

## A COMPARISON OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BASIC SCHOOL HEADS

Yaw A. Ankomah  
University of Cape Coast

Warren C. Hope  
Florida A&M University

### Abstract

*It is generally acknowledged that there is a relationship between effective instruction, student academic achievement, and the quality of the educational enterprise. Concern abounds when student achievement does not reach expected levels. In Ghana, West Africa, student achievement in public basic schools, as measured by Basic Education Certificate Examinations and Criterion Reference Tests, is lower than that of students in private basic schools. Several factors, including the availability of teaching and learning resources and teacher motivation have been invoked to explain the achievement disparity. Supervision has received limited attention as a factor that contributes to the gap. This research examined basic school head teachers' supervisory practices to determine whether there is a relationship to the achievement disparity. An independent t-test conducted on private and public school teachers' response data from the instructional supervision subsection revealed variability in basic school heads exercise of supervision. However, overall subsection's data analyses do not support variability between public and private basic school head teachers' supervisory practices.*

### Introduction

Ghana allocates a substantial portion of its national budget for education expecting the educational system to prepare students with knowledge, skills, and abilities that will enable them to contribute to national development. Recognizing the capacity inherent in an educated citizenry, Ghana, in 1996, implemented a Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy, two objectives being that all appropriate age children enroll in school and to obtain quality education at the basic level by 2005. Basic education in Ghana includes the first nine years of school, first through the ninth grades. The first six years comprise primary education followed by three years of junior high school. Basic education considers children ages six to fifteen.

Over the years Ghana has witnessed a persistent achievement disparity between students in public and private basic schools (Quansah, 2000). Academic achievement as measured by Basic Education Certificate Examinations and Criterion Reference Tests results of students in private schools exceeds that of those in public schools. Like in other countries, Ghana's public school stakeholders question whether the investment in education yields an appropriate return. Ironically, many of Ghana's private schools employ teachers who are not professionally trained while public schools are staffed with a majority of certified professional teachers (EARC, 2003). Lack of teaching and learning resources and poor teacher motivation in public schools; abundant resources and better compensation in private schools have been articulated as reasons for the achievement disparity (EARC, 2003).

Supervision, particularly its instructional dimension, has received minimal attention as a factor influencing Ghana's public and private school student achievement disparity.

Supervision is recognized as essential to improving teachers' instruction (Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Oliva & Pawlas, 2004; Dipaola & Hoy, 2008) and the quality of teachers' instruction is related to student achievement (Dipaola & Hoy, 2008). Supervision that promotes instructional improvement is the primary responsibility of school leaders. Given student academic data for public and private schools in Ghana, it is plausible to suggest that there is variability in public and private basic school head teachers' supervisory practices, which could account for the achievement difference. Should this premise be the reality, then, in addition to the achievement disparity, it could also be argued that private school graduates have a competitive edge in access to higher education and job placement than those from public schools. Question, are Ghana's scarce resources being wasted because public basic school head teachers' supervision does not improve teaching and learning? It was deemed appropriate to conduct an investigation into public and private basic school head teachers' supervisory practices. The Brong Ahafo region of Ghana was selected as the research site because of its pronounced public and private basic school student achievement disparity (Quansah, 2000).

### **Purpose**

Given Ghana's public and private basic school student achievement disparity, this research was conducted with a twofold purpose: (a) Compare the extent to which public and private basic school head teachers manifest instructional and school-wide supervisory practices, and (b) ascertain the extent to which variability exists in the supervisory practices of public and private basic school head teachers, which could form the basis for educational policy initiatives to improve instructional supervision.

### **Research Questions**

Seven questions were formulated to guide the investigation. Those questions were:

1. How do public and private basic school head teachers compare on instructional supervisory practices?
2. How do public and private basic school head teachers compare on school-wide supervisory practices?
3. Is there a significant difference between the supervisory practices of public and private basic school head teachers?
4. Is there a significant difference between the supervisory practices of rural and urban basic school head teachers?
5. How do the instructional supervisory practices of private and public basic school head teachers compare with their school-wide supervisory practices?
6. How do the instructional supervisory practices of urban and rural basic school head teachers compare with their school-wide supervisory practices?
7. How can the supervisory practices of basic school head teachers be improved?

The basic school head teacher is responsible for creating a school environment where teaching, learning, and student achievement are central goals. Sackney, Walker, and Hajnal (1998) observed that a characteristic of effective schools is the quality of supervision the head teacher provides. Where effective school-based supervision exists, there is the likelihood that teacher competence levels are being elevated, which relates to improvement in student academic performance (Sackney, Walker, & Hajnal, 1998). The basic school head teacher performs a number of supervisory tasks including visiting classrooms, reviewing lesson

plans, giving feedback on teaching skills, and providing opportunities for professional development. At the heart of supervision is the basic school head teacher's direct assistance to teachers (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2004). Supervisory assistance involves the provision of personal, ongoing contact with the individual teacher to observe and provide feedback on classroom instruction. Supervisors facilitate teachers' growth and development that leads to increased student learning (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008). DiPaola and Hoy also asserted that the primary objective of supervision is to improve instruction that leads to student achievement. Basic school head teachers' failure to effectively perform the supervisory role can have an adverse effect on teaching, learning, and student achievement. Student achievement in Ghana's public schools is an increasing concern among stakeholders, hence the need to focus on head teachers' conduct of supervisory activities (GES, 1994). It is theorized that effective supervision improves student achievement outcomes while ineffective supervisory practices do not lead to increased student achievement.

## **Methodology**

This research investigated the supervisory practices of basic school head teachers. A cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect data from public and private basic school heads and teachers. Cross-sectional survey is appropriate when examining attitudes, beliefs, or practices (Creswell, 2005). The Brong Ahafo Regional Director of the Ghana Education Service (GES) granted permission to conduct this research and provided a letter of introduction for heads of the basic schools. Twenty percent of the schools in the population were selected to participate in the research. Because of Ghana's unreliable mail system, the School Leadership Supervisory Practices Questionnaire (SLSPQ) was administered to basic school heads and teachers at the schools.

### *Setting*

This research was conducted in the Brong Ahafo Region where farming is the predominant occupation and adult illiteracy is high. Brong Ahafo was not a beneficiary of early educational endeavours by Western European merchants and missionaries. Prominent historians, McWilliams and Kwamena-Poh (1975), did not mention any of this region's communities or townships in their comprehensive historical accounts of Ghana's educational development. Since the 1990s, numerous private schools have opened in Brong Ahafo to compete with public schools. Many parents patronize private schools believing that their children will receive a better education. Basic Education Certification Examination (BECE) and Criterion Reference Test (CRT) results support parents' belief as student achievement has been higher in private schools than in public schools (Quansah, 2000) in spite of the fact that most private school teachers are non-professionals (EARC, 2003).

### *Sample and Sampling*

Brong Ahafo has 1,470 public primary and 728 junior high schools, 218 private primary and 81 junior high schools. Berekum and Sene districts were excluded from the study because they did not have both public and private primary and junior high schools. Table 1 shows Brong Ahafo's public and private basic schools.

Six districts, Asunafo, Asutifi, Jaman, Kintampo, Sunyani, and Wenchi, were randomly selected to provide the school head and teacher samples. There were 439 basic schools, 380 public and 59 private in these districts. For representation purposes, the ratio of

private to public schools was one to five. A decision was made to have at least two private schools from each district to represent the urban and rural categories. A total of 93 basic schools, 76 public and 17 private, were selected from the accessible population from which the school heads and teacher samples were determined. All heads of the basic schools, 38 urban and 55 rural, participated in the research. Teachers were randomly selected from the primary and junior high schools. There were 311 public and 83 private school teachers representing 172 urban and 222 rural schools in this research. Stratified random sampling was employed to capture the subgroup categories, private and public, rural and urban schools. While the stratification process allowed for adequate representation of the categories, randomization afforded equal chances for teachers' selection.

**Table 1: Districts and Type of Basic Schools in the Brong Ahafo Region**

District	Public		Private	
	Primary	JHS	Primary	JHS
Asunafo	194	80	20	10
Asutifi	74	44	6	3
Atebubu	135	36	11	3
Berekum	57	61	26	-
Dormaa	128	67	16	8
Jaman	108	73	25	11
Kintampo	119	48	8	4
Nkoranza	108	39	4	2
Sene	75	23	3	-
Sunyani	96	67	41	22
Tano	110	66	8	4
Techiman	119	56	34	5
Wenchi	147	68	16	9
Total	1,470	728	218	81

Source: *Educational Management Information System (EMIS) Unit of the GES, Brong Ahafo Region*

Table 2 displays the distribution of schools for each district. For the teacher sample, four teachers, two from primary and two from junior high, were selected from each public school and five teachers, three from primary and two from junior high were selected from private school. The difference between the numbers of teachers selected from private versus public schools was to ensure adequate private school teacher representation. All school head teachers, and 394 teachers returned completed and usable questionnaires yielding 100% and 96.3% return rates respectively.

**Table 2: Districts, number and types of schools**

District	Public		Private		Total Selected
	No. of Schs.	No. Selected	No. of Schs	No. Selected	
Asunafo	80	16	10	3	19
Asutifi	44	9	3	2	11
Jaman	73	15	11	3	18
Kintampo	48	10	4	2	12
Sunyani	67	13	22	5	18
Wenchi	68	13	9	2	15
Total	380	76	59	17	93

### *Research Instrument*

The School Leadership Supervisory Practices Questionnaire (SLSPQ) (See Appendix), Form 1 for school head teachers and Form 2 for teachers, was used to collect data. Both forms utilized a five-point rating scale with the response options 1 (*Not at All*); 2 (*To a Very Little Extent*); 3 (*To a Little Extent*); 4 (*To a Large Extent*); and 5 (*To a Very Large Extent*). The instrument collected data that determined the extent to which head teachers perform the supervisory role. The questionnaire was delineated into two sections. Section A covered Instructional Supervisory Practices, comprising, I, Provision of Direct Personal Support by School Head teacher, II, Provision of Assistance with Instructional Delivery, and III, Provision of Structured Learning Opportunities such as Workshops, In-Service Activities, or Staff Development Programmes. Section B, designated as School-wide Supervisory Practices, had one component, School Head teacher's Engagement in School-wide General Practices.

### *Instrument Pilot Testing*

The SLSPQ was piloted in the Ahafo Ano South District of the Ashanti Region, which is similar to Brong Ahafo, rural and largely agrarian. Three public and two private basic schools from urban and rural settings were selected. Five head teachers from junior high schools completed the questionnaire. Twenty-one teachers were randomly selected from urban, rural, public and private basic schools, four from each of the three public basic schools, five from one urban private basic school, and four from one rural private basic school. Cronbach's alpha reliability for the SLSPQ was .92.

## **Data Analysis and Results**

That the achievement gap between students in public and private basic schools is influenced by head teachers' supervisory practices was a research premise. Understanding the extent to which head teachers perform the supervisory role provides a composite view of their influence on teaching, learning, and student achievement. Analysis of responses from the SLSPQ presented results that were the basis for conclusions about public and private school head teachers' supervisory practices, which in turn informed about the achievement disparity.

### *Responses to Research Questions*

*Research Question 1:* How do public and private basic school head teachers compare on Instructional Supervisory Practices? The mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for the SLSPQ Section A Instructional Supervisory Practices were generated from public and private school head teachers and teachers' responses. A single item mean weight (MW) for the overall mean (M) was calculated by dividing the overall mean by the number of items in the subsection. This calculation generated numerical values that referred to average means corresponding to the scale 1 (*Not at All*); 2 (*To a Very Little Extent*); 3 (*To a Little Extent*); 4 (*To a Large Extent*); and 5 (*To a Very Large Extent*). The scale describes the extent to which head teachers manifest supervisory practices. The mean weight calculation also made possible comparisons among the SLSPQ subsections.

Table 3 displays analysis related to Research Question 1; Section A, Instructional Supervisory Practices. As can be seen, public school head teachers (M=121.3, SD=20.3) and private school head teachers' (M=121.1, SD=18.8) means indicate that they manifested

Instructional Supervisory Practices *to a large extent* (MW=4.0). Teachers' responses about school head teachers' Instructional Supervisory Practices performance yielded slightly lower means and mean weights. Public school teachers' responses (M=108, SD=25.3) had a single item mean weight of 3.6 while private school teachers' responses (M=114, SD=22.4) yielded a single item mean weight of 3.8. Although the mean weights from teachers and head teachers' data differ, the variation is not large enough to conclude that there is a difference in head teachers' performance of this supervisory practice. At best, the data suggests that private school teachers perceive their head teachers as more engaged in the supervisory practices in the Instructional Supervisory Practices subsection. Still, public and private school head teachers manifest Instructional Supervisory Practices *to a large extent*.

Mean weights for public and private basic school head teachers' data on Provision of Direct Personal Support are equivalent (4.1), indicating that head teachers manifest these practices *to a large extent*. Teachers' data present a similar outcome, but with slightly lower means than those obtained from school head teachers. Mean weights comparison does not provide evidence of variation to suggest that there is a difference between basic school head teachers' performance on supervisory practices for this subsection. The mean weights indicate that head teachers manifest supervision *to a large extent*.

The means and mean weights of head teachers' data regarding Provision of Assistance with Instructional Delivery are similar for public (M=25.4, SD=8.1) and private school head teachers (M=23.8, SD=4.7). The mean weights of public school head teachers (MW=4.2), and private school head teachers (MW=4.0) indicate that they manifest this supervisory practice *to a large extent*. Public school teachers' mean weight was less than that of their head teachers while private school teachers' mean weight was slightly higher than their head teachers' mean weight. Mean weights comparison between public and private school teachers indicate that both view head teachers as manifesting the Provision of Assistance with Instructional Delivery *to a large extent*. The difference between teachers' means is marginal, but suggests that private school teachers' perceive their head teachers as more engaged with the teaching and learning processes in this subsection's supervisory practices than their public school colleagues.

**Table 3: Public and Private Basic School Head teachers' Performance on Instructional Supervisory Practices**

Supervisory Practices	School Type	Heads' Responses			Teachers' Responses		
		N	M (MW)	SD	N	M (MW)	SD
I. Provision of Direct Personal Support	Public	69	50.2(4.1)	6.4	311	46.0(3.8)	9.7
	Private	24	49.6(4.1)	7.6	83	47.2(3.9)	8.5
II. Assistance With Instructional Delivery	Public	69	25.4(4.2)	8.1	310	22.4(3.7)	8.1
	Private	24	23.8(4.0)	4.7	82	24.3(4.1)	4.7
III. Provision of Structured Learning Opportunities	Public	69	45.7(3.8)	12.2	311	39.7(3.3)	12.9
	Private	24	47.7(4.0)	9.7	82	43.5(3.6)	11.5
Overall Instructional Supervisory Practices	Public	69	121.3(4.0)	20.3	311	108.0(3.6)	25.3
	Private	24	121.1(4.0)	18.8	83	114.1(3.8)	22.4

Note: Mean Weights above .5 are rounded to the next response option.

Public and private head teachers' mean weights for the Provision of Structured Learning Opportunities are approximate, 3.8 and 4.0 respectively. It is apparent, however,

that public and private school teachers have different views of their head teachers' manifestation of this supervisory practice. The mean weight of private school teachers' responses (3.6) indicates supervisory practice manifested *to a large extent* by their head teachers, while the mean weight of public school teachers' responses (3.3) indicate that their head teachers' manifest the supervisory practices *to a little extent*. It needs to be acknowledged that school head teachers' ability to engage in practices identified by items in this subgroup may be contingent upon resources provided by and available from the system. The difference between public and private teachers' mean weights reflects one rationale for the achievement gap, that private schools have relatively more resources than public schools. On the other hand, effective supervision requires head teachers to assist teachers to improve their teaching by providing various learning opportunities. If public school head teachers are not organizing and facilitating teachers' professional development, as the practices in this subsection suggest, a case can be made for public school head teachers' ineffective supervision, which ultimately impacts student achievement.

*Research Question 2:* How do private and public basic school head teachers compare on school-wide supervisory practices? Head teachers and teachers of public and private schools responded to 11 items comprising Section B, School-wide Supervisory Practices. Overall means (M) and standard deviations (SD) were determined for school type. The means were subjected to further calculation to generate single item mean weights (MW) to allow for comparison in the context of the scale, which described the extent to which head teachers manifested School-wide Supervisory Practices. Table 4 shows that public and private school head teachers' responses on School-wide Supervisory Practices had single item mean weights of (M=45.1, SD=7.8) 3.8, and (M=43.6, SD=7.0) 3.6, respectively. Public and private basic school head teachers' data analysis results reveal that School-wide Supervisory Practices are manifested *to a large extent*. Teachers' mean weights were equivalent for school type, 3.4, indicating that they perceived their head teachers to manifest School-wide Supervisory Practices *to a little extent*. The mean weights of head teachers' responses indicate the manifestation of School-wide Supervisory Practices *to a large extent*, while that of teachers yield School-wide Supervisory Practices *to a little extent*. A review of Section B items, especially three, four, and eight through eleven reveals that head teachers would have more direct knowledge of the extent to which they manifest these supervisory practices and could account for the variance in head teachers and teachers' mean weights.

**Table 4: Public and Private Basic School Head teachers' Performance on School-wide Supervisory Practices**

Section	School Type	School Heads' Responses			Teachers' Responses		
		N	M (MW)	SD	N	M (MW)	SD
School-wide Supervisory Practices	Public	69	45.1(3.8)	7.8	311	41.2(3.4)	8.2
	Private	24	43.6(3.6)	7.0	83	40.8(3.4)	7.5

Note: Mean Weights above .5 are rounded to the next response option.

*Research Question 3:* Is there a significant difference between the supervisory practices of public and private basic school head teachers? A *t*-test of independence was conducted to ascertain difference between public and private school head teachers' supervisory practices. Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference between public and private school head teachers' with respect to their Overall Supervisory Practices  $t(43.04) = 0.30, p=0.77$ . There was no significant difference between public and private schools head teachers in the exercise of Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices.

Table 5: T-Test of Independent Means on Supervisory Practices of Public and Private Basic School Head teachers

Supervisory Practice Type	School Type	Heads' Responses					Teachers' Responses				
		N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Instructional	Public	69	121.3	20.3			311	108.0	25.3		
	Private	24	121.1	18.8	.30	.98	83	114.1	22.4	-2.14	.03
School-wide	Public	69	45.1	7.8			311	41.2	8.8		
	Private	24	43.6	7.0	.90	.37	83	40.8	7.5	0.49	.63
Overall	Public	69	166.4	24.3			311	149.2	31.4		
	Private	24	164.7	23.5	.30	.77	83	154.8	27.6	-1.60	.11

Test results for teachers' responses on public and private school head teachers' Overall Supervisory Practices also yielded no significant difference  $t(143.79) = -1.60, p = 0.11$ . A similar outcome prevailed for analysis of teachers' responses for heads School-wide Supervisory Practices. However, analysis of teachers' responses in Instructional Supervisory Practices between public and private school head teachers  $t(143.2) = -2.14, p = 0.03$ , yielded a significant difference. The Instructional Supervisory Practices of head teachers in private basic schools ( $M = 114.1, SD = 22.4$ ) was rated higher by private basic school teachers on the average than the ratings given to public head teachers by public basic school teachers ( $M = 108.0, SD = 25.3$ ).

Head teachers' instructional supervision intends to improve teacher instruction in order to influence student achievement. Private school teachers perceive their head teachers as practicing instructional supervision to a greater extent than public school teachers' view their head teachers. This result is at the heart of the research premise that variability in head teachers' supervisory practices influences the public private school student achievement gap. Should this result be the reality, then there is reason to conclude that supervision has a role in the public-private school student achievement disparity.

*Research Question 4:* Is there a significant difference between the supervisory practices of rural and urban basic school head teachers? An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether a significant difference existed between the supervisory practices of head teachers in rural and urban basic schools. Table 6 shows no significant difference between urban and rural basic school head teachers with respect to their Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices. Considering both supervision dimensions, which is reflected in Overall Supervision, no significant difference was found to exist between the urban and the rural basic school head teachers,  $t(85.57) = 0.62, p = 0.54$ . Analysis of teachers' data revealed no significant difference between rural and urban school head teachers with regard to their Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices as well as the Overall of both supervision dimensions, which yielded  $t(365.58) = 1.31, p = 0.19$ .

**Table 6: T-Test of Independent Means on Supervisory Practices of Urban and Rural Basic School Head teachers**

Supervisory Practice Type	School Location	Heads' Responses				Teachers' Responses					
		N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	N	M	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Instructional Supervision	Urban	38	122.	18.6			172	111.3	25.0		
	Rural	55	0	20.6	.72		222	107.7	24.6	1.41	.16
			120.		.47						
			0								
School-wide Supervision	Urban	38	44.8	8.8			172	41.4	8.8		
	Rural	55	44.7	6.8	.06		222	40.9	8.4	0.60	.55
					.95						
Overall Supervision	Urban	38	167.	24.3			172	152.7	30.9		
	Rural	55	8	25.2	.62		222	148.6	30.5	1.31	.19
			164.		.54						
			7								

Data analysis results for school head teachers  $t(84.69) = 0.72, p = 0.47$ , and those for teachers,  $t(365.224) = 1.41, p = 0.16$  yielded no significant difference between urban and rural head teachers' Instructional Supervisory Practices. Test results for head teacher and teachers' samples on School-wide Supervisory Practices showed no significant difference between urban and rural school head teachers,  $t(85.57) = 0.06, p = 0.95$ . Teachers' data did not yield a significant difference,  $t(361.63) = 0.60, p = 0.55$ .

*Research Question 5:* How do instructional supervisory practices of private and public basic school head teachers compare with their school-wide supervisory practices? The objective was to ascertain whether there was a difference in school head teachers' supervisory performance with respect to the Instructional and School-wide supervisory dimensions. Mean weights were calculated enabling a comparison.

Table 7 shows the extent to which public school head teachers manifest Instructional Supervisory Practices (M=121.3, SD=20.3), mean weight of 4.0, and (M=108.0, SD=25.3), mean weight of 3.6, for Head teachers' and teachers' data respectively. Head teachers and teacher samples data analyses indicate that head teachers manifest Instructional Supervisory Practice *to a large extent*. The extent to which head teachers' School-wide Supervisory Practices manifest is represented by (M=45.1, SD=7.8) a mean weight of 4.1 and (M=41.2, SD=8.8), mean weight of 3.7. In the final analysis, public school head teachers' Instructional and School-wide supervisory practices manifest *to a large extent*. The difference between mean weights of head teachers' Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices is negligible. Heads' and teachers' data show comparability between the Instructional Supervisory Practices and School-wide Supervisory Practices of public basic school head teachers, although teachers' data were lower in magnitude than those of head teachers.

**Table 7: Comparison of Public Basic School Head teachers Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices**

Supervisory Practice Type	Heads' Responses			Teachers' Responses		
	N	M (MW)	SD	N	M (MW)	SD
Instructional Supervision	69	121.3(4.0)	20.3	311	108.0(3.6)	25.3

School-wide Supervision	69	45.1(4.1)	7.8	311	41.2(3.7)	8.8
-------------------------	----	-----------	-----	-----	-----------	-----

Note: Mean Weights above .5 are rounded to the next response option

**Table 8: Comparison of Private Basic School Head teachers’ Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices**

Supervisory Practice Type	Heads’ Responses			Teachers’ Responses		
	N	M (MW)	SD	N	M (MW)	SD
Instructional Supervision	24	121.1(4.0)	18.8	83	114.1(3.8)	22.4
School-wide Supervision	24	43.6(4.0)	7.0	83	40.8(3.7)	7.5

Table 8 shows that the Instructional Supervisory Practices of private basic school head teachers approximates the extent to which they manifest their School-wide Supervisory Practices. Analysis of private school head teachers’ data for Instructional Supervisory Practices (M=121.1, SD = 18.8) and the School-wide Supervisory Practices (M=43.6, SD=7.0) show equal mean weights of 4.0. Teachers’ data show similar comparability. The mean weight for head teachers Instructional Supervisory Practices (M=114.1, SD=22.4) is 3.8 while that for School-wide Supervisory Practices (M=40.8, SD=7.5) is 3.7. Thus, private basic school head teachers manifest Instructional Supervisory Practices and School-wide Supervisory Practices *to a large extent*.

*Research Question 6:* How do the Instructional Supervisory Practices of urban and rural basic school head teachers compare with their School-wide Supervisory Practices? The question sought to capture a comparison of the two dimensions of the head teachers’ supervisory practices to determine whether location influenced school head teachers’ Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices. Table 9 shows that the magnitude of the Instructional Supervisory Practices manifested by school head teachers in urban settings is the same as that for their School-wide Supervisory Practices. School head teachers’ Instructional Supervisory Practices (M=122.0, SD=18.6) and the School-wide Supervisory Practices (M=44.8, SD= 8.8) have mean weights of 4.1.

Teachers’ data yielded similar results. Head teachers mean weight for the Instructional Supervisory Practices (M=111.3, SD=25.0) is 3.7, and the mean weight for their school-wide supervisory practices (M=41.4, SD = 8.8) is 3.8. The mean weights indicate that urban and rural school head teachers’ Instructional supervisory practices are comparable to their School-wide Supervisory Practices, with both manifesting *to a large extent*.

**Table 9: Comparison of Urban Basic School Head teachers’ Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices**

Supervisory Practice Type	Heads’ Responses			Teachers’ Responses		
	N	M (MW)	SD	N	M (MW)	SD
Instructional Supervision	38	122.0(4.1)	18.6	172	111.3(3.7)	25.0
School-wide Supervision	38	44.8(4.1)	8.8	172	41.4(3.8)	8.8

Table 10 shows comparisons of rural basic school head teachers' supervisory practices. As can be seen, rural basic school head teachers' Instructional Supervisory Practices compare in magnitude with their School-wide Supervisory Practices. From the perspective of the head teachers, the Instructional Supervisory Practices (M=120.0, SD=20.6) have a mean weight of 4.0 while the School-wide Supervisory Practices (M=44.7, SD =6.8) have a mean weight of 4.1, indicating similar manifestation of practices. Teachers' data reveal that rural basic school head teachers' Instructional Supervisory Practices (M=107.7, SD=24.6) have a mean weight of 3.6 while their School-wide Supervisory Practices (M=40.9, SD=8.4) have a mean weight of 3.7. Rural basic school head teachers manifest *to a large extent* both Instructional Supervisory Practices and School-wide Supervisory Practices. Thus, location does not influence head teachers' Instructional and School-wide Supervisory practices.

**Table 10: Comparison of Rural Basic School Head teachers' Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices**

Supervisory Practice Type	Heads' Responses			Teachers' Responses		
	N	M (MW)	SD	N	M (MW)	SD
Instructional Supervision	55	120.0(4.0)	20.6	222	107.7(3.6)	24.6
School-wide Supervision	55	44.7(4.1)	6.8	222	40.9(3.7)	8.4

*Research Question 7:* How can the supervisory practices of basic school head teachers be improved? The SLSPQ instrument contained an open-ended item that elicited recommendations to improve school head teachers' supervision. Responses were summarized and grouped thematically. The frequency distributions of the emergent themes were subjected to simple percentage calculation for descriptive analysis. Table 11 displays the thematic information from head teachers' responses. Nineteen percent of head teachers (N=20) indicated that being more friendly, open and sympathetic to teachers was a way to improve their supervision. Fourteen percent (N=15) identified training in supervisory practice techniques as a need for newly appointed heads.

Basic school head teachers meeting regularly with teachers, sharing ideas with staff, and organizing in-service training were suggested as an intervention to improve supervision. Eleven percent (N=12) specified the need to detach head teachers from teaching responsibilities. Although it can be argued that understanding teaching and learning is essential to supervision, performing both roles can negatively impact the supervisory responsibility. Because head teachers have to teach, they are unable to devote time to observing teaching and are less likely to offer feedback for improvement. Staff development for head teachers was viewed as a viable means to improve supervision by six percent of respondents (N=7). Increasing head teachers' duty allowance as a way to improve supervision had the least support. This response is reminiscent of the general low levels of workers' remuneration in the country. In essence, the increase is not viewed as substantive enough for the responsibility.

**Table 11: Head teachers' Views on Improving Supervisory Skills**

Item	N	%
Provision of training to newly appointed head teachers	15	14.3
Detaching all head teachers from classroom teaching	12	11.4
Giving occasional in-service training to head teachers on supervision	8	7.6
Increasing duty allowance of head teachers	5	4.8
Head teacher ensuring adequate supply of teaching and learning materials	7	6.7
Head teacher sharing ideas with staff	9	8.6
Head teacher giving in-service training to teachers	8	7.6
Head teacher encouraging teachers to do their work	6	5.7
Head teacher meeting teachers regularly to share their problems	15	14.3
Head teacher being open, friendly and sympathetic	20	19.0
Total	105	100(approx)

Table 12 shows teachers' recognition of heads' lack of training for supervision. Almost one-fourth (24.3%) responded that training will equip heads with skills that will enable them to perform the supervisory responsibility more effectively. The adequate involvement of teachers in supervisory work in the schools (23%) is also viewed as important and necessary to improve supervision. Other issues recognized by teachers were the need to detach heads from classroom teaching, the heads showing greater interest in the welfare of teachers, the heads being more friendly and open and ensuring the regular supply of teaching and learning resources. These responses are similar to heads' views of improving supervisory skills.

**Table 12: Teachers' Views on Improving Basic School Head teachers' Supervisory Skills**

Item	N	%
Head teacher involving teachers adequately in supervisory process	97	23.0
Detaching all head teachers from classroom teaching	75	17.9
Provision of training in supervision to head teachers	102	24.3
Head teacher being friendly and open	43	10.2
Head teacher organizing in-service training for teachers regularly	27	6.4
Head teacher showing greater interest in welfare of teachers	31	7.4
Head checking teachers' work properly	11	2.6
Ensuring regular supply of teaching and learning resources	34	8.1
Total	420	100(approx)

## Conclusion

Today, instructional supervision is the school leaders' primary task and a major factor in improving student learning (DiPaola & Hoy, 2008). Variability between public and private basic school head teachers' exercise of supervisory practices was fundamental to this research. Evidence of its existence could provide an explanation for Ghana's public and private student achievement gap. An independent samples *t*-test analysis of public and private school teachers' responses on head teachers' Instructional Supervisory Practices revealed a significant difference. This result points to variability in head teachers' supervisory practices and supports the assertion that supervision has relationship to the student achievement disparity between Ghana's public and private basic schools. Additionally, private school teachers' mean weights for head teachers' Instructional Supervisory Practices, Provision of Direct Personal Support, Provision of Assistance with Instructional Delivery, and Provision of Structured Learning Opportunities such as Workshops, In-Service Activities, or Staff Development Programmes, were higher than those of public school teachers. These mean weights suggest that private school teachers view their head teachers as manifesting instructional supervisory practices to a greater extent than public school teachers view their head teachers. This mean weights comparison is also an indicator of variability in instructional supervisory practices.

These results lend to a straightforward recommendation for policy makers, however, other data analysis does not provide additional evidence to support variability between public and private basic school head teachers' exercise of supervision. In the broader context, overall mean weights of public and private basic school head teachers' responses to SLSPQ items indicate that both groups manifest Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices *to a large extent*. Means comparison for public and private head teachers' supervision also does not show a difference in overall supervisory practices, which could account for the student achievement disparity. Independent samples *t*-test results for public and private basic school head teachers' instructional and school-wide supervisory practices as well as their overall supervisory practices revealed no significant difference.

Although variability was found between the mean scores of private and public basic school teachers concerning head teachers' provision of Structured Learning Opportunities, with private school teachers indicating manifestation *to a large extent* and public teachers indicating manifestation *to a little extent*, the overall mean weights of teachers' response data indicated that their head teachers exercise Instructional Supervisory Practices *to a large extent*. Also, as with head teachers' data, an independent means *t*-test on teachers' scores for Overall Supervisory Practices that combine the Instructional and School-wide Supervisory Practices dimensions, revealed that there was no significant difference between public and private school head teachers. The results do not support head teachers' supervisory practices as a causal factor in the student achievement disparity and negates a perspective that public school head teachers are wasting Ghana's scarce resources.

The research results have not unequivocally established variability between Ghana's public and private basic school head teachers' supervisory practices as a causal factor in the public and private basic school student achievement disparity. Yet, the fact that an independent samples *t*-test analysis of teachers' responses on head teachers' Instructional Supervisory Practices revealed a significant difference between public and private basic school head teachers along with higher mean weights for private school head teachers than for public school head teachers on instructional supervisory practices, cannot be ignored. In

addition, head teachers' role in teachers' professional development, which improves instruction, is fundamental to student achievement. That public basic school teachers' mean weights for their head teachers indicated that they manifested Structured Learning Opportunities (teacher professional development) *to a little extent*, must be given more than cursory consideration in the public and private basic school student achievement dichotomy. Ghana's policy makers should view these results as target areas for improvement and initial evidence for improving head teachers' supervisory skills.

Teachers are at the center of instructional improvement (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). School leaders have a responsibility for identifying teachers' professional development needs (Oliva & Pawlas, 2004). There is a link between school leaders' facilitation of teachers' professional development and instructional effectiveness. Likewise, head teachers' understanding of the instructional needs of teachers to orchestrate an effective teaching and learning environment is important for student achievement. Research connects teachers' classroom instruction and the degree of student learning (Guskey, 2000). In Ghana, there is a need for head teacher professional development to improve their supervisory skills. Head teachers with a repertoire of supervisory skills can improve teachers' classroom performance and influence student achievement. Consideration also needs to be given to eliminating head teachers' classroom responsibility. Limiting school head teachers to leadership and supervision is an intervention that can positively influence how school head teachers conduct their supervisory responsibilities. Indeed, instituting this recommendation as educational policy could be a first step toward improving head teachers' supervisory practices.

More research needs to be conducted that investigates supervision as a factor that influences student academic achievement. Attention should focus on head teachers' instructional supervision to ascertain whether it is an authentic causal factor in public-private basic school student disparate achievement. Other variables to consider are teacher qualifications and pedagogy as these may have a role in Ghana's public and private basic school student achievement disparity.

## References

- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- DiPaola, M. F., & Hoy, W. K. (2008). *Principals improving instruction: Supervision, evaluation, and professional development*. Boston. Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Educational Assessment and Research Centre (EARC) (2003). *Comparative study of public and private schools in Ghana*. Sponsored by USAID. Accra: Author.
- Ghana Education Service (1994). *Headteachers' handbook*. Accra: Ministry of Education.
- Glickman, C. D., Gordon, S. P., & Ross-Gordon, J. M. (2004). *Supervision of instructional leadership: A developmental approach* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Guskey, T. R. (2000). *Evaluating professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Hoy, A. W., & Hoy, W. K. (2006). *Instructional leadership: A research-based guide to learning in schools*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- McWilliams, H. O. A., & Kwamena-Poh, M. A. (1975). *The development of education in Ghana*. London: Longman Ltd.
- Oliva, P. F., & Pawlas G. E. (2004). *Supervision for today's schools* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Quansah, K. B. (2000). *1999 report on the administration of primary 6 criterion-referenced tests*. Accra: Ministry of Education.

Sackney, L. Walker, K., & Hajnal, V. (1998). Principal and teacher perspectives on school improvement. *Journal of Educational Management*, 1(1), 45-63.

Yaw A. Ankomah  
University of Cape Coast  
Cape Coast, Ghana  
[yankomah@yahoo.com](mailto:yankomah@yahoo.com)  
233 42 33824

Warren C. Hope  
Florida A&M University  
Tallahassee, Florida  
[warren.hope@famu.edu](mailto:warren.hope@famu.edu)  
850-599-3191