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UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

**ASSESSING THE ROLE OF CHANGE CHAMPIONS AS ADVOCATES FOR
GESSTAFF REFORMS: A CASE STUDY OF (DIVINE MERCY R/C BASIC SCHOOL)**

BY

SALOME ALEXANDRA DUAH


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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled “Assessing the role of change champions as advocates for change champions” is my original work and has not been submitted in whole or in part, for the award of any degree at any other institution. All references to other people’s work have been acknowledged. Therefore, I will be held responsible for ant errors detected in this project work.

Candidate’s signature.....


Date..... 11th December, 2025

NAME: Salome Alexandra Duah

INDEX NUMBER: MASPRM24004

Supervisor’s Declaration

I declare that the preparation and presentation of this dissertation was supervised by the guidelines on the supervision of a dissertation laid down by the University of Media Arts and Communication in Ghana.

Supervisor’s signature.....

Date..... 11th December, 2025

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DEDICATION

To my dear family

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ABSTRACT

Ghana Education Service (GES) has introduced numerous reform initiatives with the aim of improving teacher performance, professional development, and overall educational quality. The success of these reforms has often been constrained by limited ownership and ineffective change management strategies. This brings to the discourse the role of champions. Change champions are individuals within schools who actively promote, support, and sustain change. These are recognized as crucial advocates in bridging the gap between reform policies and their adoption and practical implementation. This research aims to evaluate the role of these change champions as advocates for GES staff reforms, using Divine Mercy R/C Basic School as a case study.

The study is guided by three objectives such as to examine the strategies used by change champions in advocating staff reforms. The research is grounded in change management theories and organizational readiness for change. These theories highlight the significance of internal advocates in influencing staff behavior, reducing resistance, and building momentum for sustainable change.

A qualitative case study approach will be used, semi-structured interviews and observation with teaching and administrative staff of Divine School. Purposive sampling will be used to identify 8-10 participants, including key change champions. Data will be analyzed thematically and observe ethical factors, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring confidentiality.

The findings of the study are expected to contribute to both theory and practice by deepening understanding of how change champions influence reform outcomes in educational institutions. The study will also provide practical recommendations for empowering change champions, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of GES reforms at the basic school level.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Education remains a critical priority in Ghana, especially at the basic school level. Over the years Ghana Education Service has implemented a number of policy reforms aligned with international goals. Despite these efforts. There is a persistent gap between reform designs and its implementation especially at the grassroots level. One under explored critical factor that contributes to this gap is the role played by change champions. Change champions are individuals with passion to support and drive reform initiatives within schools.

The chapter introduces the study by providing a background to staff reforms which occur especially at the basic or school level.it highlights the challenges faced by frontline implementers with a specific focus on Divine Mercy R/C Basic School. The chapter also outlines the problem statement research objectives, research questions, significance of study, the scope of study and the overall organization of the study. The study sets the stage for a deeper exploration into how change champions can be identified and empowered to improve reform outcomes and sustainability in the basic school level.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Ghana Education Service, like many others across Africa has undergone numerous reforms aimed at improving learning outcomes, increase access, and enhance the overall quality of service delivery. These reforms are often driven by government policies and policies of international bodies such as UNESCO, UNICEF which Ghana belongs to and is an active member. These international policies or development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),

Education for All (EFA), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), help shape Ghana's policies to align with global standards. There is therefore immense expectations placed on the Ghana Education Service (GES) which is an agency under the Ministry of Education with an aim to implement government policies in the education sector, to establish structures and systems which can aid the successful implementation of these policies and thus achieve the kind of reform it intends to have or achieve (Agizo, 2009)

Reforms are deliberate changes or improvements made usually to correct or improve upon a system or the way things are done. While much attention has been given to curriculum reviews, infrastructural development and policy directions over the years, much attention has not been given to the role the staff or human capital of the institution particularly at the school level (Abonyi and Sofo,2019) this brings to the fore the work of a group of people who believes in the value of change thus actively support, promote and inspire others to also embrace it. These individuals are called Change Champions. It is worthy of notice that change champions are not only found in the education sector but across other institutions such as the health sector. However, the activities of these change champions in facilitating and sustaining these reforms remains underexplored.

Staff reforms within the GES are essential not only for improving teaching and administrative efficiency but also for creating a culture of continuous improvement within schools. These reforms usually call for the professional development of staff members, decentralization of decision-making, inclusive leadership and innovations in the management of schools. However, change in GES is perceived to be bureaucratic, hierarchical and resource constrained and therefore, very difficult to implement effectively without champions who actively advocate for and guide these reforms from within the system. Change champions, also referred to as internal reform advocates,

thus play a critical role in driving staff reform by inspiring others, managing and overcoming institutional resistance, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders.

In the context of basic schools in Ghana, where policy directives often trickle down from the top without adequate consultation or participation, the presence of effective change champions at the school level is quite crucial. These individuals identified often as headteachers, senior staff members, or enthusiastic teachers act as catalysts by promoting reform ideas, mediating between school leadership and classroom staff, and demonstrating best practices (Quansah,2024) Their commitment, leadership style, and capacity to influence others can either propel or hinder reform efforts. However, the existence and effectiveness of these individuals called change champions, heavily depends on institutional support, school culture, and the broader administrative environment (Amposah, 2025)

Despite numerous reforms initiated by the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service, there remains a gap in understanding how reforms are translated into action at the school level, particularly in public basic schools. Staff morale in many public schools remains low, teacher absenteeism persists, and resistance to change is not uncommon. As Adams, li, and MU (2025) point out the need for deeper insight into how internal actors specifically change champions are engaged in the reform process and what impact they have on school development. Reform implementation should not be viewed solely as a top-down process; rather, it should include the views and participation of those who operate at the heart of educational delivery.

Divine Mercy R/C Basic School, is a public basic school located in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana specifically in the Ga -West Municipality. It represents a microcosm of the broader issues facing GES staff reform efforts and like many other schools across the country, it has experienced

several waves of policy-driven changes, including teacher accountability measures such as lesson planning, new pedagogical expectations, and staff appraisal systems. While some of these reforms have led to improved practices, others have encountered significant resistance or have not been sustained beyond their initial introduction⁹(Abonyi and Sofo, 2019) Understanding how change champions operate within such a context, and what challenges or opportunities they encounter, is vital to informing future reform strategies both at the school and national levels.

Moreover, the concept of change champions as advocates of staff reform is under-theorized in the context of basic education in Ghana. While there is much research and literature works on distributed leadership, teacher agency, and school-based reform, limited empirical work has focused on how these roles manifest in local school settings, particularly in resource limited environments (Quansah, 2024, Adams et.al. 2025). This lack of localized understanding makes it difficult to craft policies that leverage the strengths of school-based leaders or address their constraints. In environments where formal authority may not be enough to create genuine transformation, informal leaders those who command respect and influence without necessarily occupying administrative positions can play a pivotal role.

The background of this study is also informed by ongoing national discussions about educational reform implementation. Many education policy documents highlight the importance of school leadership, teacher motivation, and stakeholder involvement. Yet, implementation often falters because the individuals who are expected to carry out these reforms including teachers, headteacher and School Improvement Support officers (Donkor,2013) may not be adequately supported or empowered to act as true agents of change. Consequently, reforms may remain on paper and fail to produce the desired outcomes at the basic level.

This research, therefore, aims to examine how change champions function within a basic school setting, specifically Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School. It seeks to explore who these individuals are, how they influence reform processes, the challenges they face, and the extent to which their actions align with or deviate from official reform agendas. It also aims to provide insights into how such individuals can be supported through policy, training, and institutional frameworks to become more effective advocates for sustainable staff reform in the basic education sector.

In doing so, the study will contribute to the broader discussion on educational leadership, reform implementation, and teacher empowerment in Ghana. The study will also highlight the need for a bottom-up approach to policy implementation that can result in reforms being more effective equitable and sustainable basically also through the lived experiences and efforts of individuals called change champions.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the past few decades, Ghana's education sector has witnessed a series of ambitious reforms aimed at improving access, quality, and accountability at all levels of learning. At the basic school level, these reforms have included the implementation of the Standard-Based Curriculum (SBC), national teacher licensing programs, school performance improvement planning (SPIP), and increased efforts to integrate technology into teaching and learning. Despite these interventions, there remains a persistent gap between reform policy design and effective implementation particularly within individual schools like Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School, in the Greater Accra Region in Ghana. One crucial but under explored dimension of this challenge is the role of change champions. These are individuals within the school system who actively promote, interpret, and facilitate reforms among staff and the broader school community.

Staff at Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School, explains that poor implementation of policies emanates from reform fatigue which is as a result of poor consultation, inconsistent policy communication, and a lack of ownership. While headteachers and some committed teachers occasionally emerge as local reform enforcers, there is no clear structure within the Ghana Education Service (GES) to formally identify, empower, or support these potential change champions. As a result, reforms tend to be perceived as top-down directives, imposed by higher authorities without sufficient input from those responsible for day-to-day delivery of education. This disconnect leads to staff resistance, low morale, and sporadic adherence to new policies, ultimately compromising the quality of teaching and learning at the basic school level.

Change champions are individuals within an organization who advocate for, promote and sustain transformational change. They play a critical role in bridging this implementation gap Prosci (2020). Rooted in Kotter's Change Model, Kotter, J.P.(1996), and Lewin's Three-Stage Model of Change by Lewin K.(1947) the concept emphasizes the power of internal leadership, collaboration, and peer influence in successful reform adoption. However, while these theories have been applied in developed contexts, their relevance and roles in basic schools within Ghana, such as Divine Mercy R/C., remain significantly under-researched.

Preliminary observations at Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School, suggest that leadership tends to be concentrated in the hands of the headteacher his or her deputies and a few senior staff, with little emphasis on distributed or participatory models. Teachers often feel excluded from decision making processes related to reform implementation. As a result, reforms such as the SBC and continuous professional development programs are inconsistently adopted across classrooms. This echoes the findings of scholars like Dampson et al. (2018), who argue that empowering basic level

teachers, curriculum leads, and unit heads as change champions can create grassroots support for reforms, improving both uptake and sustainability.

Additionally, institutional structures within GES do not sufficiently incentivize reform leadership at the school level. There is a lack of formal recognition, professional development trainings, accountability frameworks to encourage reform advocacy among basic school staff. Ampofo (2020) and Boateng (2019) confirm that such institutional rigidity stifles innovation, particularly in public basic schools operating within hierarchical administrative systems. At Divine Mercy R/C Basic School, this is compounded by logistical challenges such as high pupil-teacher ratios, limited teaching resources, and inconsistent support from district and regional education authorities which place additional burdens on reform implementation.

Despite the visibility of reforms in official documents and district education programs, there is often a lack of contextualization for schools like Divine Mercy R/C Basic School. This is because Standardized training and implementation models, fail to consider the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional uniqueness of each school. Ofori (2023) emphasizes the need for inclusive reform strategies that acknowledge the views of staff, students, and community members. Without such inclusion, change remains superficial and unsustainable.

Political and bureaucratic dynamics also play a significant role in the marginalization of local reform champions. As Ahenkan and Osei-Kojo (2017) noted, many reform initiatives are politicized or externally driven, leading to mistrust among frontline implementers. At Divine Mercy R/C., teachers express skepticism about new policies, often questioning whether reforms are genuine efforts to improve education or merely political showpieces. This suspicion further dampens enthusiasm and creates a climate of resistance or indifference.

This study therefore seeks to address a critical gap in understanding how change champions can be effectively mobilized and supported to serve as change advocates at the school level using Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School as a case study. It will explore who the change champions are, how they emerge, what roles they play, what barriers they face, how they able to navigate these barriers and how institutional and community dynamics influence their effectiveness in leading reforms. By focusing on these specific contexts, the research intends to generate grounded insights that can inform more nuanced reform strategies specifically at the basic level and across all levels of education.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the roles played by change champions in staff reform efforts at Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School.
2. To understand the strategies and personal motivations that drive these change champions to advocate for staff development and institutional reform.
3. To investigate the barriers or challenges change champions face in their line of duty .
4. To explore how the presence and activities of change champions affect the outcomes and sustainability of staff reforms within the school.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Who are identified as change champions within Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School.
what roles do they play in advocating for staff reforms?
2. What strategies and approaches do these change champions use to influence staff reform and promote institutional change?

3. What barriers or challenges do change champions face in the line of their duty.
4. In what ways have the actions of change champions impacted staff development and the implementation of reforms at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School?

.1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in its potential to shift the reform conversation from one centered solely on policy directives to one that acknowledges the indispensable role of local agency and internal leadership. It posits that if change champions at Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School are empowered through training, recognition, institutional support, and participatory structures, then reform implementation can become more effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

This study is significant because it addresses a critical gap in the discourse on educational reform implementation in Ghana, particularly at the basic school level. While reforms are often conceptualized and initiated at the national level, their success depends largely on how well they are accepted, interpreted and executed at the grassroots, especially by teachers, school leaders, and other internal advocates mostly referred to as change champions. By focusing on Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School, this research provides localized, context-specific insights. This study can go a long way to inform both policy and practice of the wider Ghana Education Service (GES) body including:

1. Policy Makers and GES Administrators

The findings of this study will help all directors of education, stemming from National, Regional and District to understand the actual role change champions play in the implementation of reforms especially at the basic school level. This understanding can influence the development of policies

that could empower internal actors, improve communication across hierarchical levels, and promote a more participatory approach to staff reforms. The study can also inform decisions on resource allocation, leadership training, and institutional support systems.

2. School Administrators

School Improvement Support Officers (SISO) Head facilitators, Assistant Head facilitators, and departmental heads will benefit from a clearer picture of how leadership and shared responsibility can facilitate reforms. This study also highlights practical strategies used by successful change champions and emphasizes the importance of school-based leadership in overcoming resistance, motivating staff, and creating a positive climate for change. These insights if adopted can be applied to strengthen internal leadership and collaboration in schools especially at the basic level.

3. Teachers and Staff

Another group of individuals who will benefit from this study are the teaching and non-teaching staff who are often the frontline actors in any educational reform, yet their views are not sought and in the most unlikely situations underrepresented. This study thus gives attention to their perspectives and experiences, emphasizing the importance of grassroots advocacy and participation in reform implementation. It also affirms the potential of teachers as reform advocates and may inspire greater commitment, urgency, and innovation among staff members.

4. Researchers and Academicians

The study contributes to the growing body of literature in educational leadership, reform implementation, and change management in schools across Sub-Saharan Africa. It provides empirical evidence on the under-explored concept of change champions within the basic education

sector in Ghana, thus offering a basis for future research in other levels or sectors of education. It also presents a framework for examining how informal leadership and institutional culture influence policy outcomes.

5. Civil Society and Community Stakeholders

Communities play a key role in supporting or resisting school reforms. By exploring how change champions engage with stakeholders of education will provide insights that can strengthen school-community collaboration. Community leaders, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), School Management Committee and local education oversight committees may find useful strategies to support staff reform advocates to enhance educational outcomes.

In summary, this study is important not just for understanding how reforms are managed within a single school, but also for offering practical and in-depth insights on how to identify, empower, and support change champions in the broader basic education system of Ghana. The study has the potential to influence practice, inform policy, and inspire reform at the grassroots.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on exploring the role of change champion individuals within the school system, who actively promote and support change as key advocates in staff reform processes within the Ghana Education Service (GES). The specific setting for this research is Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School, located in the Ga West Municipality in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

The scope of the study is defined along the following dimensions:

1. Geographical Scope

The research is limited to Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School, a basic school under the supervision of GES. Although the findings may have implications for other basic schools within Ghana, the research does not extend beyond this specific school. The reason for focusing on a single school is to allow in-depth understanding of reform practices and leadership roles within a specific context.

2. Institutional Scope

This study is confined to the GES particularly at the Basic level, particularly the staff dynamics and reform implementation at Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School. It does not cover secondary or tertiary Education institutions. The institutional scope allows the research to address the specific reform needs and activities, staff structures, and leadership hierarchy unique to basic schools.

3. Thematic Scope centers

The research is based on the role of school-based change champion such as Head facilitators, curriculum leads, and influential teachers and how these individuals initiate, advocate for, or support staff reforms within the school setting.

Again, the study looks at the challenges these change champions encounter in the line of their duty and the strategies they adopt to manage resistance, motivate colleagues, and ensure the sustainability of reforms.

The study does not aim to evaluate all GES reforms comprehensively but narrows the focus to staff-related reforms such as professional development, performance management, motivation strategies, and leadership transformation

4. The scope of time

The research is limited to current and recent experiences of reform efforts within the past five years to ensure the relevance and accuracy of participants' responses. Historical reforms prior to this period may be referenced for context but are not the primary focus.

5. Methodological Scope

The study employs a qualitative case study approach, using interviews, focus group discussions, and observations as primary data collection tools. Quantitative methods such as surveys or statistical analysis are not used in the scope of this work, as the goal is to explore perceptions, narratives, and context-specific meanings.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This research is organized into five main chapters. Each chapter addresses a specific aspect of the study, from the background and rationale, Methodology to data analysis and conclusions. The structure is designed to provide a logical flow which serves as a guide through the whole research process.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides the foundation of the study. It covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the

study, and the organization of the chapters. It sets the context for the investigation into the role of change champions in GES staff reforms at Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Two reviews 20 existing literature related to educational reforms, leadership in schools, and the role of change agents or champions. It draws on both global and Ghanaian perspectives and highlights theoretical frameworks relevant to the study, such as distributed leadership and transformational leadership theories. This chapter identifies gaps in the literature that the current study aims to fill.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology. It explains the qualitative approach, the design, research setting, population, sampling techniques, data collection methods which includes interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. As well as data analysis procedures. It also covers ethical considerations and strategies and the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the study organized according to the major themes that emerged from the data. It includes detailed analyses supported by direct quotations from participants, and discusses the data in relation to the research questions and existing literature.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This the final chapter which summarizes the main findings, draws conclusions based on the research objectives, and makes practical recommendations for school leaders, policymakers, and

educators. It reflects on the implications of the study for basic education reform in Ghana and also suggests areas for further research.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In summary, the chapter has explored roles played by a group of people called or known as change champions. The chapter seeks to look at other reforms in the institution of GES. The gap that other literatures didn't fill is determined in the statement of problem and the need to fill the gap as well. The chapter also reveals that despite numerous policy driven reforms in the basic education sector, implementation often falters due to top-down approaches, limited staff involvement, low morale, and institutional constraints. By focusing on current reform efforts within the past five years, the study investigates how change champions impacts professional development, manage resistance, and foster staff motivation. It examines their strategies, motivations, challenges, and overall impact on reform outcomes and sustainability.

The study will seek to use qualitative case study approach by gathering data through interviews, focus group discussions, and observations to uncover the lived experiences and perceptions of change champions by educators. It does not extend to secondary or tertiary institutions and excludes quantitative methods, focusing instead on in-depth, context-specific analysis. Organized into five chapters, the study covers the background, literature review, methodology, findings, and practical recommendations. Ultimately, the study will highlight on the need to empower change champions especially at the basic level to advocate for internal reform through supportive leadership structures, professional development, and policy engagements. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of basic level reform in Ghana and calls for a more inclusive, bottom-up approach to educational change

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an in-depth review of existing literature and relevant theoretical perspectives. It opens with a discussion of the theoretical framework guiding the study, providing clear explanations and outlining the key assumptions of the chosen theories. It further examines related empirical studies on Leadership support and school culture, Institutional backing and professional development, Socio-political and community context, Barriers such as workload and limited resources. The chapter also presents the conceptual framework guiding the study, operational definitions of key terms, and the importance of the study. It concludes with a summary of identified research gaps and the role of this study in addressing them.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework enables readers to understand the foundation of the research and serves as a guide for shaping and directing the overall study. The study draws on three theories: The Communication Process Theory, Equity Theory, and Kotter's 8-Step Change Model. These theories provide more insights on the role of change champions as advocates in school reforms.

2.1.1 Communication Process Theory

The Communication Process Theory, first introduced by Shannon and Weaver (1949), conceptualizes communication as a systematic, cyclical process through which information is encoded by a sender, transmitted through a channel, and decoded by a receiver. The model also emphasizes the presence of noise, or barriers that can distort the message, and feedback, which ensures mutual understanding. Later scholars such as Schramm (1954) and Berlo (1960) expanded

this theory into interactive and transactional models, stressing the importance of context, shared meaning, and two-way communication.

In the context of educational institutions, this theory provides a foundation for understanding how information, ideas, and reforms are communicated among stakeholders. School reforms typically involve multiple actors—policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents, and students—and thus depend on clear, consistent, and responsive communication to succeed.

Under this theory it is assumed that; Communication is dynamic and continuous, not a one-time event (Shannon & Weaver, 1949), Both sender and receiver contribute to the creation of shared meaning (Schramm, 1954), Noise—such as misinformation, resistance, or lack of clarity interferes with message transmission (Berlo, 1960), and Feedback loops enable correction and adaptation, fostering understanding and cooperation.

Fullan, (2007) supports the theory noting that, in school reforms, change champions act as key communicators and advocates who bridge the gap between policy and practice. Their role involves translating complex reform messages into practical terms that teachers can understand and accept (Fullan, 2007). Effective champions ensure that communication flows both ways, from policymakers to teachers and from classrooms back to leadership. Poor communication, however, leads to misunderstanding, resistance, and reform fatigue. Thus, the Communication Process Theory provides a valuable lens to assess how champions use language, channels, and feedback to influence reform adoption and sustain change.

2.1.2. Equity Theory

Equity Theory, developed by John Stacey Adams (1963), explains human motivation and workplace behavior through the lens of fairness and balance. The theory posits that individuals compare their inputs (effort, skill, time, experience) and outcomes (rewards, recognition, benefits) with those of others. When individuals perceive inequity, they experience psychological discomfort and may attempt to restore equity by altering their input, seeking greater outcomes, or resisting participation.

In educational settings, this theory sheds light on teacher motivation, morale, and engagement during reform implementation. Teachers often evaluate whether the reform benefits justify the additional workload or changes in instructional practice. If teachers perceive that reforms are unfairly distributed, they may resist or disengage, which directly affects the success of change champions.

Under this theory it is assumed that; Individuals seek fairness in the ratio between their contributions and rewards (Adams, 1963), Perceptions of inequity lead to tension and corrective behavior (Walster et al., 1978), Fairness in outcomes enhances commitment, satisfaction, and cooperation (Greenberg, 1987), Equity perceptions are subjective and influenced by individual values and organizational norms.

Harris and Spillane (2008) support this theory noting that Change champions rely on collaboration and teacher buy-in to drive reforms. If teachers perceive that only a few individuals (often the champions) receive recognition or resources, while others bear the burden of change, resentment may grow. Research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) suggests that equitable distribution of opportunities, rewards, and support enhances teacher motivation and reform sustainability. By

advocating for fair treatment, professional recognition, and inclusive decision-making, change champions can strengthen trust and minimize resistance. Equity Theory thus provides a psychological basis for understanding how perceptions of fairness influence advocacy effectiveness and reform outcomes.

2.1.3. Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

John Kotter's (1996) 8-Step Change Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing organizational transformation. The model emphasizes that successful change is not a single event but a systematic and structured process that unfolds in distinct yet interconnected phases. Kotter's model is particularly useful in the educational context, where reforms often face resistance, uncertainty, and the challenge of aligning diverse stakeholders. Within schools, change champions play a critical role in applying these steps as they advocate, guide, and sustain reform initiatives.

The first stage of Kotter's model is the creation of a sense of urgency. This step involves helping individuals and organizations recognize the necessity for change by highlighting current challenges or future threats if reform does not occur. The second step is the formation of a guiding coalition, which entails assembling a group of influential individuals who can drive the change forward. Next, Kotter emphasizes the development of a vision and strategy for change. The vision provides direction and clarity by articulating the desired future state of the school system after reform implementation. Following the formulation of a vision, it must be communicated effectively to all members of the organization. Communication, according to Kotter, should be continuous, transparent, and multi-directional. The fifth phase of Kotter's model focuses on empowering others to act on the vision. This step involves removing obstacles that hinder progress, whether they are structural, procedural, or attitudinal. In schools, such obstacles may include lack

of resources, rigid hierarchies, or resistance to new teaching methods. After empowerment, the next step is to generate short-term wins. Kotter argues that visible, early successes help to build credibility and momentum. In the context of school reforms, these wins may take the form of improved test scores, enhanced student engagement, or successful pilot programs. The seventh step involves consolidating gains and producing more change. At this stage, organizations must build on the momentum of early successes to drive deeper transformation. Rather than declaring victory prematurely, change champions encourage continuous improvement by identifying additional areas that require reform. Finally, Kotter emphasizes the importance of anchoring new approaches in the organizational culture. This step ensures that the change becomes part of the institution's norms, values, and practices. In schools, this might mean embedding reform principles into teacher evaluation systems, school policies, or professional development programs.

Under this theory it is assumed that; Organizational change requires leadership, not just management (Kotter, 1996), A shared vision and consistent communication are essential for alignment (Kotter, 2012), Empowerment and participation reduce resistance and promote ownership, Change becomes permanent only when embedded in the organizational culture (Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

Fullan (2007) support this theory noting that, In the context of school reforms, change champions act as members of Kotter's guiding coalition. They promote urgency by explaining the need for reform, communicate the vision through workshops and meetings, empower teachers by providing support, and celebrate short-term successes to sustain enthusiasm. Their advocacy is essential in moving reforms beyond policy documents to classroom practice. Studies by Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) affirm that such champions bridge the emotional and practical gap between leadership intentions and teacher action. Kotter's model thus provides a step-by-step roadmap for

understanding how change champions can effectively lead and advocate during school reform processes.

2.2. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) conducted a study on leadership and organizational change across Canadian schools and found that teacher-leaders and reform advocates often serving as change champions play a pivotal role in translating policy initiatives into classroom practices. They observed that champions who acted as internal advocates fostered teacher buy-in and sustained reform efforts through continuous communication and modeling of new practices. However, the study was limited to leadership perspectives and did not explore how peer relationships among teachers influence champions' effectiveness.

Similarly, Fullan (2007) emphasized in his empirical work on educational change that reform success largely depends on "change agents" within schools who advocate persistently for innovation and help align staff attitudes with new policy directions. Fullan's findings suggest that these champions act as catalysts, bridging the gap between reform policy and teacher implementation, though his work focused more on systemic processes than individual advocacy strategies.

In their multi-school case study, Harris and Spillane (2008) explored distributed leadership during reform implementation in the United Kingdom. Their findings revealed that change champions, often middle leaders, exercised informal influence through mentoring and collaborative practices. By fostering shared vision and peer dialogue, they helped reduce resistance to change. Nevertheless, the study highlighted that without visible institutional support, the advocacy roles of these champions could be undermined by workload pressures and hierarchical barriers.

Similarly, York-Barr and Duke (2004) reviewed numerous empirical studies on teacher leadership and found that teacher-leaders acting as reform advocates were most effective when they were empowered to make decisions, had access to professional development, and received strong administrative backing. Their synthesis underscores that advocacy thrives where school culture values collaboration and trust.

Ng (2019) conducted an empirical investigation in Singaporean schools to assess how innovation champions advocate for curriculum reforms. Using mixed methods, Ng discovered that champions who combined technical expertise with strong interpersonal communication skills were able to influence both their peers and school leadership, resulting in smoother adoption of new pedagogical frameworks. However, the study also found that champions' impact was uneven across departments, suggesting that contextual factors—such as departmental culture and leadership openness—moderate advocacy success.

Likewise, Ochieng and Odhiambo (2021) examined education reforms in Kenyan secondary schools and found that local champions, particularly senior teachers trained under the competency-based curriculum (CBC), acted as advocates by organizing peer workshops and mediating between policymakers and teachers. Their advocacy promoted acceptance of the new curriculum, though limited resources and unclear policy directives constrained their influence.

In a comparative study across South African and Namibian schools, Moyo (2020) examined how teacher-champions advocate for inclusive education reforms. The research revealed that champions employed persuasive communication, storytelling, and community engagement to shift attitudes toward learners with special needs. Despite these successes, the study noted that champions often lacked formal authority, which reduced the sustainability of their efforts once

external support ended. Similarly, Poekert (2012) investigated professional learning communities in Florida and found that teacher-leaders serving as change champions promoted reform by linking professional development with practice. Through consistent advocacy and peer modeling, these champions cultivated reform ownership among teachers; however, their effectiveness depended heavily on administrative recognition and time allowances.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) offered insights from the Fourth Way reform model, emphasizing that successful school transformation depends on grassroots advocates who integrate moral purpose with professional collaboration. Their study of reform movements in Finland and Canada showed that change champions not only implement reform but also frame it in ways that align with teachers' values and community needs. Meanwhile, McDonald (2021) explored digital transformation in Australian schools and found that "technology champions" advocated for reform by demonstrating benefits, offering peer training, and creating online communities of practice. Yet, the study observed that lack of incentives and unclear institutional strategies hindered long-term advocacy.

Finally, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) examined "teacher leaders" in the U.S. context and found that those who acted as advocates during reform initiatives influenced both school culture and instructional practices through relational trust, dialogue, and shared decision-making. However, their findings indicate that sustained advocacy requires systemic recognition of champions as legitimate reform partners, not just informal influencers. Across these studies, a consistent pattern emerges: change champions serve as vital advocates who bridge reform policy and practice through communication, modeling, and collaboration. Nevertheless, their success depends on contextual enablers such as leadership support, professional learning structures, and school culture that values innovation.

2.3. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.3.1. Barriers to Education Reforms in Ghana: Political, Institutional, and Resource-Based Challenges.

Educational reform in Ghana has often been influenced by a complex interplay of political, institutional, and resource constraints that shape the pace and effectiveness of implementation. Political barriers frequently emerge from changes in government, partisan influence, and inconsistent policy priorities (Osei, 2017). Each administration tends to introduce its own education agenda, which often disrupts the continuity of previous reforms. As a result, long-term initiatives may be abandoned or restructured, leading to policy instability and reduced stakeholder trust.

Institutionally, Ghana's education system faces challenges related to bureaucracy, weak accountability mechanisms, and limited institutional capacity (Akyeampong, 2018). Many schools lack effective administrative structures that can translate reform policies into action at the grassroots level. Teachers, headteachers, and district directors often experience role ambiguity during reform rollouts, creating resistance or confusion about implementation strategies.

Resource constraints also pose a major hindrance to reform success. Inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and limited access to teaching and learning materials undermine reform efforts, particularly in rural areas (Anamuah-Mensah, 2015). Teacher shortages and low remuneration further weaken morale and make it difficult for change champions to mobilize collective support for reform. Consequently, even well-designed reform policies struggle to achieve desired outcomes because they are not sufficiently supported by resources, capacity, and political continuity.

2.3.2. Communicating and Promoting Education Reforms to Teachers

Effective communication is central to the success of educational reform. According to Fullan (2007), reforms fail not necessarily because of poor design but because of weak communication and inadequate teacher engagement. In Ghana, where teachers form the backbone of the education system, communication serves as a tool for building understanding, trust, and ownership among stakeholders.

Change champions—such as headteachers, curriculum officers, and teacher leaders—play a vital role in translating reform policies into practical, classroom-level actions. They interpret complex policy language, clarify objectives, and engage teachers through workshops, meetings, and peer collaboration (Adu-Gyamfi, Donkoh, & Addo, 2016). By using clear, two-way communication channels, change champions foster dialogue and feedback, which help to address misconceptions and resistance.

However, when communication is top-down and one-directional, teachers may perceive reforms as externally imposed mandates rather than collaborative initiatives (Osei, 2017). Therefore, effective reform communication must be inclusive, participatory, and context-sensitive allowing teachers to express concerns and contribute to decision-making. Digital communication platforms, social media, and professional learning communities can further enhance reform advocacy and strengthen teacher participation.

In essence, communication and advocacy are interdependent components of reform success, as they ensure that the intentions behind reforms are properly understood, internalized, and executed at the classroom level.

2.3.3. Enablers of Education Reforms: Leadership, Collaboration, and Culture

The success of educational reform depends not only on policies but also on the enabling conditions that facilitate their implementation. Three critical enablers identified in the literature are leadership, collaboration, and organizational culture.

Leadership plays a transformative role by articulating a clear vision, motivating staff, and creating a supportive environment for change. According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), effective school leaders build trust, provide direction, and empower teachers to take ownership of reform. In Ghanaian schools, leaders who act as change champions bridge the gap between government policy and classroom practice by guiding implementation and fostering professional learning.

Collaboration among teachers, administrators, and education stakeholders enhances collective problem-solving and innovation. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) describe collaboration as a process that promotes professional capital—shared expertise and mutual accountability—that sustains reform beyond individual efforts. In Ghana, teacher networks, mentoring programs, and peer learning communities can help create a collaborative culture that drives reform momentum.

Culture, as an enabler, refers to the shared values, beliefs, and norms that influence how people within schools respond to change. A culture that encourages openness, reflection, and experimentation supports innovation and reform adoption (Schein, 2010). Conversely, rigid hierarchies and fear of failure stifle change. Therefore, cultivating a positive, learning-oriented culture is essential for change champions who aim to embed reforms into daily school practices.

Collectively, leadership, collaboration, and culture interact dynamically to enable sustainable school improvement. Without these enablers, even well-funded reforms risk collapsing under institutional inertia and lack of ownership.

2.3.4. Education Reforms in Ghana – Historical and Systemic Perspectives

Education reform in Ghana has a long and evolving history, reflecting the country's broader social, political, and economic transformations. From the colonial period through post-independence, reforms have aimed to expand access, improve quality, and align education with national development goals (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975).

Following independence in 1957, Ghana's early reforms focused on universal primary education and the localization of curricula to reflect national identity. The 1987 Educational Reform Programme marked a major milestone, restructuring the system into the current 6-3-3-4 structure (six years of primary, three of junior secondary, three of senior secondary, and four of tertiary education). This reform sought to enhance access, improve relevance, and reduce disparities, but faced implementation challenges due to limited resources and teacher preparedness (Osei, 2017).

Subsequent reforms, such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy in the 1990s and the Free Senior High School (FSHS) initiative introduced in 2017, sought to improve equity and accessibility (Akyeampong, 2018). However, systemic issues—such as inadequate funding, teacher shortages, and infrastructure deficits—continue to limit reform outcomes.

These historical experiences reveal that education reform in Ghana is cyclical and politically influenced, often emphasizing access over quality. They also highlight the crucial role of change champions in ensuring policy continuity, building stakeholder commitment, and translating reforms into meaningful classroom practices. Understanding this historical trajectory helps contextualize current reform challenges and the ongoing need for advocacy-driven leadership within the education sector.

2.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study on “The Role of Change Champions as Advocates in School Reforms” is significant both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of literature on educational change and leadership by emphasizing the pivotal role of change champions as internal advocates of reform. Traditional models of school reform have often focused on top-down implementation led by administrators and policymakers; however, recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of grassroots change agents who operate within schools to influence peer behavior and foster reform acceptance (Fullan, 2020; Rogers, 2003). By examining the advocacy functions of change champions, this study integrates principles from Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003) and Change Leadership Theory (Kotter, 1996), thereby enriching the theoretical understanding of how educational innovations diffuse and become institutionalized.

Empirically, this research addresses a gap in the literature regarding how advocacy behaviors among school-based champions influence teacher commitment, collaboration, and the effective implementation of reform initiatives. Existing studies have established that teacher leaders and peer advocates play a vital role in promoting reform sustainability and teacher engagement (Harris & Jones, 2018; Taylor et al., 2019). Yet, little is known about the mechanisms through which advocacy—through persuasion, modeling, and communication—translates into successful reform outcomes in developing-country school contexts. By providing data-driven insights on these processes, this study contributes to the empirical foundation of change management in education, particularly within resource-constrained environments where external support is limited (Ofojebe & Ezugoh, 2010; Ainscow, 2020).

Practically, the findings of this study have the potential to inform school leaders, policymakers, and teacher education institutions. For school leaders, the study underscores the need to identify, train, and empower change champions who can serve as credible advocates for reform initiatives within their schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Policymakers can draw on the results to design reform programs that deliberately integrate advocacy and peer influence structures, rather than relying solely on policy mandates or administrative enforcement (Fullan, 2020). Furthermore, teacher professional development programs can use the insights from this study to strengthen teachers' capacity in communication, leadership, and advocacy skills essential for sustaining reform efforts (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012).

Ultimately, this study is expected to contribute to the sustainability of educational reform by demonstrating that meaningful change does not rely solely on directives from above but on the collective advocacy, trust, and commitment cultivated by internal champions. By situating change champions at the center of reform processes, the study offers a model for improving implementation fidelity, enhancing teacher motivation, and ensuring that reforms translate into improved teaching and learning outcomes (Fixsen et al., 2005; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996).

2.5 RESEARCH GAPS

Despite the growing body of literature on educational change and school reform, significant research gaps remain concerning the role of change champions as advocates in promoting and sustaining reform initiatives within schools.

Much of the existing scholarship on educational change has primarily focused on top-down leadership approaches, emphasizing the roles of principals, administrators, and policymakers as the central drivers of reform (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Fullan, 2020). While such leadership is important, it overlooks the subtle yet influential contribution of grassroots actors teachers,

departmental heads, and coordinators who often serve as internal advocates for reform. These individuals, commonly referred to as change champions, can play a critical role in shaping teacher attitudes, motivating peers, and ensuring that reforms move beyond policy rhetoric to classroom practice (Harris & Jones, 2018; Taylor et al., 2019). However, empirical investigations into how these champions operate within schools, and how their advocacy behaviors translate into reform success, remain limited.

Another major gap in the literature relates to the contextual scope of existing studies. Much of what is known about change champions originates from non-educational or Western settings, particularly in corporate, healthcare, or higher education environments (Fixsen et al., 2005; Rogers, 2003). These contexts differ significantly from the realities of basic and secondary schools, especially in developing countries where structural limitations, resource constraints, and bureaucratic barriers often hinder reform efforts (Ofojebe & Ezugoh, 2010; Ainscow, 2020). There is, therefore, a pressing need for context-specific research that explores how advocacy, leadership support, and peer influence function within school systems characterized by limited resources and diverse teacher experiences.

Furthermore, the mechanisms through which change champions influence reform outcomes remain inadequately explained in current scholarship. Although prior studies recognize that champions contribute to innovation adoption and sustainability, few have examined the mediating and moderating variables that explain *how* advocacy leads to successful implementation (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Key constructs such as teacher commitment, collaborative communication climate, and leadership support are rarely integrated into empirical models of reform implementation. As a result, there is limited theoretical clarity on the processes that connect

champions' advocacy efforts to the actual success and sustainability of school reforms (Fullan, 2020).

In light of these gaps, the present study seeks to make a meaningful contribution by investigating the role of change champions as advocates in school reforms. The study will explore how champions' advocacy behaviors such as communication, persuasion, modeling, and peer support—influence teacher commitment and the overall implementation of reform initiatives. Guided by Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003) and Change Leadership Theory (Kotter, 1996), the study positions advocacy as the key mechanism through which change champions facilitate reform acceptance and institutionalization. By examining the interplay between champions' advocacy roles, teacher commitment, communication climate, and leadership support, this research will provide new insights into the internal dynamics that determine reform success within schools.

The findings from this study are expected to bridge the gap between theory and practice by providing empirical evidence on how internal advocacy contributes to effective reform implementation. Practically, it will guide school leaders and policymakers in developing strategies to identify, train, and support change champions as credible reform advocates. Ultimately, this research aims to demonstrate that sustainable school reform depends not only on top-level directives but also on the advocacy, collaboration, and commitment fostered by internal champions within the school community (Fullan, 2020; Harris & Jones, 2018).

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides a detailed review of literature relevant to the roles played by change champions as GES advocates for staff reforms. It analysis both the theoretical and empirical

foundation of the role of change champions and analysis the need for further research due to the identified gaps

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodological framework that will be used to explore how PR strategies, such as two-way communication and relationship management, can be employed to mitigate conflicts in the classroom, at the basic level of education. The study aims to identify the roles played by change champions as advocates in facilitating staff reforms. This section covers the research paradigm, philosophical approach, research design, sampling methods, and how data was collected and analyzed

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is particularly suitable for exploring complex human behaviors, social interactions, and contextual experiences. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) describe qualitative research as a situated activity that locates the observer in the world, seeking to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Unlike quantitative methods that emphasize objectivity and statistical generalization, qualitative research prioritizes an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and meanings. This approach is ideal for the present study, which aims to explore how specific individuals, referred to as change champions, influence and advocate for staff reforms within a basic school environment.

Qualitative research allows for flexibility in design, open-ended data collection, and interactive interpretation of themes (Patton, 2015). It is particularly effective in uncovering participants' subjective experiences, motivations, challenges, and strategies. Therefore, this approach is most appropriate for examining leadership behavior, reform implementation, staff engagement, and organizational change processes at Divine Mercy R/C Basic School.

By adopting this approach, the researcher is able to interact directly with participants through interviews and discussions, observing non-verbal cues and contextual factors that influence reform dynamics. The goal is not to generalize findings to all schools in Ghana but to develop a rich, grounded understanding of the phenomenon within a real-life setting that can inform broader insights into staff reform in basic education institution

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore and assess the role of change champions as advocates for staff reforms at Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School within the Ghana Education Service (GES) framework. A research design refers to the overall strategy that integrates the different components of a study in a coherent and logical way, ensuring that the research problem is effectively addressed (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Within the qualitative paradigm, the case study design is particularly suited to examining contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly defined (Yin, 2018).

The case study design enables an in-depth, holistic exploration of a microcosm system such as a school, organization, or community through detailed, context-rich data collection and analysis (Stake, 1995). It allows the researcher to gain comprehensive insight into how individuals,

processes, and contextual factors interact to shape particular outcomes. In this study, the case study approach provides an opportunity to understand how individuals, identified as change champions, influence, advocate for, and sustain staff reforms within a basic school setting. The case study design is particularly appropriate when a researcher seeks to gain deep insight into a specific phenomenon within its real-life context. Since the objective of the study is to understand how individuals within a basic school influence and drive institutional reform, the case study approach allows for a holistic, in-depth investigation.

A qualitative approach is suitable for this inquiry because it prioritizes participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and social meanings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Unlike quantitative methods that rely on numerical data, qualitative case studies capture complex human experiences, relationships, and dynamics that cannot be measured statistically. This design facilitates the collection of rich, descriptive data through interviews and observations, that reveal the deeper motivations, challenges, and strategies of change champions.

The choice of a case study design is justified by the study's focus on Divine Mercy R/C Basic School as a unique and illustrative example within the Ghana Education Service system. According to Yin (2018), a single-case design is appropriate when the case represents a critical, typical, or revelatory instance of a broader phenomenon. By concentrating on one institution, the study allows for a thorough contextual analysis of leadership behaviors, staff engagement practices, and organizational change processes. This focus provides nuanced insights into how reform initiatives are championed and sustained at the school level, contributing valuable understanding to the discourse on educational reform in Ghanaian basic schools.

3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm refers to a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that guide how research is conducted, including how knowledge is generated, what constitutes valid evidence, and which methods are appropriate for inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Creswell and Poth, 2018). This study is rooted in the interpretivist (social constructivist) paradigm, which focuses on understanding the personal experiences and meanings that individuals associate with their social realities (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Unlike positivist paradigms that assume an objective reality exists independently of human perception, interpretivism posits that reality is socially constructed and context-dependent (Schwandt, 2014). Knowledge is therefore co-created through the interaction between the researcher and participants, with attention to participants' perspectives, interpretations, and lived experiences.

For this study, the interpretivist paradigm is most suitable because it provides a foundation for examining the role of change champions as advocates for staff reforms in Divine Mercy R/C Basic School. Thus, by adopting this, the researcher can explore how change champions perceive their roles, the strategies they employ and the challenges they face in influencing reforms. This approach prioritizes participants' lived experiences allowing the study to capture the nuanced social interactions, organizational dynamics and contextual factors that shape reform advocacy (Daymon and Holloway, 2012).

3.4 RESEARCH POPULATION, SAMPLING SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

3.4.1. Population of the study

In research a population refers to the entire group of individuals, events or elements that possess common characteristics relevant to a specific study (Creswell and Creswell 2018). According to Cooper and Schinder (2014), population is the total collection of elements about which inferences

are made. The population provides the framework for identifying participants who can offer information necessary to address the objectives of the study. The target population for this study includes teaching staff, school administrators, curriculum leads and change champions at Divine Mercy R/C Basic School in the Ga -West Municipality. This accessible population consists of individuals who are directly involved in or affected by staff reforms and leadership practices within the school. The population for this study is 36 staff members at Divine Mercy R/C Basic School.

3.4.2 Sample size

A sample size refers to the specific number of participants or elements selected from a larger population to take part in a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In qualitative research, the emphasis is not on the numerical size of the sample but rather on the richness and depth of the information gathered from participants (Patton, 2015). The goal is to achieve data saturation, the point at which no new insights or themes emerge from additional data collection (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Unlike quantitative studies that rely on large, statistically representative samples, qualitative research often uses smaller, purposively selected samples to enable a detailed exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings (Mason, 2010). Therefore, determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research depends on the study's scope, the nature of the phenomenon, and the diversity of participants' experiences rather than statistical considerations.

For this study, a total of 6 participants will be selected for the interviews. These will include, 2 change champions, 2 teaching staff who have experienced or been influenced by staff reforms, The headteacher who oversees reform implementation within the Ghana Education Service (GES) framework and a curriculum lead.

In addition, non-participant observations will be conducted within the school environment to complement the interview data. Observation will focus on staff interactions, leadership practices, and reform-related activities. According to Flick (2018), combining interviews and observations enhances data credibility through triangulation and provides a more holistic understanding of the research phenomenon.

This sample size is appropriate for a qualitative case study because it allows for an in-depth examination of the perspectives of those directly involved in or affected by reform advocacy. As Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend, qualitative case studies typically include 5 to 25 participants, depending on the complexity of the case and the level of data saturation achieved. Hence, the proposed sample is sufficient to provide diverse yet detailed insights into how change champions advocate for staff reforms within GES institutions.

3.4.3 Sampling Technique

A sampling technique refers to the method or process by which a researcher selects a subset of individuals or elements from a larger population to participate in a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It determines how participants are identified, approached, and included in the research, ensuring that the sample appropriately represents the characteristics or experiences relevant to the research objectives. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), selecting an appropriate sampling technique enhances the credibility, validity, and relevance of the study's findings.

This study will employ a purposive sampling technique, which is one of the most common approaches in qualitative research. This involves the deliberate selection of participants based on their knowledge, experience, or involvement with the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). It allows the researcher to focus on individuals who can provide rich, detailed, and

relevant information about the topic. As Patton (2015) explains, purposive sampling is appropriate when researchers seek depth of understanding from information-rich cases rather than statistical representativeness.

In the context of this study, purposive sampling is particularly suitable because the research aims to explore the roles and experiences of change champions as advocates for staff reforms within the Ghana Education Service (GES). Participants which include change champions, headteachers, teaching staff and curriculum leads are selected based on their direct involvement in reform activities at Divine Mercy R/C Basic School. This intentional selection ensures that the data collected reflect authentic insights into reform implementation, leadership behavior, and staff engagement.

This technique also aligns with the interpretivist paradigm guiding this study, emphasizing depth, context, and the co-construction of meaning through participants' lived experiences.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

To gain a deep and contextualized understanding of the role of change champions in staff reforms at Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School, the study will rely solely on primary data collected directly from participants. This aligns with the qualitative case study design, where the goal is to capture participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary data collection methods will include will employ multiple qualitative data collection methods. This triangulation will help increase the validity and depth of the findings. The data collection methods shall include:

The primary data collection tool will be semi-structured interviews. This will be conducted with change champions, teachers, and administrators. According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2015), this

method allows for flexibility for the researcher to delve deeper into issues while ensuring that core themes related to the research objectives are covered.

These interviews will also allow participants to express their thoughts, experiences, and perceptions in their own words, while still providing enough structure to ensure consistency across responses. An interview guide will be developed around key themes such as leadership roles, reform participation, motivation, barriers to reform, and staff dynamics.

Each interview is expected to last between 30–45 minutes and will be audio-recorded (with consent) for accuracy.

Non-Participant Observation

To complement interviews and discussions, the researcher will conduct non-participant observation during selected staff meetings, planning sessions, or reform related activities (subject to permission). The observation will help capture, Staff interactions, Leadership behavior, Communication styles and Participation in reform initiatives

Field notes will be taken to document natural behaviors and environmental factors that interviews may not fully reveal.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

A data collection instrument **refers** to the tool or mechanism that a researcher uses to gather relevant information from participants in a systematic and reliable manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The choice of instrument depends on the nature of the study, the research questions, and the methodological approach adopted. In qualitative research, instruments are typically designed

to capture participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings through open-ended and interactive techniques (Patton, 2015).

For this study, two primary data collection instruments will be employed: semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations.

3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview guide will serve as the main instrument for data collection. It will consist of open-ended questions that allow participants to freely express their experiences, opinions, and perspectives while giving the researcher flexibility to probe for deeper insights (Kallio et al., 2016). This tool is appropriate because it enables the researcher to explore how change champions perceive their roles, strategies, and challenges in advocating for staff reforms within the Ghana Education Service (GES).

3.6.2 Non-Participant Observation

Observation will be used as a supplementary instrument to capture participants' behaviors, interactions, and organizational dynamics within the school setting. As noted by Flick (2018), observation provides a firsthand account of natural events and allows the researcher to identify contextual factors that may not emerge in interviews. An observation checklist will guide the process to ensure systematic and consistent recording of relevant behaviors related to leadership practices, collaboration, and reform advocate

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The data collection process refers to the systematic procedure through which information is gathered from selected participants using identified instruments (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Data collection will occur in two main phases interviews and observations. This will be conducted sequentially to ensure depth and triangulation of findings.

Interview Phase:

The researcher will first contact potential participants, explain the study's purpose, and obtain informed consent. Interviews will then be conducted face-to-face at the Divine Mercy R/C Basic School. Each session is expected to last between 30 to 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded with participants' permission to ensure accuracy in transcription and thematic analysis of the data collected. Field notes will also be taken to document non-verbal cues, tone, and context.

Observation Phase:

Following the interviews, the researcher will engage in non-participant observation within the school environment. This will involve attending meetings, staff interactions, workshops and PLC meetings without interfering in participants' normal routines. Observations will be documented using an observation guide to ensure consistency and focus on relevant reform-related behaviors.

To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, data will be triangulated through comparing interview narratives, observational notes, and secondary documents. As Yin (2018) emphasizes, triangulation enhances the validity of case study research by cross-verifying findings from multiple sources.

3. 8 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

A data analysis technique refers to the systematic process of organizing, interpreting, and making sense of collected data to identify patterns, themes, and relationships that address the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative research, data analysis involves an iterative and interpretive process aimed at understanding participants' meanings and lived experiences rather than measuring numerical variables (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The goal is to move from raw data to meaningful insights that illuminate the social phenomena under investigation.

Given the qualitative nature of this study, a thematic analysis approach will be employed. Thematic analysis is defined as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It provides a flexible and rigorous way of organizing and describing data in rich detail, while also interpreting various aspects of the research topic. This technique is particularly suitable for studies exploring human behavior, attitudes, and experience in this case in understanding how change champions advocate for staff reforms within the Ghana Education Service (GES).

During analysis, interview transcripts, field notes, and observation records will be carefully examined. The data will first be transcribed verbatim and manually coded using open coding techniques. Emerging codes will then be categorized into broader themes reflecting participants' perspectives on reform advocacy, leadership roles, and organizational change. As Patton (2015) notes, qualitative analysis involves constant comparison, reflection, and interpretation to uncover the underlying meanings of participants' experiences.

To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher will employ strategies such as member checking (verifying interpretations with participants), triangulation (cross-verifying data from interviews

and observations), and maintaining an audit trail of analytical decisions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These strategies help ensure the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study's findings.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations refer to the principles and standards of conduct that guide researchers in ensuring respect, integrity, and protection of participants throughout the research process responsibility in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data (Resnik, 2020). According to Babbie (2021), ethical research seeks to safeguard participants from harm, ensure voluntary participation, and maintain honesty and transparency in all stages of the study. It is the cornerstone of qualitative research, especially when engaging directly with participants in educational settings. This study will therefore adhere to standard ethical principles to ensure that all participants are respected, protected, and treated with dignity throughout the research process at Divine Mercy R/C Basic School. The Consent of all participants will be sought with a clear explanation of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, their right to withdraw at any time, and how their data will be used

Maintaining Confidentiality and Anonymity will be a critical aspect of the study. Participants' identities will be kept strictly confidential. Pseudonyms or codes will be used in place of real names in all transcripts, data analysis, and final reporting. Any identifying information (such as job titles or department names) will be generalized to prevent recognition. Audio recordings, notes, and transcripts will be stored securely and accessible only to the researcher. Participation in this research will be entirely voluntary. No individual will be coerced or pressured to take part in the interviews, focus group discussions, or observations. Participants will be allowed to withdraw from the study with prior notice to the researcher as best practices will require at any point in time. The

research does not pose any physical risk, but potential emotional or professional discomfort may be possible if sensitive issues about school leadership or reforms are raised. The researcher will remain sensitive to participants' comfort and avoid intrusive questioning. Participants will be reminded that they can skip questions or end the interview at any time, should they feel uncomfortable answering a particular question

Before data collection, ethical clearance will be sought from the appropriate institutional review board or ethics committee and approval sought from Ga West municipal a subsidiary under Ghana Education Service (GES), the SISO for Kotoku circuit and the head facilitator of Divine Mercy R/C Basic. All protocols and permissions will be secured before fieldwork begins.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the research methodology adopted to explore the role of change champions in advocating staff reforms at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School. The study employs a qualitative research approach, using a case study design to gain in-depth insight into how school leaders, head facilitators, and key stakeholders' function as change agents within the reform process.

The chapter began by justifying the use of qualitative methods and describing the case study as the most appropriate design for capturing the rich, contextual experiences of participants directly involved in education. The research population was defined, focusing on staff members of Divine Mercy R/C. Basic School. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have meaningful experiences related to reforms and leadership.

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation aimed at capturing diverse and multifaceted perspectives. Thematic analysis was chosen for data

analysis to allow the researcher to identify, organize, and interpret patterns emerging from participants' narratives.

Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and minimization of harm were discussed in detail. Furthermore, the chapter outlined how trustworthiness will be ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability strategies.

This chapter sets the stage for the data collection and analysis which will be presented in subsequent chapters. By grounding the research process in robust qualitative methodology, the study aims at generating meaningful insights into how change champions influence educational reform efforts in the context of a Ghanaian basic school.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study titled “Assessing the Role of Change Champions as Advocates for GES Staff Reforms” conducted at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School. The findings derive from two main sources: semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations. The interviews captured participants’ perspectives and experiences, while the observations provided contextual evidence of how change champions enacted their roles, influenced colleagues, and navigated challenges within the school environment. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data (Cohen et al., 2007; Silverman, 2010). The data on shared and lived experiences of participants were transcribed verbatim and manually by the researcher. Shared and lived experiences of participants are presented. The discussion is organized around five main themes and their corresponding sub-themes that emerged from the qualitative data analysis. These are represented in table 1.

Each theme addresses one or more of the research questions, supported by relevant literature and interpretive commentary. Direct quotations from participants are used to substantiate key insights and provide authentic voices from the field with descriptive observation notes to enrich interpretation and provide authenticity.

This chapter will consist of three main parts: the sociodemographic data of participants, main findings and discussion of the main findings.

Table 1. Main themes and their corresponding sub themes

No	Objectives	Main Themes	Sub Themes
1	Objective 1: To identify change champions and their roles	Theme 1: Change champions as advocates and agents of reform	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocacy and leadership 2. Representation of teachers concerns 3. Role modelling decision making and participation
2	Objective 2: Examine strategies and approaches used by change champions	Theme 2: Collaborative and communicative strategies for reform implementation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peer discussions at PLC meetings, workshops and in-service trainings 2. Open communication and transparency 3. Parental and community involvement.

3	<p>Objective 3:</p> <p>Explore barriers and challenges faced by change champions</p>	<p>Theme 3:</p> <p>Resistance, Motivation and Resource constraints as barriers to change.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher resistance and fear of change 2. lack of motivation 3. Limited resources and institutional support 4. Communication gaps
4	<p>Objective 4:</p> <p>Assess the impact of change champions on staff development and reform implementation</p>	<p>Theme 4:</p> <p>Positive but gradual impact on staff development and reform progress</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhanced teacher understanding of reforms 2. Incremental Progress in Reform Implementation 3. professional growth and confidence building. 4. positive influence of students learning outcomes

5	Emergent insights from data	Theme 5: need for Bottom-up participation and inclusion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher involvement in reform design 2. Shared decision-making 3. Feedback mechanisms between schools and authorities
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4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

This presents characteristics of 6 participants who took part in both the observation and interview phases of the study. The study revealed that all participants are teachers of Divine Mercy R/C Basic school a head teacher, two teachers I PLC Leader, and two curriculum leaders. Their teaching experience ranged from between 10 and 25 years but have been teaching in the school between 2 months and 5years. The respondents were fairly balanced in terms of gender which includes 2 males and 4 females.

Their ages ranged between 35years to 54 years. This was demonstrated in the objectivity of their answers. With their educational background, all had degrees in BED with the headteacher having an additional MASTERS degree.

4.2 MAIN FINDINGS

4.2.1 Theme One: Change Champions as Advocates and Agents of Reform

The first research objective sought to find out participants views on who change champions and the roles that that they play. This was basically to help answer Research Question One.

This theme thus explores how change champions act as the driving force behind educational transformation and by so doing bridging the gap between policy and classroom practice. Three subthemes basically emerged the responses of the respondents. These included; their role as advocates and leaders, representing teachers concern to authorities and serving as role model

4.2.2 Advocacy and Leadership

Participants consistently revealed that change champions are advocates for reform for instance some respondents explained that

A change champion is someone who is directly involved in advocating or championing for change in an institution. Of course, which GES is part..... (P2)

A change champion is an initiator who helps in the implementation of a reforms.....(P3)

In emphasizing their role in explaining, promoting, and justifying changes to colleague. Some respondents described themselves as role models and leaders who demonstrate reform principles through action. As a respondent remarked,

“It Is to act as a role model, ensure there is clear communication of change objectives and the progress to all stakeholders in the school, I can also be a motivator to inspire and encourage colleagues to embrace change”(P6).

This perspective illustrates a leadership model rooted in moral purpose, consistent with Fullan's (2019) assertion that effective change leaders inspire reform through conviction rather than compliance

On 11th September 2025 during a staff meeting, change champions were seen actively clarifying reform objectives and explaining new policy directives. They often mediated between school management and colleagues, demonstrating leadership through knowledge sharing.

These findings indicate that these change champions do not merely transmit directives; they contextualize reforms within teachers' professional realities, thereby fostering buy-in and alignment with institutional goals.

The observation of their activities confirmed that advocacy was not abstract but demonstrated in everyday leadership, such as coordinating discussions, summarizing GES directives, and encouraging open dialogue.

4.2.2 Representation of Teachers' Concerns

Change champions also positioned themselves as intermediaries between teachers and management, ensuring that staff perspectives were integrated into decision-making processes. As one participant stated,

“: As a change champion, I do advocate on issues facing colleague teachers through letters and articles so that from the top some changes specific to teachers are made...(P2).

Observation during a staff briefing showed a similar pattern: a change champion documented teacher concerns about curriculum overload and presented them to the headteacher, leading to an immediate discussion on adjusting lesson pacing.

Such advocacy supports Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins's (2020) concept of inclusive leadership, where the inclusion of multiple voices enhances legitimacy and ownership of change. Within Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School, this representative function has strengthened trust and facilitated more balanced reform implementation.

Observations confirmed that this representation was not merely verbal but procedural and consultative in practice.

4.2.3 Role Modeling, Decision-Making and Participation

Respondents highlighted the importance of leading by example. One participant shared,

“People will usually stay aloof, showing signs of I don't care, but seeing me very active motivates them to be active as well”(p4)

Observation of classroom teaching confirmed this. Change champions frequently used group work, peer teaching and interactive questioning techniques. These practices aligned with the new curriculum. Colleagues observing these sessions often took notes, and some later adopted similar methods.

This demonstrates how visible leadership contributes to shaping collective behavior, aligning with Bass and Riggio's (2006) notion of transformational leadership, in which modeling desired practices inspires emulation and shared commitment.

Through participation in school activities and reform meetings, change champions directly influence operational decisions, reinforcing their dual role as both practitioners and policy enforcers at the school level. Change champions thus visibly embodied reform ideals, influencing both instruction and decision-making culture.

4.3 THEME TWO: COLLABORATIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGIES FOR REFORM IMPLEMENTATION

This theme addresses the collaborative and participatory strategies used by change champions to promote reform in line with research objective 2. Findings reveal three subthemes which are that peer discussions, open communication and parental and community involvement were central to sustaining engagement across staff members and by extension parents.

4.3.1 Peer discussions at PLC meetings, Workshops and Inservice trainings.

Respondents frequently mentioned that organizing or attending workshops, having in-service trainings and professional learning community (PLC) sessions are instances where knowledge and experiences are shared on new reforms. Some remarks made by some respondents are as follows;

“ It is through in-service training, workshop, Continuing Professional Development(CPD’S) and other means”(P3)

“ So PLC is one forum so whenever there is plc we explain policies to colleagues. Where it involves parents, during PTA meeting I educate parents”.....(P4)

It was observed that on the school’s PLC timetable was also an agenda to discuss reform issues. On a particular day the curriculum lead led teachers to discuss the new terminologies used in the curriculum comparing it to the old syllabus to help in the understanding of the new curriculum.

“ So as a change champion I try to see through the importance of the reforms and through discussions with the teachers I try to let them see the importance of the reforms and also help them to understand the part of the reform they may not understand”(P2)

Observation during lesson preparation periods confirmed this: experienced change champions were often seen guiding newly recruited teachers, explaining assessment rubrics and co-developing lesson plans.

Observation on 14th September, 2025 a workshop led by two change champions demonstrated practical lesson delivery aligned with GES reforms. Teachers participated actively, discussing strategies and sharing resources.

Such collaborative platforms align with Harris and Jones (2018), who argue that professional learning communities enhance reform sustainability by fostering collective learning. At Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School, workshops, PLC's have become a critical tool for aligning instructional practices with reform objectives.

4.3.2 Open Communication and Transparency

Open and continuous communication was cited as crucial for minimizing resistance and fostering inclusion. One respondent had this to say

** so communication is what I use to encourage stakeholders and to motivate colleagues"(P4)*

P5 said 'I think they [change champions] have to foster open communication ad build trust through active listening ad giving feedbacks to their colleagues" .

Observation confirmed that communication was indeed participatory. In several instances, change champions invited feedback during staff meetings and encouraged teachers to share difficulties openly. This led to collective brainstorming rather than unilateral directives.

This mirrors Kotter's (2012) emphasis on two-way communication as a driver of successful organizational change. Within the Divine Mercy context, transparent dialogue built on trust enabled staff to express concerns, clarify misunderstandings, and collectively navigate implementation challenges. Observations further revealed that even outside meetings such as during breaks or lesson transitions, change champions continued discussions, reinforcing ongoing engagement.

4.3.3 Parental and Community Involvement

Some change champions extended their communication beyond the school walls. As one participant explained, "*where it involves parents, during PTA meetings I educate them*" (P4)

Observation during a PTA meeting confirmed parental involvement. In this particular meeting, change champions interacted with parents, explaining student-centered learning displays and new assessment techniques to parents and guardians.

This initiative resonates with Epstein's (2018) framework of school-family partnerships, reinforcing the idea that reform is a shared enterprise involving teachers, parents, and the wider community. By engaging external stakeholders, change champions expanded the reform's reach and sustainability.

4.4 THEME THREE: RESISTANCE, MOTIVATION AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS AS BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Despite their dedication, change champions faced significant obstacles, including teacher resistance, lack of motivation, and insufficient resources. These barriers highlight the systemic and psychological factors that complicate reform implementation

4.4.1 Teacher Resistance and Fear of Change

Resistance from colleagues emerged as the most prevalent challenge.

(P 3) described this challenge succinctly: “To sell a new reform to colleagues’ teacher is 50-50; they can listen to you or not... they just rubbish it because teachers are teachers.”

Likewise, *(P6) acknowledged that “There’s always the fear of change. There is the thinking that we cannot do it. We are also comfortable with the old system of doing things. So that will be a resistant to any change or reform, and also lack of motivation and incentives, you know because materials are not available, we are not motivated enough to start the change*

I think its lack of support, when most of the colleagues may not be initially in support of whatever change the change champions are bringing.....(P5)

I will say lack of support most of the time they don’t get enough people to support the change...(P1)

Observation confirmed subtle forms of resistance. In some staff meetings, a few teachers were disengaged or avoided contributing to reform discussions. In observed classrooms, certain teachers maintained traditional, lecture-based styles despite recent training.

This echoes Oreg’s (2006) argument that resistance often stems from fear of incompetence or uncertainty about outcomes. The findings suggest that some teachers viewed reform as disruptive rather than developmental, underscoring the importance of continuous reassurance and coaching by change champions. Observation corroborates that resistance was not overt defiance but passive non-engagement. This is a reminder that reform success depends on emotional readiness as much as structural change.

It also reflects Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, which notes that individuals' readiness and attitudes significantly affect adoption of innovations. O'Sullivan (2002) also observed that teacher resistance often stems from uncertainty and lack of ownership in reform processes.

4.4.2 Lack of Motivation, Limited Resources and Institutional Support

Participants also lamented the absence of tangible incentives for their extra efforts.,

“At least some water and drinks when used during meetings will help motivate. But funds are not there.” (P4)

Similarly, another respondent noted that colleagues were “hesitant to accept the reform called starter” due to lack of financial incentives.....(p3)

Observation supported this sentiment: despite active engagement, champions often multitasked without administrative acknowledgment. Their additional responsibilities (e.g., organizing workshops, preparing materials) were unpaid and time-consuming.

Also, there are no materials to support some of these reforms making the work of we change champions quite cumbersome ...(.P2)

Observations in the classrooms revealed this assertion as teachers didn't have resource materials to facilitate teaching in the classroom. Likewise, students didn't have text books based on the new curriculum to support their learning as well.

These finding supports Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory, which emphasizes the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in sustaining engagement. The lack of recognition not only undermines morale but also threatens long-term reform continuity.

Such constraints are consistent with Fullan's (2020) view that sustainable reform requires both human and material capacity. Without sufficient institutional support, even the most committed champions struggle to actualize intended changes. Observations made visible the material strain underlying reform challenges, making this a systemic rather than individual issue.

4.4.3 Communication Gaps

Delayed or unclear communication from authorities also hampered implementation. Several respondents, including Respondent 6 who, emphasized the need for early communication and clear explanation of reforms to reduce misunderstanding

"The explanation of the change has to be clear to each and every one so that we will go by it." ...
(P6)

Communication is key to a lot of things, as for the heart of humans when you get them to understand they will embrace the lessons....(P4)

I think they have to improve their communication, that is having an open and honest conversation to help their colleagues to understand the issues and then to express their perspective, and sometimes they have to ask for support from colleagues and set clear expectations.....(P5)

Observation of a mid-term staff meeting confirmed unclear communication; some teachers expressed confusion about how to use a new grading templates that had already been implemented elsewhere and used in a way that was contrary to theirs.

This challenge reflects Kotter's (2012) warning that breakdowns in communication can derail reform progress. The need for timely, coherent information from higher authorities remains a

critical factor for effective implementation. observation showed how difficult it is to address some of these issues because they [change champions themselves] are ill informed.

4.5 THEME FOUR: POSITIVE BUT GRADUAL IMPACT ON STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM PROGRESS

Despite various challenges, the actions of change champions have contributed positively to staff development, collaboration, and professional growth. The impact, though gradual, demonstrates the transformative potential of distributed leadership in school reform. Four sub themes emerged from this theme.

4.5.1 Enhanced Teacher Understanding of Reforms

Through sustained engagement, teachers developed a clearer grasp of policy intentions.

As a respondent remarked *“I have helped the teachers or facilitators to cope or catch up with new development and better understand new reforms that are introduced every now and then” (P2)*

Observation confirmed this as teachers increasingly referenced reform terms like learning outcomes and competency-based activities during meetings.

This finding aligns with Guskey’s (2002) assertion that professional learning enhances understanding, leading to improved implementation fidelity. Clarity bred confidence, which, in turn, strengthened reform outcomes. The observed behavioral shift of competence gives credence to genuine learning progress

4.5.2: Incremental Progress in Reform Implementation

Several respondents rated their overall influence moderately with

Respondent 2 gave himself 51% by saying that " I have been able to assist some teachers with some of the reforms that they may not have agreed to "

While Respondent 6 estimated "about 50%."

Respondent 4, however, believed his efforts had "80% effect on my colleagues."

These mixed responses indicate gradual yet visible progress in reform adoption. Additionally, observations of change change champions impact on staff was gradual process as some teachers still lagged behind.

4.5.3 Professional Growth and Confidence Building

Engagement in reform processes fostered professional identity and self-efficacy.

Respondents consistently noted positive impacts of their efforts on staff capacity.

"I have helped the teachers to cope or catch up with new developments and helped in teaching and learning." ... (P2)

A respondent also affirmed this by stating that,

"My role as a teacher has had positive impact on my teaching and this helps us grow as professionals...(p6)

Observation supported this confidence of teachers and change champions as they facilitated class activities with minimal supervision and demonstrated new teaching strategies.

This observation aligns with Hattie's (2012) argument that teacher confidence directly impacts classroom effectiveness. Change champions, therefore, serve not only as reform agent but also as

catalysts for professional empowerment. The observed self-assuredness of the teachers thus illustrated tangible professional growth.

4.5.4 Positive Influence on Student Learning Outcomes

Respondents linked teacher development to improved student outcomes.

An example of tangible outcomes from reform-inspired initiatives is provided by one the respondents

“When I came to the school... we introduced mentorship for learners... and I can bet you now most of the students can read Asante Twi.” (P6)

Anytime an initiative comes up it helps to improve learning outcomes.... (P3)

Observation of the performance of students showed active student participation in group discussions, practical exercises, and assessments as a result of these new reforms especially on the New Curriculum

This reinforces Hattie’s (2012) conclusion that teacher quality remains the most influential school-based factor in student achievement. The ripple effect of change champions thus extends beyond staff to (learners themselves. Observations confirmed visible classroom transformation resulting from change champions’ efforts.

4.6 THEME FIVE (EMERGENT): NEED FOR BOTTOM-UP PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

An emergent insight emphasized the necessity of bottom-up engagement in reform design. Participants called for greater teacher involvement in decision-making to ensure reforms reflect

classroom realities and sustain ownership. Both interviews and observations indicated a growing desire for inclusive, bottom-up reform processes.

4.6.1 Teacher Involvement in Reform Design

I wish the authorities will come to the grassroots because we teachers are the implementors of the reform they need to involve us in some of the reforms so that it can resolve some of these issues or barriers (P2)

Observation revealed similar sentiments, where teachers often awaited directives from above before adapting reforms. This suggests limited involvement during the design phases of these reforms.

P4 also urged authorities to *cast their nets wide to get hidden change champions on board and support them.*

This highlights the disconnect between top-level policy and ground-level practice. Fullan (2020) advocates for co-construction of reform with practitioners to enhance authenticity and sustainability an idea echoed strongly in this study. Sustainable change can only be achieved when all stakeholders have shared responsibility. Also change can only be meaningful when implementers are engaged as co-creators rather than being seen as only implementers

4.6.2 Shared Decision-Making

Teachers advocated for participatory leadership models.

I believe If we are consulted during the formulation of new reforms, we can suggest what works best in our context(P6)

Observation of planning meetings showed instances where management sought teacher input, though such consultations were occasional. However, it was also observed that during the discussion of reforms teachers complained about the fact that their inputs were not sought.

This supports Leithwood et al.'s (2020) findings that, shared decision-making strengthens ownership, accountability, and innovation within educational settings. Once teachers are consulted when decisions are taken, they feel part of the whole process and this emboldens them to also help in making sure that whichever reform they were consulted on becomes a success otherwise they sit *and fold their arms as if they don't care* as participant 4 asserted.

During a meeting held on 15th October, 2025, I observed that only two teachers out of 18 teachers present, contributed to discussions on modifying the weekly scheme. Later, in informal conversations outside the meeting many of them admitted they did not feel their inputs mattered. This showed that the consultation process was late, inconsistent and not fully trusted.

4.6.3 Feedback Mechanisms Between Schools and Authorities

Respondents recommended establishing regular feedback mechanisms this they attributed will help create transparency and trust and make them feel heard and valued. The earlier these feedbacks are reported will help correct mistakes during the implementation of reforms before they become serious issues.

As **Participant 5** explained, *the challenges we face when reforms are introduced are enormous but I think if we should report these challenges early and directly to the authorities so that solutions will come faster.*

Observation data collected on the field confirmed the absence of structured feedback systems; most complaints and suggestions shared during staff meetings which I observed, stayed at the school level. There were no structured forms, reports or email submissions to higher authorities. In one meeting for instance teachers in disappointment shouted “We have said this several times, but nothing changes”.

Thus the proposal of having regular feedback underscores Fullan’s (2019) call for dynamic, two-way communication between policymakers and implementers, ensuring reforms remain adaptive and responsive. When there is feedback, challenges can be tackled and improved for onward implementation. Authorities must therefore be ready to provide structured feedback systems to accept feedbacks from the grassroots and work on them.

Across all themes, the findings reveal that change champions play a pivotal role in facilitating educational reform within Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School. They act as advocates, communicators, and mentors who bridge the gap between policy and practice. Through collaboration, role modeling, and advocacy, they help to foster professional growth

However, their effectiveness is tempered by systemic challenges, particularly resistance, inadequate motivation, and resource constraints. The study thus reaffirms that sustainable reform requires not only individual leadership but also institutional structures that support, resource, and recognize the work of change champions. The emerging call for bottom-up participation further suggests that reform is most effective when teachers are empowered as co-creators rather than mere implementers of change.

4.7 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.7.1 Research Question 1: Who are identified as change champions within Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School. what roles do they play in advocating for staff reforms?

The study revealed that change champions serve as advocates, intermediaries, and role models for reform implementation. Interview data indicated that teachers perceived them as key conduits between policy and practice, while observational evidence confirmed that they embodied these roles during meetings, classroom teaching, and informal interactions. Findings revealed that change champions are typically selected or self-emerge from among the teaching staff based on their commitment, initiative, and credibility among peers. These individuals embody moral purpose and display leadership traits that motivate others to engage in reform processes. As Fullan (2019) notes, effective change leaders operate not through authority but through influence, modeling, and moral conviction. Within Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School, these champions were found to be proactive teachers who voluntarily advocate for reforms, bridging communication between management and staff. Their identification is thus not formalized through designation alone but validated by peer recognition and consistent engagement in reform-related activities.

Even though through the interviews. change champions' enthusiasm was highlighted, field observations revealed moments of fatigue and competing responsibilities, reminding us that advocacy requires both institutional recognition, support and emotional resilience.

These findings are consistent with Fullan (2007), who emphasizes the importance of change agents in motivating colleagues and bridging the gap between reforms and practice. Similarly, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) note that transformational leadership fosters staff buy-in during educational reforms. Observed leadership behaviors also reflect the principles of distributed leadership, as

described by Harris and Spillane (2008), whereby responsibility and influence are shared across staff rather than concentrated in hierarchical authority.

Furthermore, the advocacy practices of change champions correspond to the initial steps of Kotter's (1996) model of change, which includes creating a sense of urgency, forming guiding coalitions, and communicating the vision. Equity Theory is also supported by the findings, as teachers demonstrated increased motivation when they perceived leadership and recognition to be fair. Similarly, Communication Theory is affirmed, as active dissemination of reform goals enhanced staff understanding and engagement.

4.7.2 Research Question 2: What strategies and approaches do these change champions use to influence staff reform and promote institutional change?

The findings revealed that collaboration, communication, and mentorship are central to their approach. They employ participatory mechanisms such as workshops, professional learning communities (PLCs), and mentorship sessions to help teachers internalize and implement new policies. This aligns with Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice, which emphasizes the collective nature of professional learning and shared meaning-making.

Additionally, the role of communication emerged as a critical enabler of reform success. Consistent with Kotter's (2012) framework for organizational change, two-way communication was found to reduce resistance, clarify expectations, and build consensus. The champions also extended their communication efforts to include parents and community members, reinforcing Epstein's (2018) argument that educational reform thrives when it involves a network of stakeholders. These strategies underscore that reform implementation is most effective when it is participatory and inclusive rather than top-down. Furthermore, observational data enriched the

understanding of communication strategies. field observations showed champions initiating informal reform discussions during informal periods such as breaks demonstrating sustained commitment beyond formal settings. This supports Kotter's (2012) emphasis on continuous communication as a change enabler.

These strategies resonate with prior research. York-Barr and Duke (2004) emphasize that teacher leadership and professional learning communities strengthen reform adoption, while Harris and Spillane (2008) argue that collaboration and shared responsibility within distributed leadership enhance reform sustainability. Parental and community involvement reflects Epstein's (2018) school-family partnership framework, reinforcing that inclusive engagement promotes reform effectiveness.

Moreover, these approaches are consistent with Kotter's (1996) steps for empowering staff and generating short-term wins, as champions created practical opportunities for teachers to apply new practices and build confidence. Equity Theory is reflected in the inclusive nature of these strategies, fostering motivation by ensuring teachers felt supported and fairly engaged. Communication Theory underpins the emphasis on two-way dialogue in PLCs, mentorship, and community interactions, highlighting the central role of communication in successful reform implementation.

4.7.3 Research Question 3: What barriers or challenges do change champions face in the line of their duty.

The third research question focused on the barriers or challenges faced by change champions. The results highlighted multiple impediments, including teacher resistance, lack of motivation, inadequate resources, and communication breakdowns. Resistance was primarily rooted in

teachers' discomfort with new methods and their preference for established practices, a phenomenon Oreg (2006) and O'Sullivan (2002), supports by emphasizing that resistance often stems from fear of incompetence or uncertainty. Moyo (2020) similarly in his study notes that , resource constraints and inadequate support undermine reform initiatives in African educational contexts

Motivational challenges further complicated implementation. As Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory suggests, sustained engagement in reform requires both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. In this study, the absence of recognition or incentives for change champions led to feelings of neglect and burnout. Furthermore, material shortages and insufficient institutional support constrained the ability of champions to carry out reform initiatives effectively. These challenges highlight that while individual agency is crucial, structural support and resource allocation from educational authorities are equally essential for reform sustainability.

The communication gaps identified between the Ghana Education Service (GES) and school-level implementers further underscore the need for timely and transparent information flow. Late circulars and unclear policy directions often created confusion, echoing Kotter's (2012) warning that breakdowns in communication are among the leading causes of failed organizational change.

These challenges also resonate with Kotter's (1996) model, particularly Step 5, which emphasizes on the need to remove obstacles to change. Equity Theory is consistent with the findings as it accounts that motivation is reduced when teachers perceive inequitable workloads or lack of recognition. Communication Theory is likewise validated, as insufficient and unclear communication from authorities contributed to misunderstandings and passive resistance

Resource constraints were clearly observable in classrooms where there were no text books and other materials to implement effectively new reforms especially the new curriculum. This visual confirmation transforms what might have been perceived as complaints into institutional realities. Hence, these observation data anchored the interviews in tangible, verifiable context.

4.7.4 Research Question 4: In what ways have the actions of change champions impacted staff development and the implementation of reforms at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School?

Despite the challenges change champions encounter, the findings revealed substantial positive outcomes. Teachers reported improved understanding of reform policies, enhanced collaboration, and increased confidence in applying new teaching methods. These findings resonate with recent studies such as those by Guskey's (2002) which emphasize that professional learning is a catalyst for deeper engagement and sustained instructional improvement.

Moreover, the study found that the influence of change champions extended beyond professional competence to the realm of culture building. Their mentorship and example fostered a climate of collegiality and shared purpose, aligning with Hattie's (2012) assertion that teacher collaboration and self-efficacy are key determinants of student success. Several respondents noted that as teaching improved, students became more attentive, participatory and successful, demonstrating the indirect but profound impact of leadership on learning outcomes. Observation echoed this gradual nature of reform progress where sessions showed varying levels of adoption among teachers. This reflects Fullan's (2019) caution that reform is iterative, requiring patience and reinforcement. These findings suggest that, reform is evolving, but directionally positive.

Additionally, the study affirms the relevance of key theoretical frameworks. Kotter's Steps 6 and 7 which pertains to the achievement of short-term wins and the consolidation of gains. These are

evident in the incremental adoption of reform in the finding. Equity Theory is also reinforced, as teachers who perceived adequate support demonstrated greater engagement, which in turn enhanced their confidence and professional identity. Finally, Communication Theory emphasized the critical role of sustained mentoring and participatory dialogue in reinforcing the understanding and implementation of reform policies.

4.7.5 Emergent Insights and Broader Implications

An emergent theme highlighted the necessity of bottom-up participation in reform planning. Teachers expressed a desire to be more actively involved in policy formulation and decision-making, reflecting Fullan's (2020) argument that authentic reform requires practitioner ownership. When teachers are excluded from early stages of policy design, reforms risk being perceived as imposed, which undermines long-term commitment.

This finding carries broader implications for educational leadership within the Ghana Education Service. For reforms to be both meaningful and sustainable, leadership structures must be reoriented toward participatory governance, where feedback loops between schools and higher authorities are formalized. Leithwood et al. (2020) similarly advocate for distributed leadership models that empower teachers as co-creators of institutional change rather than passive implementers. During field change champions were a few times observed in seeking colleagues' suggestions during planning. This demonstrates the potential for participatory culture, though not yet fully institutionalized.

The presentation of findings demonstrates that change champions play an indispensable role in bridging the gap between reform policy and classroom practice. Their advocacy, leadership, and collaborative efforts foster professional growth, enhance staff motivation, and gradually shift the

school's culture toward innovation and inclusivity. However, their success is contingent on the presence of enabling conditions adequate resources, recognition, and open communication channels.

The results underscore the dual nature of educational reform as both a human and systemic process. While individual leadership at the school level drives momentum, systemic structures must support these efforts for sustained impact. As Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School continues to navigate GES staff reforms, empowering change champions and institutionalizing participatory practices will be vital to ensuring lasting transformation. The findings thus reaffirm that educational reform is not merely a matter of policy but of people champions who advocate, model, and sustain change through vision, collaboration, and resilience. Their efforts illuminate the broader principle that sustainable reform begins with empowered teachers and inclusive leadership as corroborated Harris and Spillane (2008). Kotter's (1996) steps related to communicating vision and empowering staff are reinforced, as teachers' inclusion in decision-making processes directly supports reform adoption. Equity Theory explains that participatory structures increase perceptions of fairness, motivation, and commitment. Communication Theory is confirmed through the necessity of two-way feedback loops to ensure transparency, trust, and responsiveness.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented and discussed the major findings of the study on the role of change champions as advocates for GES staff reforms at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School. Through thematic analysis, the findings revealed that change champions play multifaceted roles as advocates, mentors, communicators, and catalysts for institutional change.

Their actions have positively influenced staff collaboration, professional development, and reform implementation despite persistent barriers such as resistance, limited motivation, and inadequate resources. The discussion further highlighted the need for participatory, bottom-up approaches to ensure inclusivity and sustainability in reform processes.

Additionally, the integration of findings with literature indicates strong alignment with prior studies and reinforces the relevance of transformational, distributed, and participatory leadership models in educational reform. The theoretical frameworks of Kotter's 8-step model, Equity Theory, and Communication Theory provide explanatory power for both the successes and challenges observed. highlights the critical role of inclusive, participatory leadership in sustaining educational reforms in Ghana.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The study examined the role of change champions as advocates for staff reforms within the Ghana Education Service (GES), focusing on Divine Mercy R/C Basic School. The study was guided by the interpretivist (social constructivist) paradigm, which emphasizes understanding individuals' lived experiences and the meanings they attach to social realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A qualitative case study design was adopted to explore how teachers and change champions within a basic school environment influence and drive organizational change. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations involving six purposively selected participants, including a headteacher, change champions and teaching staff.

The data was analyzed using thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which enabled the identification of emerging themes and patterns related to reform advocacy, leadership behaviors, and institutional challenges. The aim of the study is to understand how change champions facilitate reforms, the strategies they employ, the constraints they encounter in promoting change and their impact within the GES framework

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

5.2.1 Emergence of Change Champions

The study revealed that change champions often emerge naturally within the school environment while some are formally appointed. Their role is driven by personal initiative, professional commitment and a desire to improve teaching and learning practices within the institution. These

individuals distinguish themselves through their proactive attitudes, leadership qualities, and ability to influence their peers positively.

Interviews with participants indicated that change champions are usually teachers who exhibit a high level of dedication, creativity, and willingness to embrace new ideas. They demonstrate strong communication and problem-solving skills, which make them approachable and respected by their colleagues. Their leadership is not positional but rather inspirational and relational, aligning with Fullan's (2016) concept of "moral purpose" in educational leadership, where individuals seek to improve the lives of others through meaningful change.

The findings further revealed that the recognition of change champions often arises from their consistent demonstration of positive behavior and commitment to school improvement initiatives. In the context of Divine Mercy R/C Basic School, these individuals were identified as the key drivers behind reforms such as continuous professional development, and improved staff coordination.

This result supports the assertion by Rogers (2003) in his Diffusion of Innovations theory, which states that individuals who are early adopters of new ideas often serve as opinion leaders or change agents within an organization. Similarly, Kotter (2012) emphasizes that successful organizational change depends significantly on the presence of individuals who can guide and inspire others through the transformation process.

The emergence of change champions in this study thus underscores the importance of individual motivation in fostering reform. Their informal leadership roles demonstrate that meaningful educational change can be initiated from within, particularly when individuals are empowered and

trusted to innovate. This suggests that recognizing and nurturing such champions is essential for sustaining reform momentum within the Ghana Education Service (GES).

5.2.2 Advocacy and Influence Strategies

The study found that change champions employ a variety of advocacy and other influence strategies to promote staff reforms and ensure their effective implementation. These strategies include collaborative communication, peer mentoring, role modeling, and participatory engagement. Through these methods, change champions act as bridges between the school leadership and the teaching staff, translating reform policies into actionable practices. Participants reported that open communication is the cornerstone of successful advocacy. Change champions facilitate dialogue among staff members, helping to clarify reform objectives, address misconceptions, and encourage cooperation. By engaging in one-on-one discussions, during meetings and informal conversations, they create a supportive environment that fosters trust and collective ownership of change initiatives. This finding is consistent with Kotter's (2012) argument that effective communication is essential in creating a shared vision for change.

Additionally, the study revealed that peer mentoring is a critical tool used by change champions. Experienced teachers' mentor younger colleagues by sharing practical experiences, classroom management strategies, and pedagogical innovations. This mentorship not only builds capacity but also enhances collegiality and mutual learning. Similarly, role modeling was identified as a powerful influence mechanism. Change champions lead by example, demonstrating commitment to new practices and setting performance standards that others aspire to emulate.

These findings align with Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling. In the context of GES reforms,

change champions embody the desired behaviors and attitudes, thereby inspiring their peers to adapt and improve.

Ultimately, advocacy strategies used by change champions highlight the human and relational dimension of reform. Rather than relying solely on administrative enforcement, reforms succeed when teachers are motivated, inspired, and supported through collegial influence. This confirms that interpersonal communication and shared vision are central to achieving sustainable change in educational settings.

5.2.3 Role in Reform Implementation

The study established that change champions play an indispensable role in the implementation of staff reforms. They serve as facilitators who bridge the gap between policy directives from the Ghana Education Service and the practical realities of the classroom. Through their active involvement, they help interpret reform objectives, mobilize staff, and ensure that implementation strategies align with the school's unique context.

Thematic analysis of interview data showed that change champions are instrumental in promoting staff engagement, team collaboration, and a culture of continuous improvement. They organize informal learning communities where teachers can share challenges, exchange ideas, and jointly find solutions to instructional and administrative problems. This aligns with Schein's (2010) model of organizational culture, which highlights the importance of shared values and collective learning in achieving change.

Participants described change champions as "motivators" and "connectors" who facilitate communication between management and staff. They help reduce resistance to change by presenting reforms in a relatable and non-threatening manner. Their leadership style is

collaborative rather than authoritative, fostering mutual respect and shared accountability. This resonates with Fullan's (2016) concept of collaborative professionalism, where educators work together to improve practice and outcomes.

In the context of Divine Mercy R/C Basic School, change champions were pivotal in implementing new staff performance monitoring systems, integrating ICT in teaching, and promoting teacher professional development. Their presence ensured that reforms were not perceived as externally imposed but as internally driven processes.

In conclusion, the role of change champions in reform implementation underscores their position as change facilitators and cultural mediators. Their ability to interpret, adapt, and communicate reform goals ensures that change becomes embedded in daily practice rather than remaining a policy ideal.

5.2.4 Challenges Encountered by Change Champions

Despite their important roles, change champions encounter numerous challenges that hinder their effectiveness. The study identified major obstacles such as limited administrative support, resource constraints, resistance to change, and bureaucratic barriers within the GES system.

Participants reported that one of the most significant challenges is the lack of institutional recognition and support. Many change champions operate informally and without clear mandates, leaving them vulnerable to burnout and discouragement. Without official endorsement, their efforts are sometimes overlooked by school management or district authorities. This finding is consistent with Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), who argue that sustainable educational reform requires systemic support and institutional alignment.

Another key challenge identified was resistance from colleagues. Some teachers perceive reforms as unnecessary burdens or threats to established routines. Change champions often struggle to overcome skepticism, particularly when reforms require additional effort or challenge long-standing practices. Kotter and Schlesinger (2008) explain that such resistance is a natural reaction to change, stemming from uncertainty and fear of loss of control.

Inadequate resources, such as lack of teaching materials, technological tools, and training opportunities were also reported as major impediments. Change initiatives are often undermined when champions lack the logistical or financial support to implement them effectively. Furthermore, bureaucratic procedures within the GES often delay decision-making and slow down reform processes, creating frustration among change advocates.

These challenges highlight the need for a supportive institutional framework that recognizes and empowers change champions. As Fullan (2016) notes, reform sustainability depends on creating enabling environments that encourage risk-taking, collaboration, and innovation. Without such structures, even the most dedicated champions may struggle to sustain momentum.

In essence, the study concludes that addressing these challenges requires leadership commitment, policy alignment, and the provision of adequate resources to ensure that change champions can operate effectively within the school system.

5.2.5 Impact of Change Champions on Institutional Development

The final key finding of the study demonstrates that change champions have a profound impact on institutional development within the Ghana Education Service. Their efforts contribute to improved staff morale, enhanced professional collaboration, and a stronger culture of accountability and innovation.

Participants unanimously reported that schools with active change champions experience a more positive organizational climate. Teachers become more motivated, cooperative, and open to adopting new teaching strategies. Change champions inspire a sense of purpose and shared responsibility, fostering a school culture that values learning, reflection, and continuous improvement. This finding aligns with the work of Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2020), who argue that effective leadership and teacher collaboration are crucial determinants of school success.

Furthermore, change champions were found to play a central role in promoting professional learning communities (PLCs) within the school. They initiate collaborative meetings, facilitate workshops, and encourage peer observations, which collectively strengthen teaching practices and student outcomes. Their initiatives lead to a more dynamic and responsive institutional culture aligned with GES's mission of promoting quality education.

The findings also revealed that change champions influence not only staff behaviors but also the strategic direction of the school. Their input often shapes policy discussions, staff development priorities, and the implementation of performance monitoring systems. In doing so, they act as catalysts for institutional growth and innovation.

Overall, the impact of change champions extends beyond individual performance to encompass the broader organizational structure. Their presence enhances communication, fosters mutual trust, and aligns the school's internal culture with national education reform goals. In summary, the study affirms that empowering change champions is a strategic investment in sustainable school improvement and educational excellence.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to assess the role of change champions as advocates for Ghana Education Service (GES) staff reforms, using Divine Mercy R/C Basic School as a case study. Drawing on the interpretivist paradigm and employing a qualitative case study design, the study explored how individuals within a basic school setting influence, implement, and sustain institutional reforms. Through semi-structured interviews and observations, rich and detailed narratives were obtained from headteachers, teachers, and identified change champions, allowing for an in-depth understanding of their experiences and perceptions.

The findings revealed that change champions play an indispensable role in driving educational transformation. They act as informal leaders who inspire their colleagues, foster collaboration, and translate reform policies into practical actions. Their emergence within schools underscores the significance of individual agency and moral purpose in the success of organizational change. In alignment with Fullan's (2016) framework, the study affirms that sustainable educational improvement depends on people rather than structures—on relationships, trust, and shared commitment to common goals.

A major conclusion drawn from this study is that effective reform implementation in education is human-centered. The findings suggest that while national policy frameworks provide direction, it is the leadership, motivation, and advocacy of change champions at the school level that determine the success or failure of reforms. These individuals help contextualize reforms, making them relevant and achievable within the realities of the local school environment. They also serve as mediators between policy and practice, bridging the often-wide gap between administrative directives and classroom realities.

The study also concludes that the success of change champions depends heavily on the institutional environment in which they operate. Supportive leadership, access to resources, and a culture of collaboration enhance their effectiveness. Conversely, bureaucratic barriers, limited recognition, and resistance from colleagues constrain their ability to sustain reform momentum. Thus, reform outcomes are not solely a reflection of champions' competence but also of the organizational ecosystem that enables or hinders innovation.

Furthermore, the research validates the value of the interpretivist approach in educational studies, as it provided deep insight into participants' subjective experiences and the meaning they ascribe to their actions. By understanding how change champions perceive their roles and navigate challenges, the study contributes to the growing body of literature emphasizing the role of micro-level leadership in large-scale reform efforts (Harris & Jones, 2018).

The study reaffirms that the Ghana Education Service's commitment to quality education can only be realized if it acknowledges and supports the grassroots actors particularly, change champions who embody reform ideals and operationalize them within their schools. Empowering these individuals through structured recognition, continuous professional development, and supportive policies will not only strengthen reform advocacy but also ensure lasting institutional improvement.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the findings and conclusions of this study, several key recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of change champions as advocates for staff reforms within the Ghana Education Service (GES). These recommendations are aimed at improving both policy

implementation and institutional practices, while also guiding future research on educational change and leadership.

At the policy level, the Ghana Education Service should formally acknowledge and integrate the contribution of change champions into its reform agenda. These individuals play a vital role in bridging the gap between national policies and local realities, and their efforts deserve structured recognition through official frameworks, performance appraisals, or award systems. Institutionalizing the role of change champions would not only validate their contributions but also ensure continuity in reform implementation. Moreover, involving them in the design and execution of staff reform initiatives would make such reforms more practical and responsive to the challenges faced by teachers and administrators at the school level. Their firsthand experiences can provide valuable insights into what works, what does not, and how reform strategies can be better aligned with the realities of classroom practice.

The success of educational reform depends greatly on the capacity and confidence of those who drive it. For this reason, continuous professional development is crucial. The Ghana Education Service, in collaboration with teacher training institutions and district education offices, should organize leadership and change management programs for change champions. Such programs should emphasize effective communication, conflict resolution, and strategic problem-solving skills. Equipping change champions with these competencies will enable them to lead more effectively, inspire their peers, and sustain reform efforts even in the face of resistance or institutional challenges.

At the institutional level, school administrators should cultivate environments that actively support and empower change champions. Establishing professional learning communities and mentoring

networks can create spaces for collaboration, reflection, and shared learning. When teachers engage collectively in professional dialogue, the responsibility for reform becomes shared rather than individualized, reducing the pressure on single champions while fostering a culture of mutual accountability. A school culture that values openness, trust and innovation encourage teachers to experiment with new ideas and adapt reforms in ways that suit their specific contexts.

Leadership practices also play a decisive role in the success of change advocacy. Schools are encouraged to embrace distributed and collaborative leadership models that allow teachers to participate meaningfully in decision-making. When change champions are included in leadership structures and their voices are heard, reforms are more likely to gain traction and long-term support. In such environments, leadership becomes a shared endeavor that inspires collective commitment to institutional goals.

Sufficient resources remain an indispensable factor in reform implementation. The Ghana Education Service and local education authorities should ensure that schools have access to the materials, training tools, and logistical support needed to put reform ideas into practice. Even the most motivated change champions may lose momentum when faced with inadequate resources or bureaucratic delays. Ensuring steady support, both material and moral, reinforces commitment and sustains progress.

Looking ahead, there is a need for further research to deepen understanding of the role of change champions within the broader educational landscape. Future studies could extend this inquiry to multiple schools or districts, comparing how contextual factors influence the emergence and effectiveness of change champions. Employing mixed-methods research that combines qualitative and quantitative data could also provide a more comprehensive perspective on how change

champions contribute to staff performance, reform sustainability, and overall school improvement. Longitudinal studies would be especially valuable in tracking how these individuals' influence evolves over time and how reform outcomes are maintained in the long term.

Additionally, further research could explore how leadership preparation programs and professional development initiatives influence the cultivation of change champions within the GES. Understanding how training and mentorship shape their leadership capacity could help policymakers and educational leaders design more effective pathways for teacher leadership and reform advocacy.

In conclusion, the empowerment of change champions must be understood not as an isolated strategy but as an integral component of educational reform. By recognizing their contributions, providing continuous training, fostering collaborative leadership, and ensuring adequate resources, the Ghana Education Service can build a resilient and motivated workforce capable of driving sustainable change. The future of staff reform in Ghana's basic schools depends on these champions individuals whose dedication, leadership, and advocacy breathe life into the nation's vision for quality education.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented a synthesis of the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations derived from the study on assessing the role of change champions as advocates for Ghana Education Service (GES) staff reforms. The study sought to explore how these individuals influence, promote, and sustain reform initiatives within the basic school context, with a particular focus on Divine Mercy R/C Basic School. Through the qualitative case study approach, the

researcher gained deep insights into the lived experiences, challenges, and strategies of change champions, as well as the institutional dynamics that shape their effectiveness.

The findings revealed that change champions are instrumental in translating policy into practice, motivating their colleagues, and fostering a spirit of collaboration and innovation within schools. Their influence extends beyond formal authority, as they act as moral leaders who inspire others to embrace new ideas and reform objectives. However, their effectiveness is contingent on the presence of supportive leadership, adequate resources, and a positive organizational culture. Where these enabling factors exist, reforms are more likely to be implemented successfully and sustained over time.

The conclusions drawn from the study underscored that educational change is fundamentally a human-centered process. The success of GES staff reforms depends not only on policy design but also on the individuals who interpret and implement those policies at the grassroots level. By empowering change champions, schools can become active sites of reform rather than passive recipients of directives. Finally, the recommendations highlighted the need for policy recognition of change champions, continuous professional development, collaborative leadership practices, and further empirical research into their long-term impact on school improvement. Collectively, these actions can strengthen reform implementation within Ghana's basic education sector and ensure that change is both meaningful and sustainable. In essence, the study reaffirms that true educational transformation begins with the people who lead, inspire, and champion change from within the school community.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: SEMI STRUTERED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title of Dissertation: The Role of Change Champions in Staff Reform at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School

Estimated Duration: 30-40 minutes

Method : Semi-structured Interview

Respondents: Identified Change Champions. Teachers. Administrators

Location: Divine Mercy R/C Basic School

RESEARCHER TO RESPONDENTS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

The purpose of this interview is to explore your experiences and views on the role of change champions in advocating for staff reforms at Divine School.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers; I am only interested in your honest views.

Responses will be treated with confidentiality and used only for academic purposes.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

1. could you please tell me your name?:

2. What is your Position in this school: (Change Champion / Teacher / Administrator/curriculum lead)

3. Could you please tell me about your role in the school?

4. How long have you been teaching in this school?

5. Have you ever been directly involved in reform initiatives led by change champions?

SECTION B: QUESTIONS BY RESEARCHER TO RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

Objective 1:

To identify the change champions at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School and understand their roles in advocating for staff reforms.

Questions:

1. Can you describe your role or position at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School?

2. In your view, what does it mean to be a "change champion" in your school?

3. What specific responsibilities do you have when it comes to supporting or promoting staff reforms?

Objective 2:

To examine the strategies and approaches used by change champions to influence staff reform and institutional change.

4. What methods or strategies do you use to influence your colleagues or is used by change champions toward accepting or implementing changes?

5. Can you share an example of a successful initiative you led or supported?

6. How do you engage other staff members when new reforms are introduced?

Objective 3:

To explore the barriers or challenges faced by change champions in implementing reforms.

Questions:

7. What are some of the key challenges or resistance you've encountered when promoting change?

8. How do change champions deal with resistance or pushback from staff members?

Objective 4:

To assess the impact of change champions on staff development and reform implementation at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School.

Questions:

9. What impact do you think your actions (and those of other change champions) have had on staff development?

10. How would you describe the overall effect of your efforts on the school's progress in implementing reforms?

Closing remarks (Optional if time allows):

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your role in promoting change at the school?

APPENDIX B:

Observation Checklist

Study Title: Assessing the Role of Change Champions as Advocates for GES Staff Reforms at Divine Mercy R.C. Basic School

Observation Type: Non-participant Observation

Purpose: To observe how change champions demonstrate, influence, and sustain reform practices within their institutional context.

A. General Information

School Name	Divine Mercy R/C Basic School
Observer	Salome Alexandra Duah
Date	15 th October,2025
Class / Activity Observed	Professional Learning Community (PLC MEETING)
Duration	One hour
Participant Observed	All participants

B. Observation Checklist Structured by Research Questions

Research Question	Focus Area	Observable Indicators / Behaviors	Observation Notes

1. Who are change champions and what roles do they play?	Identification of change champions' behavior and leadership roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates leadership in reform-related activities - Acts as liaison between school and GES authorities - Models new instructional or administrative practices - Supports colleagues with information or direction 	
2. What strategies do change champions use to influence staff reform and promote institutional change?	Influence and motivation strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing or facilitating training/workshops - Demonstrating reform practices in class - Mentoring or 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> coaching peers - Sharing teaching materials or innovative ideas - Promoting teamwork and collaboration 	
3. What barriers do change champions face?	Constraints and resistance observed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited teaching/learning resources - Lack of administrative support - Peer resistance or apathy - Overlapping responsibilities or workload - Time constraints for reform activities 	
4. How have their activities impacted staff reforms?	Observable evidence of reform impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers adopting new teaching strategies - Improved 	

		<p>collaboration among staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students' engagement and participation - Visible change in school culture (e.g., staff meetings, displays, or discussions about reform) 	
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C. Overall Observation Summary

General Impressions	Change champions were willing to work so as to bring teachers to appreciate and thus adhere to new reforms.
Strengths Observed	Teachers were ready to be engaged though would resist some of the reform initiatives.
Challenges Observed	Change champions found it difficult in answering questions regarding the disparities in the implementation of these reforms. Lack of materials for implementation was observed as well.
Reflections	Change champions play significant roles.

