

School Improvement in Ghana: Strategies Adopted by Heads of Junior High Schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, Ghana

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the strategies adopted by school heads in public junior high schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis, Ghana. Specifically, the study was to identify the predominant change approach adopted and the area of focus for school improvement. A non-experimental descriptive study was conducted using questionnaire to collect data. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, group means, and ANOVA. The study revealed that even though the rational approach was the predominant approach adopted for school improvement, its adoption is not significantly different from the adoption of power-coercive approach. However, the study revealed that there was a significant difference between rational approach and reconstructive approach for school improvement and also a significant difference between power-coercive approach and reconstructive approach for school improvement. The study also revealed that school improvement efforts were mainly directed at the ecology of the school. The study was limited by the self-assessment technique employed to evaluate strategies adopted by school heads. In general, respondents in self-assessment tend to self-promote and may be unwilling to disparage their professional activities, believing that doing so may be personally detrimental. The study found the strategies adopted by the respondents to be largely ineffective in having protracted changes in the school. Protracted changes should be anchored in the school's culture utilizing reconstructive approach. Recommendations included the promotion of the concept of directed autonomy to enable the respondents create a change vision of their schools while being held accountable for their actions.

Keywords: change, change strategies, educational change, school improvement, school leadership for change

1. Introduction

Changes in the education system are attempts to find new ways to deliver education to learners and to attain school improvement. Fullan (2007) sees school improvement as both shifting paradigms within education and efforts of reform within education. According to Duke (2004), educational change is "intended to alter the goals of education and to improve what students are expected to learn, how students are instructed and assessed, and how educational functions are organized, regulated, governed, and financed" (p. 30).

The need for school improvement cannot be overemphasized in a knowledge society. In a changing world, schools are to engage in continuous improvement to produce the calibre of students who will have the knowledge and skills needed to not only survive but to impact their society. Disappointing performing schools produce students lacking basic academic skills and such students have shrinking employment opportunities. Kowalski (2010) intimates that students who fail to achieve minimum academic standards stand very little chance of securing gainful employment and the quality of their lives is diminished affecting society negatively. On the other hand, schools engaging in continuous improvement fulfill their mandate as efficient institutions - utilizing resources from society to transform learners into citizens who contribute to the growth of the society.

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School improvement has the potential to transform schools into high performing schools. Elmore (2007) describes high performing schools as having clearly articulated expectations for student learning, coupled with a sense of urgency about improvement, adopting challenging curricula, and investing in staff professional development. In engaging in school improvement, school administrators develop clear vision for their schools and utilize the change opportunities to speed the journey toward the preferred future.

The provision of education in Ghana is the responsibility of the government of Ghana. The government bears the primary responsibility for funding education in the country. Through the Ministry of Education (MOE) the government enacts policies for the conduct of education. The MOE executes its policies for pre-tertiary education through the Ghana Education Service (GES), which is the body empowered by the constitutions of Ghana to conduct pre-tertiary education. The educational system of Ghana is made up of basic education, second-cycle education, and tertiary education. The basic education consists of two years of kindergarten, six years of primary school, three years of junior high school. After the junior high school, students are expected to take a national standardized test, the Basic Examination Certificate Examination (BECE). The students' performance in the BECE is used to place them into the various categories of second-cycle institutions. The second-cycle education is made up of a two track system: three years of senior high school or three years of technical/vocational development institute. The technical/vocational education is a preparation for the job market while the senior high school education is a preparation for tertiary education. At the end of the senior high school, students are expected to sit for a national standardized examination, the West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Again, the performance of the students in the WASSCE is used to determine the type of tertiary institution the student will attend. The tertiary education is made up of institutions of professional training, the polytechnics, and the universities.

School heads in junior high schools in Ghana are appointed by the Ghana Education Service. The prospective school head is not required to complete a professional standardized preparatory program in educational administration. The school head is required to meet the criteria of (a) being a professional teacher with satisfactory work history and conduct and (b) must have attained the rank of superintendent; a rank attained after a minimum of 12 years of teaching experience.

The administrative structure of the GES places the school head in a position akin to that of a middle-level manager in the corporate society. The major role expectations of the school heads; managing your school and improving the quality of learning, are prescribed by the Ghana Education Service and outlined in the Ministry of Education's (2010) *Head Teachers' Handbook*. The role expectations include proficiencies that span across the climate of the school such as, managing people and instructional time, managing co-curricular activities, managing learning resources and financial matters, managing physical facilities, increasing school intake and attendance, assessing teacher and pupil performance, and improving relations between school and community. The school heads operate in an environment of directed autonomy (Kowalski, 2010) where broad goals are set for the school heads and they are expected to exercise leadership in the schools to meet these goals.

The most-frequent problems of practice faced by school heads are insufficient funds, managing the budget, dealing with non-payment of school fees, managing student discipline, complying with the Ghana Education Service mandates, and seeking input from stakeholder groups (e.g., staff, parents, students, and community members).

Problem Statement

The education system in Ghana has experienced several changes. More specifically, after independence in 1957, there have been major educational changes in the curriculum, the process of teaching and learning, teacher preparation, and duration of academic programmes. Discussions relating to school improvement have assumed centre stage in the wake of public dissatisfaction with student test scores in recent times. Stakeholders are demanding excellence and are calling on school authorities to improve the performance of the schools. The public is questioning why in the midst of several school improvement efforts in the country, schools are failing to perform to the expectations of the stakeholders.

School improvement is intended to improve educational outcomes and if there seem to be “business as usual” then the situation raises several issues. Of prime concern as to why school improvement is not achieving the intended outcomes is how these changes are implemented in the schools. Various researchers (e.g., Chin & Benne, 1985); Fullan, 2007; Kowalski, 2010) have suggested various approaches to implement educational change. The researchers further opine that the successful implementation of educational change is predicated on the adoption of the appropriate change approach. In the wake of increasing public dissatisfaction with outcomes of school improvement efforts in Junior High Schools in Ghana, the key questions school administrators must address are: *why are school improvement efforts not yielding the desired results? Are school administrators adopting the appropriate strategies to implement and anchor changes in the schools?* Studies on school improvement in Ghana have focused on the readiness of school administrators to implement change. There is a dearth of studies to examine the change approach adopted by the administrators. However, Fullan (2007) posits that the success of school improvement hinges on both the “what” and the “how” of the school improvement effort. This study sought to examine the change approach adopted by school administrators in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis and the elements in the school climate that are the targeted areas for school improvement.

The success of school improvement is driven by the assumptions one makes about how to go about effecting changes in the institution. Fullan (2001) describes the assumptions as “powerful and frequently subconscious sources of actions” (p. 122) which explains why same tools for implementing school improvements may be a great success in one situation and a failure in another situation.

Purpose of Study

The population examined in this study consisted of all heads of public junior high schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis. The study addressed two main goals: to describe (a) the change approach adopted by heads of junior high schools for school improvement and (b) elements in the school climate that constitute the target areas for school improvement.

Specifically, the study was framed by two research questions:

1. What change approach do heads of junior high schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis adopt for school improvement?
2. What elements in the school climate constitute the target areas for school improvement in the junior high schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis?

The study was limited to heads of public junior high schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis ($n = 96$). The study instrumentation also was limited to measuring the opinions of school heads.

2. Review of Related Theory

School improvement is multifaceted and can assume several forms and can take place at different levels. Marzano (2007) suggests that school improvement could be initiated at the local level or at the national level and it may be a first-order change or second-order change. The former refers to surface level change made up of new ideas that fit into existing conceptual framework of operation, while the latter refers to a change where compatibility with existing conceptual framework does not determine success.

School improvement can be seen as planned or unplanned initiative (Fullan, 1999). Planned initiative occurs when there is recognition in the institution to engage in change. In this case, the institution proactively takes steps to do things differently. A planned school improvement thus occurs in an institution when a pre-designed plan for reorganizing how the institution conducts its operations is implemented. Herman and Herman (1994) refer to planned school improvement as optional change in the institution where key members of the institution initiate the change. An unplanned school improvement takes place in the institution when the institution has to change its way of doing things in reaction to unanticipated occurrences. Circumstances force the institution to embark on changes.

School improvement can also be characterized as linear or nonlinear (Wallace & Pocklington, 2002) and incremental or quantum (Hargreaves, 1998). Linear school improvement follows sequential path and educators concentrate on completing a task at one stage before moving to the next stage. In nonlinear school improvement several or most stages are pursued concurrently. Incremental school improvement deals with small continuous changes in the institution. On the other hand, quantum school improvement deals with major or radical changes to how an institution operates.

School improvement involves three major phases of (a) initiating the change, (b) anchoring the change in the institution, and (c) sustaining the change. Harris (2002) sees the three phases as overlapping and intrinsically linked and suggests that those leading school improvement should be familiar with these phases of change and the time frame for navigating each phase. "If change is introduced too quickly or without adequate time for proper implementation, it is likely to flounder and fail. Even a small-scale change takes time and requires that careful attention be paid to the phases of change." (p. 40).

School improvements do not occur by themselves. They need active orchestration and coordination, implementation strategies, to let them happen (Louis & Miles, 1990). Sims (2002) describes a three-stage change model; "unfreezing—changing—refreezing," developed by Kurt Lewin to implement changes in an institution. The unfreezing stage refers to a process of conducting gap analysis to identify difference between existing behaviours and the desired behaviors needed to attain the goals of the institution. The changing stage entails developing new behaviours that will facilitate the accomplishment of the goals of the institution. The final stage, refreezing, focuses on stabilizing the new behaviours in the institution through reward and reinforcement of the new behaviours.

Using a different change implementation approach from Lewin, but drawing similarities from the work of Chin and Benne (1985), Kowalski (2010) suggests three broad approaches for school improvement: rational approach, coercive approach, and reconstructive approach to implement school improvement. The rational approach is made up of two tools: the empirical–rational and the normative–reeducative tools. The empirical–rational uses empirical evidence to establish the urgency for change. Communication of relevant information and the giving of incentives to members of the institution are the main tools used in the empirical–rational approach. This change approach is driven by the assumption that people are rational and will act accordingly in the face of empirical evidence.

The normative–reeducative approach is based on redefining and reinterpreting existing norms and values through continuing professional development and developing commitments to the emerging new ones. The normative–reeducative approach presents members of the institution with the need to change existing norms and provide them with the necessary education to facilitate the establishment of new norms. The normative–reeducative approach is driven by the assumption that members of the institution are social beings and adhere to cultural norms and values.

The power-coercive approach is based on the exercise of authority and the imposition of sanctions to implement new norms in the institution. The power-coercive approach uses institutional structures (e.g., chain of command) to get members of the institution to accomplish tasks. The approach is based on the belief that unless members of the institution are forced to adopt changes, they will not do so on their own volition. Though the power-coercive approach requires less time and energy for implementation, it suffers from lack of "buy-in" by members of the institution leading to spiteful compliance (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007).

The reconstructive approach utilizes the building of a shared vision and the altering of fundamental assumptions that influence behaviour in the institution. Adopting reconstructive approach entails working in collaboration with all stakeholders. The reconstructive approach is driven by the conviction that behavior is largely controlled by underlying values and beliefs and unless these values and beliefs are altered, most change efforts are doomed to fail.

The area of focus of school improvement is a key determinant in assessing the impact of the school improvement effort. The ecology, the milieu, the organizing system, and the culture constitute possible areas

of focus for school improvement (Hanson, 2003). The ecology of the school addresses the physical frame of the school (e.g., buildings, grounds layout, equipment, furniture). The milieu of the school addresses the social frame (e.g., how people treat one another in the school). The organizing system of the school focuses on the structural frame of the school (e.g., lines of authority, programmes). The culture of the school addresses the symbolic frame of the school (e.g., shared values, beliefs, norms) (Kowalski, 2010).

Fullan (2007) identifies instructional materials, teaching strategies, and pedagogical assumptions as key result areas for school improvement with direct association with improved student learning. Sashkin and Egermeier (1993) point out that a successful school improvement will have to focus on fixing essential areas in the school that include the pedagogy (i.e., curricula, teaching methods, materials); the school culture; and the people. The Ghana Education Service appraisal instrument highlights key areas where the performance of the school head is assessed. The key areas include management activities, instructional supervision, staff development, record keeping, relationship with the community, and communication skills.

Kowalski (2010) intimates that there is variation in the amount of effort required for bringing changes to the various areas of focus for school improvement. He identifies ecology and system organisation as requiring relatively less effort than milieu and culture. Kowalski further points out that depending on the area of focus, the degree of impact on the overall effectiveness of school improvement varies. For example, ecological and structural alterations have less impact on school improvement effectiveness compared with milieu and cultural alterations. Protracted school improvement efforts require the area of culture as the key targeted area because employees usually revert to shared underlying assumptions about the way they conduct their business if the underlying assumptions are not the focus for alteration.

When educational change works, it does so because it motivates a million change agents to find meaning in collective action to improve humankind (Fullan, 2007). Fullan draws a distinction between restructuring and reculturing in strategies for school improvement. The former refers to getting things done by means of policies issues from higher authorities and comes under the rational empirical model. The latter addresses how stakeholders come to question and change their beliefs and habits to get things done and falls under the reconstructive model. Fullan (2007) opines that even though restructuring is adopted time and again as a tool for school improvement, reculturing should be the adopted preferable tool. He argues that school improvement goes beyond just prescribing policies, but it entails changing also the culture of the school.

3. Methodology

A non-experimental design using survey research was conducted to collect data from the study population. The study population consisted of all the heads of public junior high schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis ($n = 96$) in the Western region of Ghana. Members of the study population were identified from the Ghana Education Service (GES) directory. Various research on school improvement (e.g., Louis & Miles, 1990; Smith, 2008) informed the development of the study instrument. The instrument was pilot tested with 10 heads of public junior high schools in the Cape Coast metropolis. The pilot test provided valuable information in the structuring of the items for the final questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .722, indicating an acceptable reliability for the instrument.

The study instrument, distributed to the school heads, consisted of two sections and was made up of 50 Likert-type items, Section one consisted of 30 items addressing change approach. Each item belonged to only one of the category of change approach adopted for school improvement, that is, rational, power-coercive, and reconstructive. Each category had 10 items (Appendix A). Section two consisted of 20 items addressing areas of focus and each item belonged to only one of the areas, that is, ecology, milieu, system organisation, and culture. Each area of focus had five items (Appendix B). The responses to ascertain the change approach adopted and the area of focus of the school improvement were selected from one of four response choices: seldom, sometimes, often, and always and coded as "1", "2", "3", and "4" respectively.

Means and standard deviations were calculated for the responses to each item in section one and then rank-ordered from highest means (signifying change approach that are most frequently used) to lowest (signifying change approach that are least frequently used). The top ten items were identified as whether they belonged to the rational, the power-coercive, or the reconstructive approach. A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to test if differences existed in the amount and level of change approach adopted. Group means and standard deviations were then calculated for the change approach adopted. Similar analyses were conducted for section two.

4. Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Frequency of Change Approach

Change Approach	M	SD
Using student test scores	3.26	0.22
Improving teacher time on task	3.25	0.47
Conducting in-service training	3.21	0.21
Requiring frequent feedback on student progress	3.16	0.62
Providing resources	3.15	0.42
Participating in workshops	3.11	0.41
Organizing seminars for teachers	3.11	0.41
Demanding accountability	3.11	0.48
Using policy directives from GES	3.08	0.51
Motivating teachers with tangible rewards	3.08	0.66
Increasing supervision	3.06	0.21
Setting expectations for teachers	3.06	0.71
Assigning tasks to teachers	3.05	0.28
Increasing teacher classroom management skills	3.05	0.34
Relying on hierarchical school structures	2.98	0.48
Communicating effectively with school staff	2.98	0.51
Introducing new teaching methodology	2.92	0.65
Increasing teacher participation	2.92	0.66
Celebrating achievements in the school	2.87	0.61
Increasing consensus on school goals	2.87	0.65
Involving teachers in planning change initiatives	2.86	0.33
Establishing control	2.85	0.51
Relying on standard operating guidelines	2.82	0.37
Clarifying teacher beliefs	2.71	0.56
Allowing teachers to adopt innovative measures	2.54	0.38
Improving discipline	2.54	0.61
Sharing administrative tasks with staff	2.53	0.67
Increasing parental involvement	2.52	0.42
Encouraging collaborative teaching	2.49	0.52
Using experts to recommend change initiatives	2.15	0.61

Respondents indicated how frequently a change approach was adopted. The calculated means and standard deviations were based on the returned survey (n=61). The rank-ordered means are presented in Table 1.

The findings showed that of the 10 most frequently adopted change approach, seven were rational approach and three were power-coercive approach. Of the 10 least frequently adopted change approach, six were reconstructive approach, three were power-coercive approach, and one was rational approach. The computed group means based on change approach typology of rational, power-coercive, and reconstructive are depicted in table 2.

Table 2: Classification of Change Approach

Change Approach	Mean	SD
Rational	3.03	.33
Power-Coercive	2.97	.19
Reconstructive	2.73	.18

As a group, the rational approach to school improvement was mostly adopted. The results of the one-way ANOVA F test for significant differences in the means of change approach adopted are presented in table 3.

Table 3: ANOVA F test for Change Approach

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.510	2	.255	4.304	.024
Within Groups	1.600	27	.059		
Total	2.110	29			

The ANOVA was significant, $F(2, 27) = 4.303$, $p = .024$. Follow-up tests conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the means, showed that there was a significant difference between rational approach and reconstructive approach; $p = .027$, significant difference between power-coercive and reconstructive approach; $p = .03$, but no significant difference between the rational approach and the power-coercive approach.

This study showed that even though the rational approach is the predominant approach adopted for school improvement, its adoption is not significantly different from the adoption of power-coercive approach for school improvement. This finding is not uncommon in a highly structured school system operating with a rigid hierarchical structure. The governance of the school system in Ghana follows a rigid hierarchical structure (Ghana Education Service, 2012). Authority flows down from the headquarters of the Ghana Education Service, through the regional directorates of education, then to the district directorates, and finally to the school heads or building administrators. Change is initiated and implemented with an over reliance on formal authority and hierarchical power. The change approach adopted by the school heads may be understood in the context of schools as formal organisations (Sergiovanni, 2005) functioning from the classical organisational theory perspective. The school heads in Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis have little option but to use formalisation and centralisation as means to get tasks accomplished in the schools.

Heads of schools mostly function as implementers of policies. Over the years, the school heads have been socialized to believe that they are only expected to implement decisions made by others. Kowalski (2012) suggests that there are both professional and cultural barriers that prevent school heads from being change initiators as well as implementers. Professionally, the school heads are perceived as not having the requisite knowledge and skills to chart the course for school improvement. Culturally, there are values and beliefs about what the school head can do. These perceptions are major determining factors the type of strategy the school head would adopt.

Kowalski (2010) observes that school heads functioning as implementers of policies, adopt rational approach for school improvement as the first option believing in the staff to act rationally. Such school heads use staff professional development, in-service training, and empirical evidence to bring about change. Hall and Hord (2001) argue that when teachers attend professional development workshops addressing intended school changes, they are prepared to implement those changes.

Bacharach and Mundell (1993) observe that when it comes to educational change, interest groups or individuals emerge to attempt to influence decision making. According to Tyack and Cuban (1995), interest groups or individuals will organize and contest other groups as each group attempts to express their values and secure their interests in the educational change. The resultant outcome is that the school head would adopt a strategy, the rational approach, which tends to not rock the boat.

Ramsay and Clark (1990) point out that even though the rational approach is not the most effective change approach for school improvement, it has been the predominant approach used in schools. In the adoption of the rational approach, individual teachers are the focus of innovation and they are to champion the innovation so that other teachers would eventually adopt the innovation. Kowalski (2010) opines that this approach may not yield desired results if underlying assumptions in the school are not integrated into the professional development workshops.

A change in perception of the professional capability of the school heads and a decentralised system using the directed autonomy concept (Hanson, 2003) will probably enable the school heads to adopt a more effective approach to bring about school improvement. The environment the school heads function within places limitations on their capabilities to find ways of fostering positive relationships and partnerships with teachers, opinion leaders, school board, and the school community and negotiate “what to do”, “how to do”, and “when to do.”

Also, the respondents indicated how frequently an area (i.e., ecology, milieu, organizing, culture) was the focus of school improvement. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the responses and the computed means were rank ordered from highest to lowest. The rank-ordered means are reported in table 4.

Table 4: Frequency of Area of Change Focus

Areas of Change Focus	Mean	SD
Ensuring school safety	3.38	0.32
Providing equipment	3.23	0.16
Clarifying teacher duties	3.13	0.11
Providing TLMs	3.11	0.38
Reorganizing school schedule	3.02	0.22
Promoting time management	2.98	0.21
Beautifying school compound	2.82	0.22
Renovating school buildings	2.80	0.36
Facilitating team work	2.67	0.27
Assuring empathy	2.62	0.41
Increasing supervision	2.62	0.46
Improving classroom conditions	2.61	0.28
Clarifying shared values	2.57	0.12
Fostering interpersonal relationships	2.44	0.35
Increasing counseling services	2.43	0.18
Promoting school philosophy	2.36	0.32
Promoting conflict management	2.34	0.30
Building trust	2.26	0.32
Developing shared vision	2.18	0.13
Encouraging peer review	2.10	0.27

The findings showed that of the 10 most frequent areas of change focus, five belonged to ecological dimension, three belonged to organizing, and one each belonged to milieu and culture dimension.

Group means and standard deviations calculated for the responses to each of the areas of focus showed that as a group, ecology was the most frequent area of focus for school improvement and culture was the least area of focus for school improvement. The results of the group means are presented in Table 5. (See Appendix B).

Table 5: Classification of Area of Change Focus

Area of Focus	Mean	SD
Ecology	3.07	3.32
Organizing	2.87	0.25
Milieu	2.40	0.11
Culture	2.40	0.28

The results of the one-way ANOVA F test for significant differences in the means of area of change focus are presented in table 6.

Table 6: ANOVA F tests of Area of Change Focus

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.738	3	.579	11.488	.000
Within Groups	.807	16	.050		
Total	2.544	19			

The ANOVA was significant, $F(3,16) = 11.488$, $p = .000$. Follow-up tests conducted to evaluate pairwise differences among the means, showed that there were significant differences between ecology and milieu; $p = .001$,

ecology and culture; $p = .001$,

organizing and milieu; $p = .019$,

organizing and culture; $p = .020$.

This finding is consistent with the concerns raised by various authors (e.g., Fullan, 2007; Kowalski, 2010, Owens, 2005). Kowalski (2010) laments that when it comes to school improvement, school administrators tend to focus on areas in the institution which are easiest to change while they pay little attention to the impact the change will have on the school. For example, renovating school buildings or changing working hours, though not necessarily effortless tasks are easier to accomplish than changing pedagogical assumptions or institutional culture. The study finding is congruent with satisfying the minimum acceptable standards dictated by Ghana Education Service appraisal instrument for school heads. The minimum standards focus on what are easily observable in the school. The ecological dimension is easily seen.

Owens (2005) argues that more effort is required to alter institutional culture than to change the school's ecology, hence school heads seeking to expend minimum energy for school improvement will opt to focus school improvement efforts on ecological changes. According to Newmann (1993), successful school improvement efforts are targeted at the institutional culture through the creation of a shared vision that focuses on student learning.

5. Conclusion

This study found that the heads of public junior high schools in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis focus school improvement efforts mostly on the ecological aspects of the school and mainly adopt the rational approach for school improvement. The school heads spend relatively least efforts on the cultural dimension of the school. As various researchers (e.g., Fullan, 2001; Harris, 2002; Kowalski, 2010) have posited, focusing mostly on ecological alterations and using rational approach produces overall minimal impact on teaching and learning when engaging in school improvement. The school heads are constrained by the organizational structure, that is, a rigid hierarchical structure, to adopt ineffective strategies for school improvement. The predominant strategy adopted by the school heads suggests that the school heads are to produce short-term visible changes in the school to the detriment of long-lasting and protracted changes that will have significant impact on teaching and learning. This situation results in the school heads having limited liberty to set a vision for school improvement and to take steps to actualise the vision.

Placing more emphasis on the adoption of the rational approach to change produces outcomes that do not meet the expectations of the school public. The resulting changes are more often cosmetic and do not significantly impact teaching and learning. A highly centralized educational system, as pertains in the Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis, tends to favor the adoption of the rational approach and this will inevitably lead to short-term gains in school improvement, rather than long-lasting protracted changes. Also, the targeted area for school improvement becomes a key critical factor in determining the level of success for school improvements. Focusing on all the key dimensions of the school climate during school improvement would provide outcomes different from those experienced in Sekondi-Takoradi metropolis.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions reported in this study, three recommendations are offered:

1. The school heads primarily operate from the classical theory perspective. The GES should empower the school heads to adopt other paradigms for school improvement.
2. Possible associations between strategies adopted by school heads and personal characteristics of school heads (e.g., gender, years of teaching, years as assistant headteacher, years as headteacher, academic qualification) were not addressed in this research. Nevertheless, this topic has obvious importance; and, therefore, additional study is needed to determine whether such associations exist and are relevant to efforts at school improvement in Ghana.
3. This study should be replicated in other GES designated areas in Ghana to determine if findings reported here are typical for the entire country.

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Appendix A

Rational Approach

1. Using student test scores
 2. Improving teacher time on task
 3. Conducting in-service training
 4. Providing resources
 5. Participating in workshops
 6. Organizing seminars for teachers
 7. Motivating teachers with tangible rewards
 8. Increasing teacher classroom management skills
 9. Introducing new teaching methodology
 10. Using experts to recommend change initiatives
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Power-Coercive Approach

1. Requiring frequent feedback on student progress
 2. Demanding accountability
 3. Using policy directives from GES
 4. Increasing supervision
 5. Setting expectations for teachers
 6. Assigning tasks to teachers
 7. Relying on hierarchical school structures
 8. Establishing control
 9. Relying on standard operating guidelines
 10. Improving discipline
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Reconstructive Approach

1. Communicating effectively with school staff
 2. Increasing teacher participation
 3. Celebrating achievements in the school
 4. Increasing consensus on school goals
 5. Involving teachers in planning change initiatives
 6. Clarifying teacher beliefs
 7. Allowing teachers to adopt innovative measures
 8. Sharing administrative tasks with staff
 9. Increasing parental involvement
 10. Encouraging collaborative teaching
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Appendix B

Ecology

Ensuring school safety
Providing equipment
Providing TLMs
Beautifying school compound
Renovating school buildings

Milieu

Facilitating team work
Fostering interpersonal relationships
Increasing counseling services
Promoting conflict management
Encouraging peer review

Organizing

Clarifying teacher duties
Reorganizing school schedule
Promoting time management
Increasing supervision
Improving classroom conditions

Culture

Assuring empathy
Clarifying shared values
Promoting school philosophy
Building trust
Developing shared vision
