy of the teachers was high than their colleagues in the Trapped (Mean = 2.2, SD = 1.1) and Failing (Mean = 1.7, SD = 0.8). Arguably, the lack of opportunities for teachers to collaborate with their colleagues to participate in professional development programmes might affect the belief that they can perform their jobs effectively.

The results in Table 1 further reveals that the teachers in Improved (Mean = 4.2, SD = 1.2) and Dynamic Schools (Mean = 4.1, SD = .84) had higher status than their colleagues in Trapped (2.5, SD = 1.1) and Failing schools (Mean = 1.5, SD = 0.7). This means that the teachers in the Improved and Dynamic schools received a greater amount of attention from superiors, community members and parents compared to their colleagues in Trapped and Failing schools. The extent of teacher motivation depends on the extent to which they are recognised (Nyakundi, Raburu & Okwara, 2019). The lack of recognition may affect the teachers' motivation to work, thereby, affecting teacher quality and students' academic performance.

Interestingly, the responses from the teachers in the Trapped (Mean = 2.5, SD = 2.0) and Failing (Mean = 2.0, SD = 2.0, SD = 1.2) schools indicate that the teachers do not influence their school environment as compared to their colleagues in the Improved (Mean = 4.6, SD = .98) and Dynamic (Means = 4.2, SD = 1.1) Schools. Teachers' inability to influence their school environment positively can harm the teachers' self-esteem (Martin, Crossland & Johnson, 2001). According to Mbuva (2016), the low self-esteem exhibited by teachers in the Trapped and Failing schools would lead to the development of characteristics such as a negative view of life, perfectionist attitude, blaming behaviour and dependence. However, the teachers in the Dynamic and Improved Schools would show signs of confidence, self-direction, and the ability to trust others and accept the mistakes of others. A clear picture of the difference between the four categories of schools described in the analysis is presented in Figure 1.

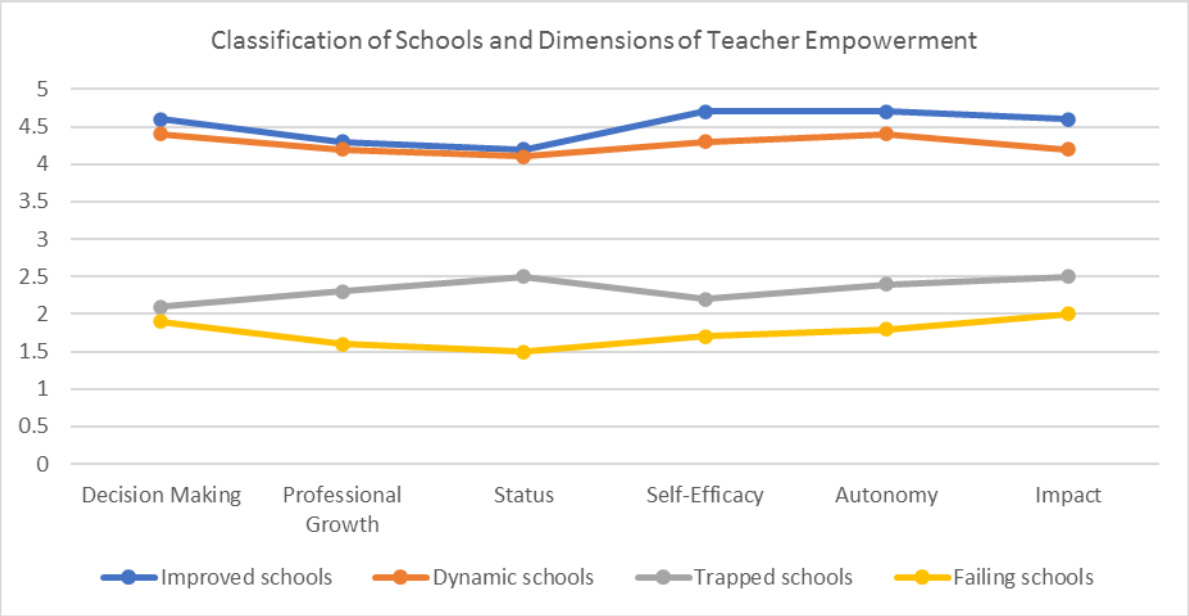

Figure 2. *Classification of Schools and Dimensions of Teacher Empowerment*

From Figure 2, it is evident that the missing hub in school improvement among the four categories of basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana is teacher empowerment. Whilst schools belonging to the Improved and Dynamic categories were empowered, schools in the categories of Trapped and Failing are not empowered.

Research Question Two: To what extent does teacher empowerment predict school improvement in basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana?

The second research question investigated the extent to which teacher empowerment influence school improvement. The results from Multiple Regression are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Model Summary of Multiple Regression Results for Teacher Empowerment and School Improvement

				Std.	Change Statistics				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.515[a]	0.52	0.48	1.428	0.52	31.530	1	324	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher Empowerment

b. Dependent Variable: School Improvement

Source: Online Field Survey, 2020

The Multiple Regression results in Table 3 revealed that teacher empowerment accounted for 50.2% of the variance in school improvement which was found to be statistically significant [F (1, 324) = 31.530, p<0.05]. This result implied that other factors not included in this study were responsible for 49.8% influence on school improvement. It is therefore inferred from these results that teacher empowerment was a good predictor of school improvement. The study further examined the beta value as an indication of statistical significance, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Standardized and Unstandardized Coefficients for Teacher Empowerment Influencing School Improvement

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.159	0.213		14.807	0.000		
	Teacher Empowerment	0.106	0.051	0.036	2.072	0.038	0.961	1.040

Source: Online Field Survey, 2020

The results in Table 4 shows that teacher empowerment (β=0.036, t=2.072, p<0.05), contributed significantly to school improvement. The results of this study have shown that teacher empowerment remains an indispensable tool in school improvement. Emerick Montgomery, Reeves, Church and Hirsch (2007) posit that educational reforms alone do not guarantee school improvement unless teachers are encouraged to control and take responsibility for several important decisions that influence not just their classrooms but in the larger environment where they teach. Unfortunately, stakeholders such as parents, headteachers, students and curriculum developers determine most classroom and school-wide decisions (Scot, 2004). Literature still remains inconclusive as to whether teacher empowerment affects student achievement. However, the overall influence of teacher empowerment cannot be downplayed. Squire-Kelly (2012) maintains that if teachers feel empowered or are actively involved in decision making, they will be more effective to promote ideas and innovations that would aid schools to improve.

6. Conclusions and Implications for Policy and Practice

The study sought to investigate the missing hub in school improvement among the four categories (Improved, Dynamic, Trapped and Failing) of basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana. Results from the data collected from the field have shown that teachers in the improved and dynamic schools are highly empowered than their counterparts in the trapped and failing schools. The teachers in the trapped and failing schools lack all the six (6) dimensions of teacher empowerment such as decision making, professional growth, status,

self-efficacy, autonomy and impact. The study further found that teacher empowerment affects school improvement significantly.

The study, therefore, concludes that the missing element in school improvement in Ghana is teacher empowerment. Impliedly, the performance of students in the Dynamic and Improved Schools would continue to be better than the performance of students from the Trapped and Failing Schools. More alarmingly, the gap would further escalate if not surmounted. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and the Central Region Education Directorate should organize workshops and seminars for teachers and headteachers in trapped and failing schools to be educated on the tenets of teacher empowerment and how it can be used as a tool to improve schools. Again, teachers from the Trapped and Failing Schools need to collaborate and seek their professional growth. Moreover, curriculum developers should create opportunities within the formal curriculum where teachers would have the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues and peers in their total professional development. At the school-level, District Directors of Education should collaborate with head teachers to institute school-based policies that would support teachers in their professional learning communities.

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