

# The Effect of Leadership Styles on Learners' Performance. The Case of Asonomaso Nkwanta in the Kwabre District Assembly of Ashanti Region in Ghana

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of leadership styles on academic performance in Junior High Schools (JHS) in Asonomaso Nkwanta in the Kwabre District Assembly of Ashanti Region in Ghana. The design for the study was a mixed study using both the qualitative and quantitative analyzes. It was a correlation survey designed to establish the relationship between leadership styles and academic performance in schools in Asonomaso Nkwanta in the Kwabre District Assembly. Data collected on the leadership styles of the school leaders were the independent variables and the academic performance as dependent variables. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 and Epi-Info, a data capturing and analysis software. The study noted that unless the headmasters are well equipped with knowledge and skills in leadership they would not know if they have any influence on their schools and on academic work. The study also established that even though respondents agreed that a leadership style can affect academic performance, the headmasters do not gain the confidence of the stakeholders enough in order to build terms that can enhance quality of teaching and learning. Based on these establishments, it was recommended that teacher training institutions should incorporate in their curriculum, training in the art and science of leadership in order to groom leaders' right from school. Again, it is recommended that compulsory continuous professional development in leadership should be institutionalized in Ghana Education Service (GES) for headmasters.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Learners' performance, Education, school

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is a major concern area in educational delivery in Ghana. Stakeholders like parents, teachers, students, policy makers and society as a whole are anxious to see learners excel in their academic work. Even without the necessary framework and resources, everyone still expects that standard of performance should be high at all times, and for poor academic performance, the Head of the school is mostly held responsible. Education is a vital strategy for the development of society (NSUBUGA, 2008). This strategy requires careful planning at every stage of its development especially in the development of the human capital. (NSUBUGA, 2008) observed that human resources determine the pace of economic and social development through the principal mechanism of formal education. Education empowers access to the productive nature of man, not only in social and economic terms but in term of imparting "values, ideas, attitudes and aspirations important for natural development" (NSUBUGA, 2008).

Many people tend to believe that a leader implies one person dominating another person or group of people; however, a leader is one who unifies and embodies the opinion of the people to any desired goal. Leadership is a key factor to improve the condition of any department and is also the same in school aspects. Functional schools and outstanding performance do not exist without effective leadership styles. In the light of the above, this study attempted to find the relationship between leadership styles and their respective impact on academic performance in schools, with particular reference to Junior High Schools (JHS) at Asonomaso Nkwanta in the Kwabre District Assembly of Ashanti region in Ghana.

The poor academic performance of students in Asonomaso Nkwanta has been a source of concern to the District Assembly and the District Directorate of the Ghana Education Service (GES). The schools' performance in public examinations, especially, at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) level has not been encouraging for the past five years. The Kwabre District Assembly, with Mampong as its capital, is located in the North-Western part of Ashanti Region. It lies approximately between coordinates of 6°41'N 1°37'W. The district covers an estimated area of 356 km<sup>2</sup> (137 sq mi). The main economic activities of the people in

Asonomaso Nkwanta are farming, small scale processing of agricultural produce (cottage industries) and trades like hair dressing, tailoring and carpentry. However, due to urbanization there are various government departments and agencies whose workers enroll their children in schools in the area. Despite the mix of children in the schools, the academic performance of the students in the BECE has not been very impressive.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review was designed to provide a review of leadership in general; leadership theories and styles; leadership and management; origins of leadership; educational leadership styles in schools and conclusion.

### **2.1 Definitions of Leadership**

(Edwards, 2009) who defined leadership as the practices that lead to positive influence, growth, and development of both the individual and groups for a collective purpose. The definition implies that a leader should not be self-centered but make sure to please most of his constituents if not all. Again the leader's way of life should influence his followers in a positive way as to the achievement of the collective goals of the group. (Kouzes & Posner, 2006) define leadership as mobilizing others to get extraordinary things done. They further emphasize that leadership skills are practices to transform values into action and vision into realities, obstacles into innovation, separation into solidarity and risks into rewards. Leadership also created the atmosphere that transforms challenging opportunities into great success.

### **2.2 Leadership and Management in school.**

Leadership is a broader concept than management. Management is a special kind of leadership in which achievement of organizational goal is paramount. Leadership occurs when ever one person attempts to influence the behavior of an individual or a group regardless of the reason. It may be for one's own goals or the goal of others and these goals may not be congruent with organizational goals (Paul, Blanchard, & Johnson Dewey, 2001). Efficacy is making the right choices about goals (Paul et al., 2001). Leadership, therefore, is a summation of those qualities of originality, people centered, inspiration, taking the challenge and above all to be efficient and effective in striving to doing the right thing at all times. Those who are in leadership require people of particular talent, and ability and not people who occupy positions of authority because of associated benefits or favors. The Pareto principle or "80-20 rule" which says that 80% of unfocussed effort produce only 20% of results, (AFFUL-BRONI, 2013) many successful leaders in our schools had to experiment with many ideas, policies or leadership principles. The initial errors due to ignorance, immaturity or inexperience could have been avoided. In effect, in any organization, including the school, there is the need for leaders to have powerful influence on the quality of teaching and student performance. (Dinham, 2007) there can be little doubt from examination of research findings that leadership is important in developing effective innovate schools and in facilitating quality teaching and learning. Although some research has indicated that school leaders have an indirect effect on student achievement, there are indeed identified leadership traits that are more conducive to increasing student performance by enhancing working conditions and the educational environment. School leadership is not just a learned behavior, but also depends on a variety of direct and indirect variables such as personality, district, goals, values and collective efficacy of all parties involved (J. T. Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004; T. Waters & Cameron, 2007)

### **2.3 Leadership Theories**

The Motivational Theory of Hierarchy of Needs by (Maslow) again changed the study of leadership theory by emphasizing more of the human aspect to meet the needs of employees for greater productivity. Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y had two extreme assumptions based on human nature. Theory X portrayed human need to be ordered before they can achieve organizational goal. Theory Y on the other hand observes humans as willing and ready to work and therefore can work on their own if they are properly motivated (Lin, 1999).

### **2.4 Leadership Styles in Schools**

Leadership style in education is rooted and influenced by scientific management theory with well-structured bureaucracy. It is loosely linked to the autonomy of teachers, based on pyramid theory of top down management style which is criticized for lack of effectiveness because participation and creativity were discouraged, with no room for followers to have a part in the decision-making process. (Lin, 1999), the change from autocratic to democratic leadership where hierarchical approach of control and predictable routines would change from autocratic leadership where hierarchical approach of control and predictable routines would change to transformable approach that nurtures acceptance and inspires follow in a facilitative role play of supporters and not at the center stage.

## **2.5 Autocratic Leadership Style in the schools**

It is a domineering style, where the leader alone takes decision for others to implement without previous consultation, very little communication, coercion, dictatorial; using threats and punishments, with trust in good intentions of others. Psychologists believe this styles stems from fear and feeling of insecurity. Brutal force is then a defensive tool; obviously, the underlying theory is McGregor's Theory Y (Afful-Broni, 2004) effectiveness, job satisfaction, school ecology and therefore, has an impact on student's academic performance (Lin, 1999).

## **2.6 Laissez – Faire Leadership Style in schools**

The terminology is from the French "Let them do what they wish." There are no hard and fast rules, which lead to complete freedom or autonomy to staff of the organization. When a wrong person is put in charge, he or she refuses to take action in order not to offend the followers, thus producing disastrous consequences (Afful-Broni, 2004). However, where the subordinates are skilled in the various disciplines, this system can be appropriate. The above notwithstanding as Afful-Broni points out, the Laissez-faire leadership can lead to apathy and anarchy on the part of the staff.

## **2.7 Democratic Leadership Style in schools**

This style is grounded on the thesis that the organization is the responsibility of all, even though the leader has the primary role of guiding the rest of the group in arriving at the collective decisions, thus encouraging delegating, coaching, accepting responsibility and recognition of the ability and potentials of others. Leaders therefore are considered *primus intra pares*"-first among equals (Afful-Broni, 2004). Notwithstanding the current management style used by headmasters/headteachers, the transformational or facilitative leader has become an effectiveness leadership style in current public education system. Many researchers had also proposed that moving towards transformational leadership was the only viable way for school restructuring and reform (Lin, 1999). "A transformational leader is keen to changing environment and has the knowledge and skills adapt to the rapidly changing situations. A transformational leader is flexible, open-minded, sensitive to other people's need, encourage participation sharing, decision-making and highly tolerant of diversity" (Lin, 1999).

## **2.8 Research questions**

To properly address the findings the following research questions were outlined:

- What opportunity can enhance performance of education centers in Asonomaso Nkwanta ?
- What are the Challenges facing the education centers in Asonomaso Nkwanta ?
- What are opinion of leadership their education centers?

## **2.9 Methodology of the Research**

The design for the study was a mixed study using both the qualitative and quantitative analyses. It was a correlation survey design to establish the relationship between leadership styles and academic performance in schools in Kwabre District Assembly. A triangulation approach was used combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods because it was anticipated that the survey questionnaire would provide extent of coverage which could be credible enough to be applied to a wider population from which the sample of the study was drawn. Data collected on the leadership styles of the school leaders were used as independent variables and the academic performance as dependent variables. The data were analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 and Epi-Info, a data capturing and analysis software.

## **3.0 Population**

There were 63 JHS in the Kwabre District Assembly (Mamponteng). However, only 60 schools presented candidates for the B.E.C.E. Therefore the research concentrated on the 60 schools. The survey population covered JHS Headmaster, circuit supervisors, examination officers, selected teachers, learners, parents, subject co-ordination, District statisticians, and District director of education and officials of the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) and Ministry of Education (MOE). The instrument used for the data collection was questionnaires, interviews, documentary surveys and observational visit to selected schools. The reliability of the survey refers to the extent to which instruments contain measurement of error's that causes scores to vary unrelated to the respondent. An instrument that has reliabilities above 60% is considered good (Aiken, 1997). The descriptive survey research design was used to construct the questionnaire.

## **3.1. Methods of Data Analysis**

On completion of data collection the aggregate response data were statistically computed using SPSS and Epi-Info statistical soft wares. The results were analyzed and interpreted. Tables and figures were utilized to report the research data and results of statistical figures, including the research questions. The obtained data were

analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. They were first captured into spreadsheet format with the aid of Epi-Info, a data capturing and analysis software SPSS was the main analysis software because of its high flexibility in data management and manipulations. Also, collected data were mainly cross-sectional which is easily and accurately handled with SPSS. In order to totally eliminate errors in data entry, all data were entered through the Epi-Info software interface. The Epi-Info provides an interface just like capturing of data as they appear on the respondent questionnaires in a faster and accurate manner. The statistical methods involved those of descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) for examination of the sources and main issues of leadership styles as well as the academic performance. The variables that were ranked based on the registered mean and median score. These were mainly on the source, issues and the behavioral science interventions of enhancing the academic performance in junior high schools in the Kwabre District Assembly. The results were also subjected to cross tabulations to bring out details of the results in relation to the independent variables (leadership styles) of the study which were mainly the personal and job profiles of the respondents. The open-ended questions of the questionnaire and the interview guide were subjected to in-depth detailed content and thematic analyses and conclusions drawn.

### 3.2 Results and discussion.

In this section the result was analysis from collected data and graphs was drawn to ascertain the finding.

#### 3.2 .1 Opportunities that can enhance performance in the education centers

**Table.1 Helps people to grow in their jobs by offering them the opportunity to learn**

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Means Never	20	4.7
Means Seldom	39	9.2
Means Often	85	20.0
Means Frequently	87	20.5
Means Always	194	45.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2016

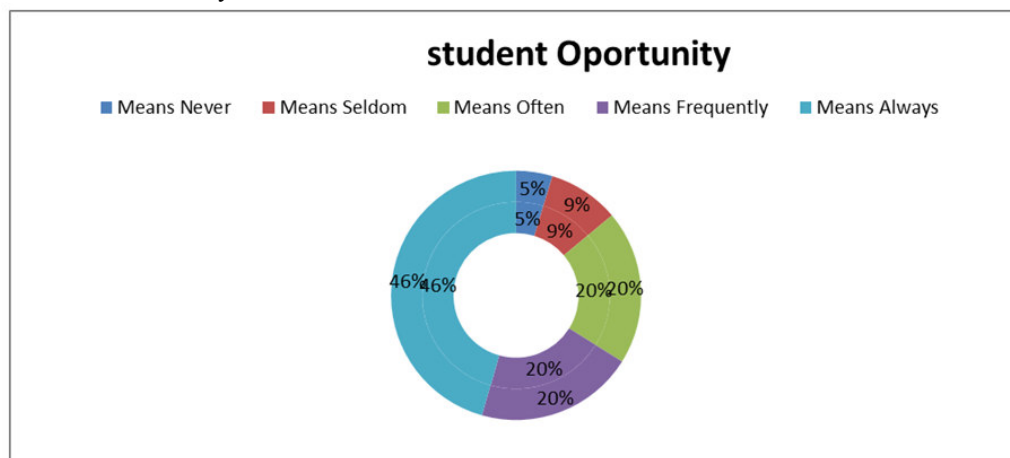


Figure:1 Student Opportunity .

Out of the 425 of the valid respondents, 194 (45.6%) of the respondents strongly believe that the headmaster’s behavior “always” helps people to grow in their job by offering them the opportunity to learn. A total of 87 (20.5%) of the respondents are also of the view that the headmaster’s behavior “frequently” helps people to grow in their jobs by offering them the opportunity to learn. Again, 85 (20.0%) of the respondents also agreed that the headmaster’s behavior “often” helps people to grow in their jobs by offering them the opportunity to learn. 39 (9.2%) of the respondents are also of the view that the headmaster’s behavior “seldom” helps people to grow in their jobs by offering them the opportunity to learn with the last group, 20 (4.7%) of the respondents also believe that the headmaster’s behavior “never” helps people to grow in their jobs by offering them the opportunity to learn.

**Table 2 Friendly to staff**

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Means Never	17	4.0
Means Seldom	41	9.6
Means Often	81	19.1
Means Frequently	91	21.4
Means Always	195	45.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2016

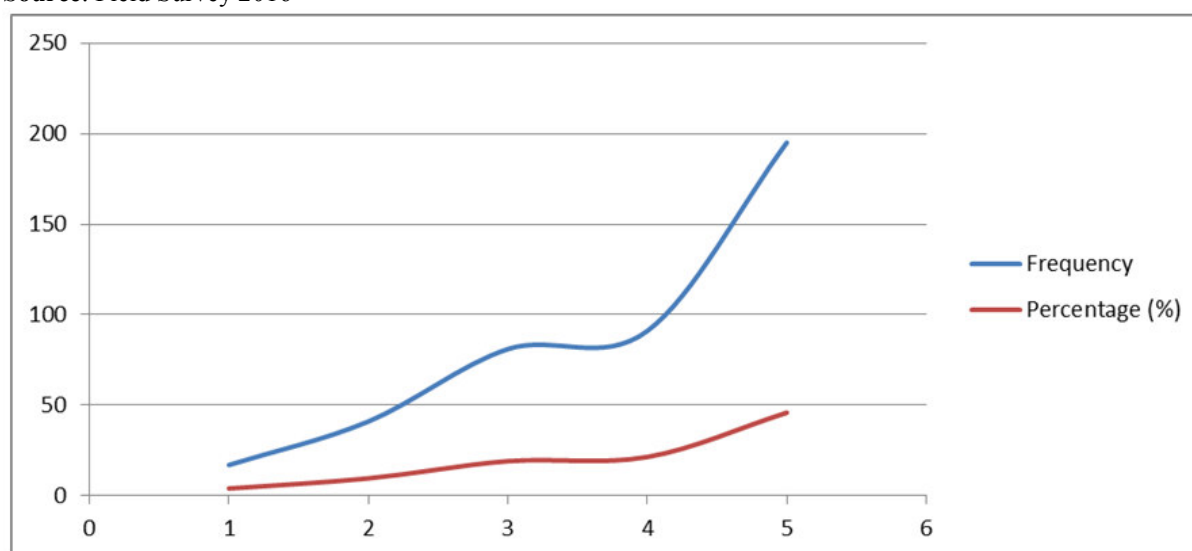


Figure:2 Friendly stuff .

Table 4.1.19 shows that, 195 representing 45.9% of the respondents said that the headmaster is “always” friendly to his staff. 91 representing 21.4% also strongly believe that the headmaster is “frequently” friendly to his staff. 81 representing 19.1% of the respondents indicated that the headmaster is “often” friendly to his staff. Again, 41 representing 9.6% also indicated that the headmaster is “seldom” friendly to his staff and finally, the remaining 17 representing 4.0% of the respondents indicated that the headmaster is “never” friendly to his staff.

**Table 3. Follows up on teachers’ performance**

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Means Never	14	3.3
Means Seldom	28	6.6
Means Often	89	20.9
Means Frequently	99	23.3
Means Always	195	45.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2016

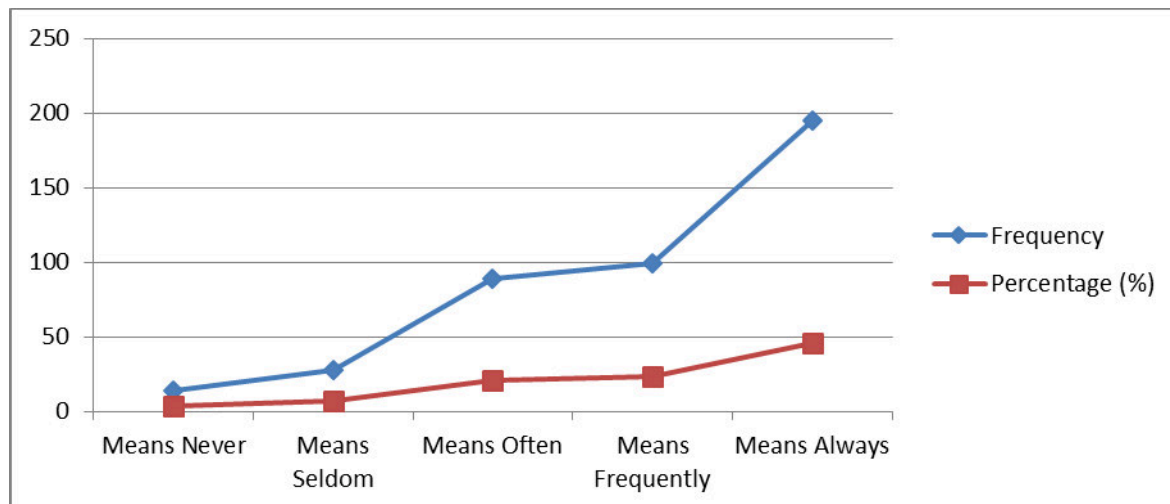


Figure 3. Teachers' performance

Table 4.1.25 indicates that 195 representing 45.9% of the respondents agree that the headmaster's behavior "always" follows up on teachers' performance. 99 representing 23.3% of the respondents also indicated that the headmaster's behavior "frequently" follows up on teachers' performance. Again, 89 representing 20.9% of the respondents also indicated that the headmaster's behavior "often" follows up on teachers' performance. 28 representing 6.6% are also of the view that the headmaster's behavior "seldom" follows up on teachers' performance and lastly, 14 representing 3.3% of the respondents also believe that he headmaster's behavior "never" follows up to teachers' performance.

### 3.2.2 Challenges facing the education centers at Asonomos Nkwanta

Table 4. Challenges the way things are done to achieve results

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Means Never	6	1.4
Means Seldom	16	3.8
Means Often	97	22.8
Means Frequently	80	18.8
Means Always	226	53.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2016

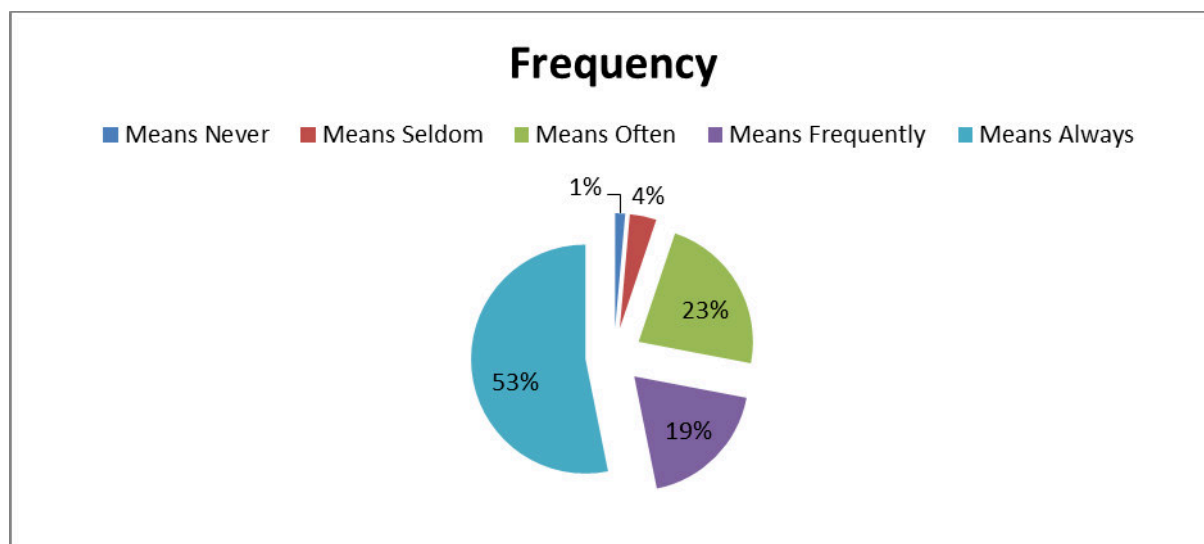


Figure 4. Challenges on Result

Table 4.1.28 indicates that 226 (53.2%) of the respondents agree that the headmaster's behavior "always" challenges the way things are done to achieve results. 80 (18.8%) of the respondents also indicated that the headmaster's behavior "frequently" challenges the way things are done to achieve results. Again, 97 (22.8%) of the respondents also indicated that the headmaster's behavior "often" challenges the way things are done to

achieve results. 16 (3.8%) are also of the view that the headmaster’s behavior “seldom” challenges the way things are done to achieve results and lastly, 6 (1.4%) of the respondents also believe that the headmaster’s behavior “never” challenges the way things are done to achieve results.

**Table 5. Supports the teachers and students who are weak**

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Means Never	33	7.8
Means Seldom	30	7.1
Means Often	83	19.5
Means Frequently	88	20.7
Means Always	191	44.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2016

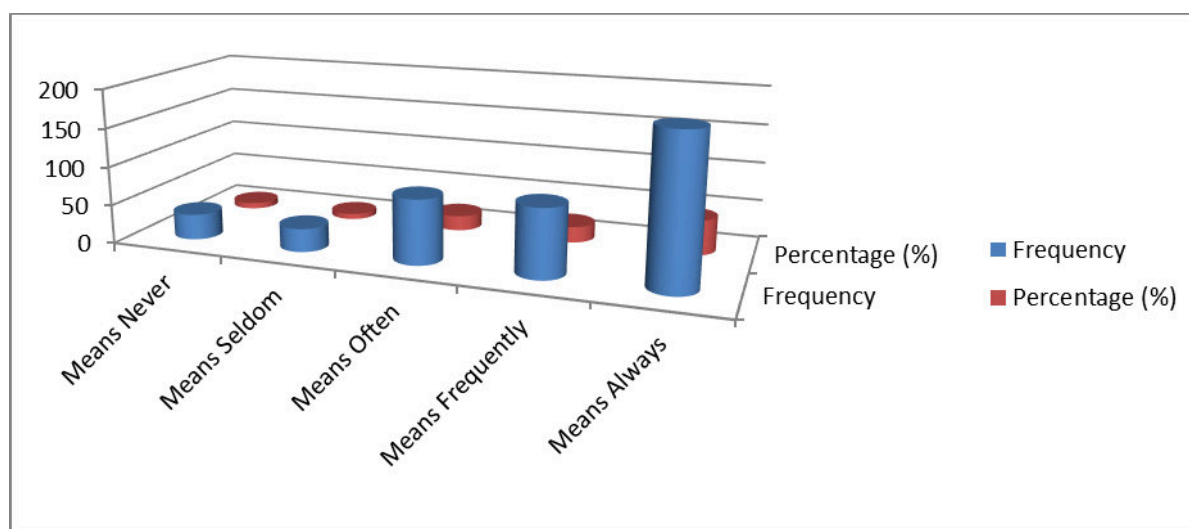


Figure 5. Challenges on Result

Table 4.1.29 indicates that 191 representing 44.9% of the respondents agree that the headmaster’s behavior “always” supports the teachers and students who are weak. 88 representing 20.7% of the respondents also indicated that the headmaster’s behavior “frequently” supports the teachers and students who are weak. Again, 83 representing 19.5% of the respondents also indicated that the headmaster’s behavior “often” supports the teachers and students who are weak. Again, 83 representing 19.5% of the respondents also indicated that the headmaster’s behavior “often” supports the teachers and students who are weak. 33 representing 7.8% are also of the view that the headmaster’s behavior “never” supports the teachers and students who are weak and lastly, 30 representing 7.1% of the respondents also believe that the headmaster’s behavior “seldom” supports the teachers and students who are weak.

### 3.2 .3 Opinion on leadership style of headmasters

#### 3.2.3.1 Teachers Only

**Table .6 Do you think you are satisfied with your headmaster’s style of leadership?**

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Non-teachers	321	75.5
Very satisfied	36	8.5
Satisfied	53	12.5
Don’t Know	6	1.4
Unsatisfied	7	1.6
Very Unsatisfied	2	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2016

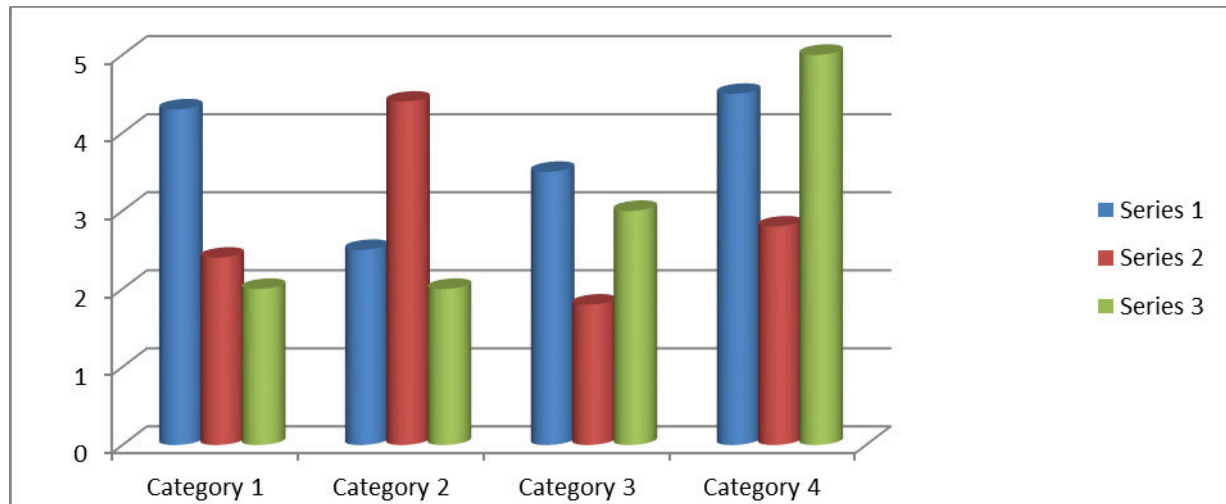


Figure 6. Opinion headmasters

Again, out of the 104 teachers, 53 representing 51.0% of the respondents also agreed that they are “satisfied” with their headmaster’s style of leadership. 36 representing 34.6% of the respondents indicated that they are “very satisfied” with their headmaster’s style to leadership. There were seven respondents representing 6.7% who also indicated that they are “unsatisfied” with their headmaster’s style of leadership. There were six respondents representing 5.8% who were confused and did not know what to say whilst two representing 1.9% of the respondents said that they are “very unsatisfied” with their headmaster’s style of leadership.

#### 4.3 Students Only

Table 7. How far do you commute from home to school?

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Blend all the leadership styles	27	6.4
Don’t know	43	10.1
Democratic leadership style	339	79.8
Laissez faire leadership style	7	1.6
Authoritative leadership style	9	2.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey 2016

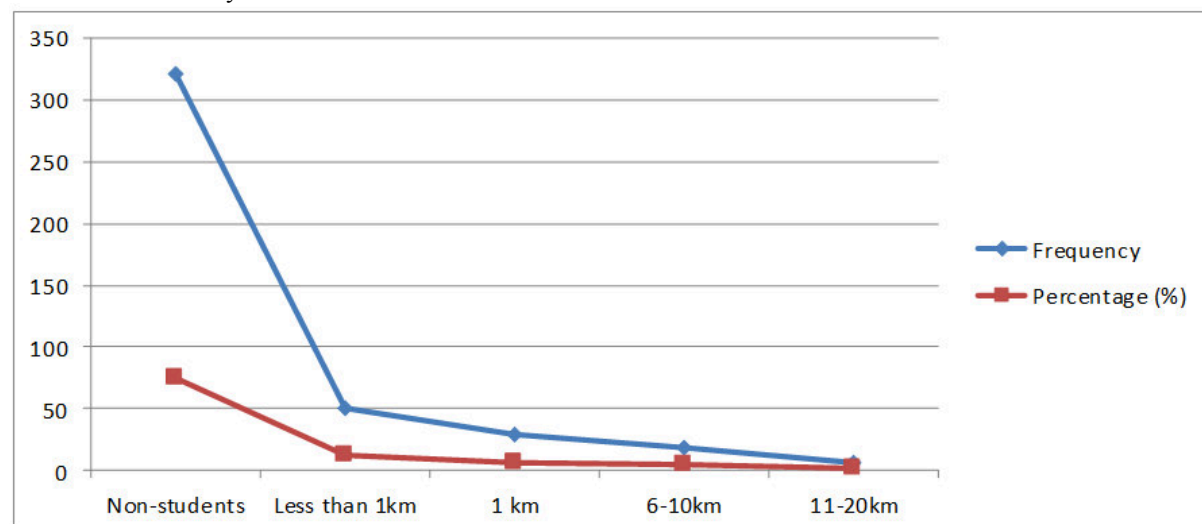


Figure 7: Students commitment

The study once again disclosed the fact that, out of 104, 50 (48.1%) of the respondent commute less than 1 km from home to school. 29 (27.9%) of the respondent commute 1 km from home to school. There were 19 (18.3%) of the respondents who also commute between 5-11 km from home to school and finally, 6 (5.7%) of the respondents commute between 10-21km from home to school.



**Table 8. If you indicate NO in 3, state why?**

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Non-students	321	75.5
Cannot afford	50	11.8
Due to inadequate supply by the government	29	6.8
Parents do not know the kind of books they should buy	19	4.5
Not applicable	6	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source 8 : Field Survey 2016

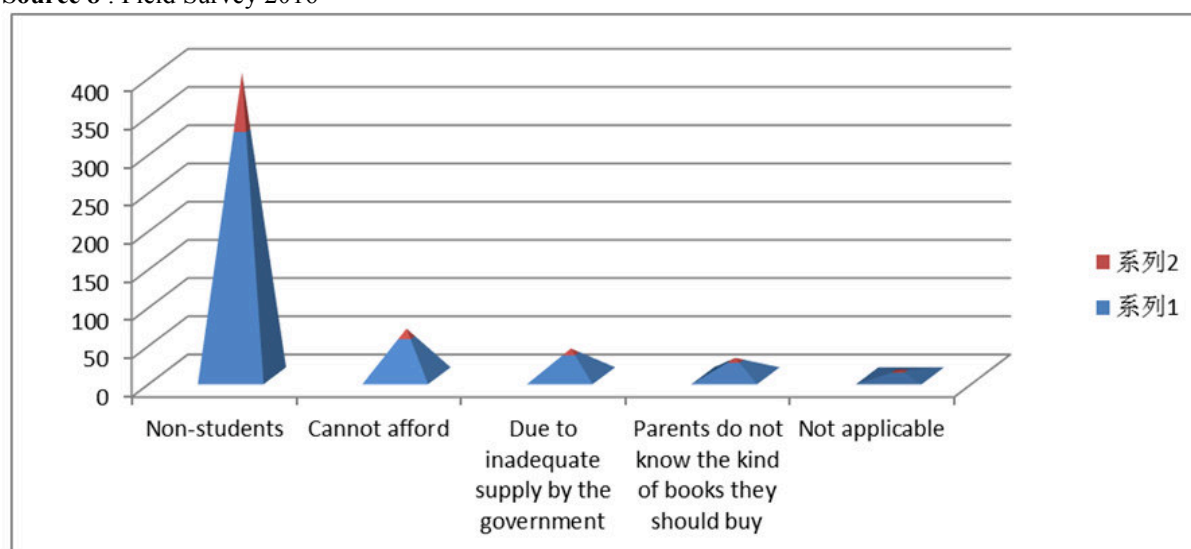


Figure: 8 Indicate NO in 3, state why.

From the table above, 50 representing (48.1%) of the respondents strongly believe they do not have all the textbooks they need for their studies because they cannot afford them. 6 representing (5.7%) of the respondents did not indicate the reasons why they do not have all the textbooks they need for studies. Again, 29 representing (27.9%) of the respondents indicated they do not have all the textbooks they need for their studies due to inadequate supply by the government with last group, 19 representing (18.3%) of the respondents indicated that they do not have all the textbooks they need for their studies because their parents do not know the kind of books they should buy.

### 5.1 Conclusions

The study noted that unless the Headmasters are well equipped with knowledge and skills in leadership they would not know if they have any influence on their schools and on academic work. The study also established that even though respondents agreed that a leadership style can affect academic performance, the Headmasters do not gain the confidence of the stakeholders enough in order to build terms that can enhance quality of teaching and learning. In the Kwabre District Assembly, the 2011 BECE results indicated a low 47% pass and it is instructive to interrogate the issues by looking at the various variables at play and by no means the roles of headmasters in terms of their leadership styles.

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