

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THEIR PARTICIPATION
IN DECISION-MAKING:
A CASE STUDY OF DORMAA SECONDARY SCHOOL.

BY

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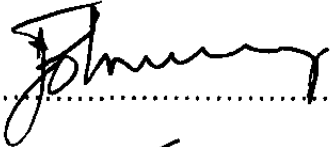
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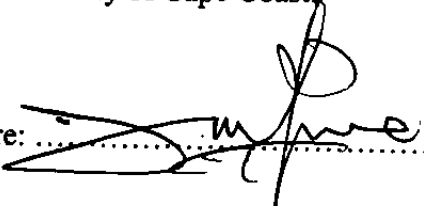
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ABSTRACT

This case study of student perception of their participation in decision-making in Dormaa Secondary School was prompted by an observation that the student leaders or prefects of the school do not sometimes perform their prefectorial duties as expected.

The study explored the perceptions of students of their participation in decision-making, the actual and desired areas of student participation in decision-making, the degree of student satisfaction with their involvement in decision-making, as well as problems that student leaders or prefects face in their leadership roles.

The sample for the study was made up of 320 second and third year students randomly selected from 16 classrooms. The views of the headmaster were also sought to balance the responses of the students. Background information on 30 selected teachers was also obtained from official records to find out the roles that they play to support the headmaster in the administration of the school.

A questionnaire made up of 37 items was used to get responses from the students. A forty-three item interview guide was also used to interview the headmaster.

The main findings are that:

1. The students have a good understanding of what participation in school decision-making is.
2. The students are actually involved in decision-making in many areas of the life of the school. These are at the class level, house level and student representative council level, and at the level of a number of school committees.

3. **The male students are not satisfied with the degree of their involvement in school decision-making, but the females are satisfied.**
4. **The student leaders face two major problems as a result of their leadership roles in the school. These are increased workload and conflicts with their classmates. The problems did not show any gender differences among the students.**
5. **Some of the student leaders do not participate actively in decision-making because it robs them of their time for normal classes and private studies, which adversely affect their academic work. The issue of increased workload was also another reason for which some of the students showed low participation in decision-making. These reasons did not differ by gender among the students.**

On the basis of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for practice:

1. **That the school authorities should establish a system of consultation with the students on issues that affect them.**
2. **That opportunities for exchange of ideas, such as open forum, should be regularly organised for the students.**
3. **The school authorities should encourage and strengthen the following centers which involve students in decision-making: class level, house level, SRC and school committees.**
4. **That the school authorities should establish a system of getting feedback from the students to ensure that the entire student body is aware of the activities of the SRC and various school committees.**

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DEDICATION

**To my dear wife, Edith Iris Akrong,
for her understanding and loving support.**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In any educational institution, such as a secondary school, the student can be described as a direct clientele of the school, and the pivot around which everything else in the school revolves. Students therefore form an integral part of the human resource that the school head has to manage. According to Ozigi (1977), the student is at the centre of the educational process and all activities in the school should aim at developing his total personality to the fullest. To achieve this, good curriculum and instructional programmes must be developed and implemented. Furthermore, the school should provide opportunities for the students to develop responsible attitudes and to experience the type of moral training that will prepare them for future life. This philosophy requires the school head or administrator to show considerable concern for the students, look into the teaching and learning situation, try to understand and help solve students' personal and social problems, and cater for their well-being and happiness.

From the views expressed by Ozigi (1977), as stated above, it could be inferred that one of the major problems that school administrators grapple with is how to create a conducive ambience for retaining students in the school, guarantee their welfare and thereby promote smooth learning. The school head must therefore put in place a wide range of student personnel services such as effective classroom management, counselling, health services / security, co-curricular activities, recreation, student governance, student social services, student feeding, student accommodation, and student discipline. The successful organisation and implementation of these services

requires the maximum co-operation and active participation of both staff and students of the school in the making of decisions concerning the nature and direction of these services. The school head has to delegate duties to the staff and students and supervise them to perform well. To achieve these objectives, it is commendable that students are giving opportunity to participate in at least some of the decision-making processes of the school.

However, when students are not well directed and organized by the school head, their participation in decision-making becomes low and therefore does not promote effective school management. Such a situation could result in communication break down between students and the school administration.

Most students of a school, especially the prefects and other leaders, desire opportunities to participate in the process of decision-making. They believe that increased participation in decision-making increases commitment to the rules and regulations of the school and acceptance of change. However, while some students would like greater participation in the school decision-making process others may not want to be involved. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the school administrator to find out the capabilities and interests of the students and assign them their desired level of participation. This is very necessary because both over-participation and deprived participation in the decision-making process may affect the tone of the school. By adopting a more democratic leadership style, school management can be improved by ensuring student participation in the life of the school through the prefectorial system, school committees with student representation, and the Student Representative Council (SRC). The school head must, therefore, know what decision-making students have to participate in and how and when students are to participate in decision-making, that is, what their roles and functions will be.

Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) emphasised the position of the headmaster as the most important administrative officer in the school. He further stated that:

At one time he has to focus the attention of the staff and students on the institutional aims of the school. His duties require him to do this. At another time he has to take note that despite the institutional expectations of the school he works with human beings, each of whom has an individual perception of the expectation of the school. He needs the co-operation of all to achieve the school's aims. It is, therefore, in the interest of everybody that he should respect their feelings and understand why teachers behave the way they do (p.66).

Management of schools, therefore, calls for a dynamic leader who has the ability to employ an interplay of conceptual, technical and human relations skills to meet the needs of both staff and students. Through the human relations skills he will be able to effectively work with and through his subordinates with a view to developing appropriate interpersonal relationships. This will enable him to have the co-operation and participation of staff and students in the various areas of the life of the school.

The school is a public, normative and service organisation. It has also been described as a social system composed of people who have, among others, varying orientations, capabilities, attitudes, expectations, interests and roles to play. These variations lead to the emergence of varying degrees of interaction and consequent interrelationships (Katz and Kahn, 1966).

Burden (1981) considered a school as a social system comprising a number of components directly or indirectly related in a causal network, and that these components are by no means necessarily static entities but can be roles or procedures.

In a school, some of the components might well be the roles assigned to various members of staff and students, the departmental structure, the classification of students, and the disciplinary regulations.

Since a school is made up of groups of people deliberately composed for the achievement of its specific purposes, there must be a hierarchy of officers and highly structured inter-personal relationships, with shared value orientations. This will enable the school, like any formal organisation, to make decisions in order to achieve its specific purposes. Erving-Goffman,(cited by Burden, 1981) was of the view that educational institutions affect the lives of the students by the very nature of their organisational structure. A typical secondary school in Ghana today will have an organisational structure with the headmaster and perhaps his deputy at the apex followed by the staff in the middle and students at the base.

In the search for a conducive school climate, it is necessary for school heads to take cognisance of those non-human organisational dimensions which influence the behaviour of teachers and students. In order to meet that demand there arises the need to identify the values that have become institutionalised as well as the informal organisational influences that have been legitimised by the common values that emerge among staff and students (Johnston and Germinario,1985). It is after these values have been identified that school heads would be better able to support and coordinate all worthwhile efforts of teachers and students within the context of the school's demands (Brady, 1985).

Historically, the system of administration found in the early Ghanaian schools was predominantly autocratic. In such schools the leadership style of the head involved the use of authority, giving of orders and sometimes economic rewards to get work done. Subordinates were usually told what to do and their ideas were often

disregarded. According to such school heads, subordinate participation in the decision-making process was laborious and a wasteful exercise not appropriate for the smooth running of the school. Richardson (1979) confirmed that some heads of educational institutions still held on to the view that administrators should administer, teachers should teach, and students should learn.

Statement of the Problem

The organisational structure, and to a large extent the decision-making structure in education, vary considerably from one secondary school to another. It will therefore be quite difficult to define what constitutes a low or a high level of student participation in school-based decision-making. However, a careful look at the leadership style of the headmaster or headmistress of a secondary school as well as the functional roles performed by school prefects, school committees involving students, and the student representative council, if any, will give an idea of the extent to which students participate in decision-making in the school.

Against this background, the questions that arise are whether students of Dormaa Secondary School have positive or negative perceptions of student participation in school decision-making, whether they desire to participate in school-based decision-making, whether they have opportunities to participate in decision-making in the school and, among others, why the level of student participation in decision-making in the school is low or high.

Purpose of the Study

The realization that the administrator or school head alone cannot achieve effective management of any educational institution is an accepted educational

principle whose proponents call for a meaningful participation in management by all the stakeholders including the staff and students. Perceptions of participation and leadership styles therefore stand out as important factors which may help to determine the extent of participation of staff and students in school administration.

This study is designed to unearth student perceptions of their involvement in school-level decision-making. It is specifically meant to explore, by gender, the perceptions of students of Dormaa Secondary School regarding their involvement in decision-making, the hierarchy and areas or levels of actual student participation in the decision-making process in the school, and their desired level of involvement in the decision-making process. It will also attempt to examine, by gender, the degree of students' satisfaction with their involvement in the decision-making process, and some of the problems associated with student participation in school-level decision-making. The final objective is to find out why some students do not participate actively in decision-making.

Research Questions

The primary concern of this study is to find out the perceptions that students of Dormaa Secondary School have about their participation in decision-making.

Specifically, the study will aim at seeking answers to the following questions:

- 1. What are students' perceptions of their participation in school decision-making ?**
- 2. Do the students' perceptions of their participation in school decision-making differ by gender ?**
- 3. At what levels or areas of school administration are students actually involved in decision-making in the school ?**
- 4. In what other areas of decision-making do the students want to participate ?**

5. Are the students satisfied with the degree of their involvement in school decision-making ?.
6. Are male and female students equally satisfied with the degree of their involvement in school decision-making ?.
7. What problems do the student leaders face in their leadership roles in the school ?.
8. Do the problems that the student leaders face in their leadership roles differ by gender ?
9. Why do some student leaders not participate actively in school decision-making ?
10. Do the reasons for not participating actively in school decision-making differ by gender ?

Significance of the Study

Literature on participation in school decision-making in Ghanaian schools is scanty. Most of the available material talked about either teacher or worker participation in decision-making which is quite different from student participation. The works of writers like Appleby (1987), Wiredu-Kusi (1990), and Amuzu-Kpeglo (1991) are examples.

The few materials that relate to student participation in decision-making are in the form of journals and books which present general theories of participation and the advantages and disadvantages of involving students in the management of schools. The works of writers like Ozigi (1977), Asiedu-Akrofi (1978), Reynolds and Sullivan (1981), Musaazi (1982), and Mankoe (2000) fall within this category.

The work of Ampah et al. (1998) on the nature and causes of indiscipline, provided a baseline evidence to support the assumption that leadership styles and administrative lapses affect the behaviour and extent to which students are involved in school-level decision-making.

There is therefore the need for specific research into the area of student participation in school decision-making. It is in the light of this that the present study was considered a worthwhile exercise.

It is hoped that the study will equip the Headmaster of Dormaa Secondary School with the knowledge of students' expectations regarding participation in decision-making in the school. It will assist him to understand the dynamics of student participation in decision-making.

The study will also assist the Headmaster to adopt appropriate management / leadership styles and techniques to effectively manage the student personnel services in the school.

The Headmaster will know the areas in which to motivate students to assist in the day-to-day running of the school. This will not only help to create a healthy communication between students and staff, but it will also set a good tone to enhance effective teaching and learning in the school.

Limitations of the Study

In spite of the strenuous effort on the part of the researcher to conduct the study thoroughly, some limitations, which should be acknowledged here, could hardly be avoided. These are that:

1. Time constraints and pressure of work did not allow a pilot study to be made. A pilot study done in another school would have tested the validity and reliability of the research instruments.
2. The study was also affected by the limitations of the questionnaire type of research in that some of the questions, especially the open-ended ones were

not adequately answered by the respondents owing to poor comprehension of concept.

Delimitations of the Study

To make the outcome of the research valid the study should have covered the entire student body of 1100 but it was limited to 320 of the students. This was due to time constraints coupled with inadequate resources such as printing materials to provide questionnaire for all the students.

The study investigated the school population by selecting samples of students from a number of classrooms to analyse the occurrence of certain perceptions or beliefs and facts about student participation in school-level decision-making in Dormaa Secondary School. This cross-sectional survey strategy helped to generalize from a sample to a population, and allowed inferences to be made about the whole population at one point in time.

Definition of Terms

Key terms and expressions used in the study are operationalised as follows:

1. **Prefects** refers to student leaders or office holders who are also known among the students as captains, monitors, and overseers in the school. Examples are class captains, house prefects, and the like.
2. The concept of **Leadership** used in this study refers to the roles played by the Headmaster, staff and prefects in the management of the school. It refers particularly to the ability of the Headmaster to induce subordinates to work towards group goals with confidence and keenness. On the part of the staff and

prefects, leadership refers to their ability to co-ordinate the activities of the student body and liaise with the school administration to achieve desired goals.

3. Autocratic leadership style refers to the dictatorial tendencies of a Headmaster who disregards the ideas of subordinates and who uses authority, orders and economic rewards to get work done.
4. Democratic leadership style refers to the tendency of a Headmaster to use group decisions and participation of subordinates to work .
5. Bureaucratic leadership style refers to the tendency of a Headmaster to use rules, regulations, and procedures in a rigid manner to get work done exactly as required by higher authorities.
6. Laissez – faire leadership style refers to the free – rein management role of a Headmaster who advises, motivates, and allows subordinates to be creative and take initiative.
7. Participation refers to taking part or sharing in an activity according to one's capability. It refers particularly to the involvement of staff and students in the management of the school by the Headmaster.
8. Decision-making refers to a choice from two or more alternatives to direct human behaviour towards a future goal or action. It refers particularly to the process by which the Headmaster, staff and student leaders, whether collectively or separately, decide on measures to be taken to manage some areas of the life of the school.
9. Prefectorial system refers to the body or group of democratically elected school prefects who have been assigned specific duties and responsibilities as part of the management of some areas of life in the school.

10. **Student Representative Council** refers to the highest decision-making body of the students of the school. It is made up of all elected school prefects, and other students selected by the students to represent classes, houses, and other interest groups in the school.
11. **School committee** refers to a team of staff and students appointed and charged with the responsibility of managing a specific service area of the school. Examples are the sports committee, disciplinary committee, food committee, and so on.
12. **Perception** refers to a set of ideas or views that a person or group of people have about an issue. It refers particularly to the ideas or views that the students have about their participation in school decision-making.

Organisation of the Study

The study is structured into five chapters. Each chapter is divided into a number of sub-sections, which relate to the title of the chapter. This first chapter deals with the introduction of the study. It has the following sub-sections: background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study, definition of terms and organisation of the study.

The second chapter of the study, the review of related literature, gives an overview of the work of some earlier writers. The review is organised under two major sub-headings: review of theory and review of previous research. The section on review of theory has the following sub-headings: decision-making in school administration, perceptions of participation in decision-making, student participation in school decision-making, leadership styles and their effect on participation in

decision-making, and school climate and its effect on participation in decision-making.

The section on review of previous research presents an overview of some research works that have a bearing on student participation in school decision-making.

Chapter three of the study deals with the methodology or the design of the study. This chapter begins with an introduction followed by a description of the type of study, and population and sample for the study. The research instruments and methods of data collection are also described in this chapter.

Chapter four of the study deals with the results or findings. It begins with an overview of the methodology employed for the study. A description of the presentation and methods of analysis of the data collected, followed by a summary of the findings are also given in this chapter.

The final chapter of the study is on the conclusion. It presents a summary of the research problem, methods and results. These are followed by the interpretation of the results in relation to the available literature. The conclusions drawn from the study and recommendations end this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, literature relevant to the research is reviewed in two parts: review of theory and review of previous research. The section on review of theory has information on (a) decision-making in school administration, (b) perceptions of participation in decision-making, (c) student participation in school decision-making, (d) leadership styles and their effect on participation in decision-making; and, (e) school climate and its effect on participation in decision-making.

The section on review of previous research contains an overview of some research work on (a) decision-making in the Ghana Education Service, (b) student participation in school decision-making, (c) the nature and causes of indiscipline in Senior Secondary Schools, and, (d) organizational climate and student participation in School decision-making.

Review of Theory

Some theoretical ideas, principles and information relating to student participation in school decision-making are review under the following subheadings:

Decision-making in School Administration

A decision is a conscious choice from among a well-defined set of competing alternatives (Musaazi, 1982). In a discussion on decision-making in school administration, Musaazi (1982) viewed the school organisation as a decision-making tool that is always engaged in the significant activity of choosing from among the educational alternatives within its jurisdiction. Using typical school based examples like (a) school meals are undercooked and students, through their prefects, have complained to the master in charge of food; and, (b) a student burns school property

intentionally and is reported to the administration, Musaazi (1982) analysed the decision-making process and called on school administrators to ask themselves the following questions when embarking on decision-making:

1. Does a problem really exist ? The administrator finds out that a problem exists through the information available to him.
2. Is the problem recognised by the administrator, staff, and students ?
3. Are all the necessary facts at hand and verifiable ? Do we have all the necessary information about the problem ? Has the problem been clearly defined and analysed ? For example, what might be the causes of the undercooked food ? what made the student to burn the school property ? Both the school head and his staff must carefully explore all the possible causes of the problem.
4. Is the problem within our jurisdiction ? Are we willing to accept responsibility for the decision ? Should others be involved in the decision-making ? Which others ? For example, can the staff alone solve the problem or does it require both staff and students to solve the problem as a school ? Does it require the Ministry of Education, the Board of Governors of the school, or parents to solve it ?
5. What do we wish to accomplish through this decision ?
6. What are the criteria for the acceptability of a decision ?
7. Have all the possible alternative courses of action or decisions and their consequences been identified and evaluated sufficiently ?
8. Is the school ready for a decision ? Who should select the alternative or make the decision ? Could it be the administrator or the staff? Or could it be done by both jointly ?
9. Has the decision been clearly communicated to all essential persons ? Has provision been made for the implementation and control of the implementation ?

Has provision been made for feedback, review and evaluation of the decision ?

Have we established a process , policy, set of criteria, etc. that can serve in making other decisions in future ? What have we learnt from this decision-making ?

Decision-making, therefore, is not easy and cannot be learned easily. It takes knowledge, effort, time, and experience. In view of the high demands of the decision-making process on the integrity and dynamism of an administrator, there is the need for administrators to develop and regulate the decision-making process in the most effective manner possible. In performing this decision-making role, the school administrator may be seen as an entrepreneur, a disturbance handler, a resource allocator, and a negotiator.

Musaazi (1982) further stressed that administrators must go about the decision-making process with the greatest possible care to get the best results. For instance, a decision by the head of a school commits the whole school to a course of action. If it is a questionable action the school may suffer and the decision will be described as a bad one. Effective administration, therefore, requires intelligent decision-making. Decisions are intelligent when they are appropriate for accomplishing specific goals.

According to Griffiths (1968), the decision-making process is a long laborious exercise that involves a conscious selection among alternatives to move towards an objective. This was described by Megginson, Trueblood, and Ross (1985) as a rational, deliberate and systematic process made up of the following inter-related and sequential steps:

1. **Recognition / identification and definition of the problem:** the administrator needs to have a clear concept of the problem on hand, and know specifically what the problem is.
2. **Statement of the desired state of affairs:** the administrator must establish the criteria against which the solution to the problem would be compared. What the decision has to accomplish or the objectives that the decision seeks to satisfy must be clearly stated so that the administrator will know when he attains them.
3. **Development / generation of alternative courses of action:** to any given problem, there would be several possible alternative solutions. To increase the chances of obtaining the most appropriate solution, it is important to consider several alternative solutions. This involves the collection and analysis of accurate and up-to-date data.
4. **Evaluation / formulation of advantages and disadvantages of each alternative course of action:** the administrator must identify and weigh the consequences of each alternative course of action to be able to decide on the best course of action.
5. **Selection of best alternative or preferred course of action:** the administrator must select the best alternative or preferred course of action from the several alternatives once the alternative courses of action have been analyzed. This becomes the decision made.
6. **Implementation of selected course of action or decision:** this involves putting the decision into action. The administrator must set up the necessary structures as well as institute control measures within which the implementation of the decision will be operated.

This administrative role of the head of a school, that is , intelligently directing the decision-making process, was echoed by Dale, (cited by Burden, 1981) that “the

nature of the decision-making process should be in relation to the stability and growth of the organisation, particularly where these are affected by restrictions within the school environment”.

Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) described the taking of intelligent decisions as perhaps the most difficult and yet the most interesting aspect of school administration. He identified four groups of people who are engaged in this task:

1. There is the student body as exemplified by student councils, individual students and class groups. These groups have their own decisions to make for the good of the school.
2. There are also decisions taken by individual teachers in their own classrooms; they relate primarily to the work done with the children.
3. There are decisions of the staff taken together at staff meetings or small committees appointed by the staff.
4. There are decisions taken by the headmaster or principal in his own right as the administrative head of the school (p.60).

These four groups of people also tend to represent, on a daily basis, the important centres in the hierarchy of the decision-making process in a school

In the school, decisions have to be made about work, direction, leadership style, the planning process, pattern of communication, mode of supervision and the nature and content of public relations programmes. Again, decisions have to be made about work operation in terms of source of funds, financial control procedures, rewards and punishment systems, professional development programmes and assignment of responsibilities. Finally, the school head has to make decisions about services concerning equipment, facilities and record keeping.

Furthermore, the school administrator must spell out the strategy by which the best decisions can be made in his own school. The administrator will normally develop his decision-making process, basing it largely on the value judgements he holds with regard to the participation of others in shaping the school's decisions and the skill with which he organises this participation into a decision-making process within the school.

Perceptions of Participation in Decision-making

Montagu (cited in Wiredu-Kusi, 1990) observed that co-operation is the key to survival in an organisation and therefore suggested that efforts towards school improvement should take place on a co-operative basis. This calls for a meaningful co-operation between the head of the institution, the staff and the students.

Bittle (1985) states that participation is an amazingly simple way to inspire people; and its simplicity lies in the definition of that word: "to share in common with others". He emphasised that:

Sharing, then, is the secret. You must share knowledge and information with others in order to attain their co-operation. You must share your own experiences so that employees will benefit from it. You must share the decision-making process itself so that employees can do something the way they would like to do. And you must share credit for achievement (p. 57)

He concluded that in today's employer-employee relations, few techniques have been as successful in developing harmony and the attainment of common goals as has the development of management by participation and supervision.

Appleby (1987) was of the view that participation in decision-making is concerned with sharing power to allow subordinates to influence decisions which may

be specific or general. The author, further discussed four views of participation in decision-making as follows:

Participation is one of the most misunderstood ideas that have emerged from the field of human relations. It is praised by some, condemned by others, and used with considerable success by still others.

Some proponents of participation give the impression that it is a magic formula which will eliminate conflict and come close to solving all management's problems. These enthusiasts appear to believe that people yearn to participate.

Some critics of participation, on the other hand, see it as a form of managerial abdication. It is a dangerous idea that will undermine managerial prerogatives and almost certainly get out of control. It wastes time, lowers efficiency, and weakens management's effectiveness.

A third group of managers view participation as a useful item in their bag of managerial tricks. It is for them a manipulative device for getting people to do what they want; under conditions that delude the participators into thinking they have had a voice in decision-making.

A fourth group of managers makes successful use of participation, but they do not think of it as a panacea or magic formula. They do not share either the unrestrained enthusiasm of the faddists or the fears of the critics (p.155).

Levin and Young (1994) alluded to the philosophical and political beliefs: that participation in every social institution is the pursuit of democracy; that education is too important to be left to educators; and that without participation the interests of those less well-served by public schools will not improve.

Mankoe (2000) explained participation in school management as the regular involvement of the significant stakeholders (district administrators, institutional heads, teachers, parents citizens, pupils where they are of age, and so on) in setting goals, resolving problems and making decisions that affect the organisation, establishing performance standards, making sure that their organisation is on target in terms of responding to the needs of the clients it serves.

In a discussion on participation in school management, Mankoe (2000) stressed that though participation has enormous benefits its practice is rather low. He identified institutional, managerial and employee barriers to participation. He described the barriers as follows:

- 1. Closed organisational climate. Under the closed climate, those who attempt to participate may be seen as “malcontents” or “troublemakers” who must be kept under control or excluded from a prestigious committee because they are prone to questioning the actions of their leader.**
- 2. Pressure from daily assignments. Involving others in making and implementing good decisions obviously takes time. This tends to increase the pressure of work that participants of decision-making have to cope with.**
- 3. Lack of technical know-how. Participation must be initiated by heads of institutions, but quite often they do not know where to begin or what to do because of lack of training in specific techniques of co-operative processes such as problem solving and goal setting.**
- 4. Insecurity of some heads. Some heads are insecure or fearful of participative methods. Some heads believe that sharing authority over certain decisions will diminish their power. Instead of taking pride in the accomplishment of their team, they resent or feel threatened by the superior performance of their subordinates.**

5. **Professional incompetence.** Participants may flounder, particularly when asked to participate in an activity for which they do not possess the requisite skills or knowledge. Effective participation may lay emphasis on skills that participants may not want to learn.
6. **Lack of resources.** Participation may require additional resources which may not be readily available or difficult to obtain. Such considerations may demoralize participants who may give up subsequent need to participate.

For any given situation, a decision taken can be described as the result of the efforts of one person or a group of people. Individual decisions may be desirable in emergency issues, and in circumstances where the group has little knowledge or background in the subject area or when the decisions are fairly easy to reach. Group decision or participative decision-making, on the other hand, has become popular because it gives subordinates the chance to voice their opinion concerning matter that affect their work. Again, many issues in administration are so technical that the services of experts in those areas must be utilized in order to reach a good decision. In the school situation when staff and students are made to participate in decision-making, they become committed to the decisions they helped to formulate. This encourages them to work harder to achieve institutional goals.

In a discussion of a plan for shared decision-making in schools, Musaazi (1982) was optimistic that the administrator can achieve effective decisions, and that this depends largely upon the skill and energy with which he handles and encourages the meaningful participation of subordinates in the decision-making process. In view of this, Musaazi suggested the following important questions related to effective decision-making in organisations :

1. Does shared decision-making produce better decisions in an organisation ?

2. **For instance, can the involvement of teachers, school prefects, and representatives of non-teaching staff in school decision-making processes produce more effective decisions for the school ?**
3. **At what point in the decision-making process should subordinates be included, and in what ways should they participate when included ?**
4. **What are some effective ways of organising the processes of decision-making in a school ?**

The choice made by the administrator in connection with such questions will largely determine how much shared decision-making opportunities the subordinates will actually have (p.87-88).

In concluding the discussion on decision-making in schools, Musaaazi further identified some ways by which subordinates can be made to participate in decision-making with the school head. These are:

1. **Group discussion with subordinates.** This involves the administrator organising the subordinates formally or informally to discuss educational problems or issues. Students could be organized to discuss aspects of their school life such as feeding, health, sanitation, entertainment, and so on . A lot of brainstorming usually takes place during such discussions and helps to generate several possible alternative courses of action.
2. **Obtaining information or suggestions from subordinates to base decisions on.** This involves the seeking of information from subordinates so that the administrator could make a more rational and logical decision.
3. **Delegation.** This involves the administrator giving subordinates the opportunity to make a decision on an issue. Students and staff could be put in

charge of routine decisions that only require the application of general rules and regulations to deal with.

- 4. Parliamentary procedure. This involves subordinates actually making a decision through voting to determine which way the decision has to go. This technique is useful whenever the administrator senses that there is a conflict of ideas and values and that a decision may not be taken through consensus (p. 95 - 96)**

Student Participation in School Decision-making

Douglas (1964) is of the view that general student government should grow out of a sincere desire for responsibility on the part of the students. This responsibility, he said, should be transferred to the students gradually and only after careful advance preparation. The author further adds that the most successful student organisations have been allotted responsibility gradually and in proportion to their demonstrated ability to discharge it satisfactorily.

Still regarding students role in decision-making, Hicks and Gullett ,1975 (cited in Musaaazi, 1982) remark that before every change of programme the students should be consulted. The comments of the students should be listened to, and discussed; sometimes their objections might negate a suggestion. With this, the group unquestionably develops a sense of participation.

For effective school administration, Ozigi (1977), recommends that school administrators must encourage students to play a meaningful role in the administration of the school by delegating duties and responsibilities to them, and supervising them to perform well. He identified the prefectorial system, the school committee system, and the Student Representative Council (SRC) as the most effective ways of involving students directly in the administration of the school.

Through these systems students are delegated certain duties connected with the day-to-day life of the school. These duties include the organisation and co-ordination of all sorts of extra-curricular activities, such as games, societies, clubs, or dealing with minor cases of discipline, taking responsibility for students' welfare, supervision of learning after school hours and checking attendance.

Leadership Styles and their Effect on Participation in Decision-making

Leadership is of particular importance in educational administration because of its far-reaching effects on the accomplishment of school programmes, objectives and the attainment of educational goals. Professional literature on leadership is replete with definitions and views, some of which are reviewed below.

In any organisation there must be a force to direct its resources towards organisational goals and standards. In order to direct subordinates, an administrator must lead, motivate, communicate and ensure co-ordination of activities so that organisational objectives are achieved (Appleby, 1987). Furthermore, Appleby (1987) stated that:

Leadership is a means of direction. A leader's actions are devoted to helping a group to attain its objectives. Leadership is the ability of management to induce subordinates to work towards group goals with confidence and keenness (p.156).

He went on to describe a successful leader as one who can be considered to be perceptible and flexible, and be able to act appropriately, that is, in one situation he is strong and exercises greater authority, in another he is permissive.

In a school, for example, there must be a force to guide the activities of staff and students towards achievement of the school's stated objectives. Leadership

provides that force (Musaazi , 1982). The position of headmaster or headmistress of a secondary school, for example, is recognised in a formal way as a leadership position.

According to Megginson, Trueblood, and Ross (1985)

Leadership occurs when one person induces another person to work toward achieving some specific goal. Leading is directing, guiding, supervising, and motivating subordinates to perform their duties and responsibilities in a way that will achieve the organisation's objectives (p.51).

In this vein, Megginson, Trueblood, and Ross (1985), identified four types of leadership styles with the following characteristics:

1. The autocratic leadership style by which the leader alone determines policy and assigns duties to subordinates without consulting them. This style, which is also known as the authoritarian, coercive, or dictatorial style, does not encourage subordinate participation in decision-making. By this style, decisions can be taken quickly, especially under emergency situations. However, there is much resentment by subordinates and conflicts constantly arise between administrators and subordinates;
2. The bureaucratic style whereby the leader is guided by rules, regulations, and procedures from which there is little or no deviation. The leader does exactly what higher authorities require, and therefore works or operates by the book, with little or no subordinate participation in decision-making;
3. The democratic or participative style which is people-oriented. The leader encourages subordinate participation in decision- making and therefore uses group decisions and participation to work. By this style, subordinate co-operation with administration is high. However, much time is spent in making

decisions and it may not be practicable to involve all subordinates in decision-making; and,

4. The free-rein or laissez-faire style by which the leader allows subordinates to be creative. The leader advises, motivates, sets performance standards and then leaves subordinates to do their own work. By this style, decisions are easily accepted. However, there is not much control over subordinates, thus chaos and conflicts often arise due to unguided freedom (p.152-154).

Views about secondary school education in Ghana generally establish that the type of management or leadership style practised plays an important role in the overall attainment of the goals of the institution. Sisk (1977) stated that leadership was essentially for effective group action and the achievement of organisational goals. He also stated that it was responsible for the success or failure of the conduct of education. In the school situation, therefore, discontent with leadership performance could lower subordinate participation in administration and erupt into violent confrontations between the head of the institution and subordinates including students.

Schools vary considerably in their cultures and ways of operation. Some are characterised by openness and consultation, while others reflect a style that is based on hierarchy and direction. Thus, no two leaders administer and lead their organisations in the same way.

In response to the notion that people would not willingly participate in decision-making and therefore should be drawn inside the management team, Mankoe (2000) discussed how to increase people's desire to participate in managing an institution such as a school. He suggested, among others, the use of the following methods to encourage participation:

1. **Provision of incentives.** It is quite difficult to get people to work free in any field of endeavour because of too many concerns that attract people's attention. Some incentives are therefore essential to induce them to participate.
2. **In-service training.** People expected to participate in management must undergo training on the job and also have sustained exposure to successful implementation and participatory techniques adopted by esteemed colleagues.
3. **Style of leadership.** The management style of people placed in leadership roles is a determining factor to the extent to which their subordinates are prepared to participate. In as much as participation is necessary for sustained growth of an institution, it is incumbent on leaders to adopt participative style of leadership. This style should rely on non-coercive power including expertise, persuasion, trust, reason and rewards. Leaders must try to exhibit behaviour that will build subordinate's confidence and feelings of self-worth and value so that they would feel ready to participate in the management of the institution.
4. **Establishing open vertical and horizontal channels of communication** to cover the entire organisation. Memos, newsletters, weekly bulletins, meetings, workshops, seminars, and informal chats are all crucial in maintaining all channels open. Ensure that these communication systems operate from top to down and from bottom to top as well as across the various divisions, departments, sections and units.
5. **Decentralization.** Adopt a policy of decentralization in the overall management of the institution. Under this management approach, empowerment should be the catchword. Official authority of legal power should be given to heads of various units to make and implement decisions that are consistent with the attainment of the mission of the organisation.

The policy of the Ministry of Education (M. O. E) and the Ghana Education Service (G. E. S) on students' involvement in school administration requires that heads of institutions should adopt strategies that will enable and encourage students to participate in the day-to-day running of the school. For example, students are to serve on school committees like the disciplinary committee to help promote discipline in the school (GE S, Unified Code of Discipline, 1994, p.1). This is in agreement with the recommendation of Ozigi (1977) for increased student participation in decision-making in the school. It is therefore no longer practicable or advisable for school administrators to exercise authority in the traditional autocratic way. School administrators are now working in complex environments such that if they want to be successful, they must be prepared to share their time honoured administrative prerogative of decision-making with staff and students and also practise democratic principles of leadership.

Bene (1961), was also of the view that the features of democratic leadership include group discussion and decision-making through bargaining and that many successful school administrators practised this participatory type of leadership.

There can be no doubt that behaviour problems in schools are currently a major cause for concern. To some people the source of all the problems lies within the individual student from the start. Others are of the view that the onus of blame must be laid entirely on forces within the school environment (Burden, 1981).

Megginson, et al (1985) considered the choice of a leadership style as dependent on the following three basic factors: (a) the leader and his abilities and characteristics, (b) the subordinates and their abilities and characteristics, and (c) the situation. Effective administrators therefore, use differing styles of leadership with different followers, in different situations. They vary their leadership styles from the

completely “boss-centered” or autocratic style to the completely “subordinate-centered” method when the need arises. Furthermore, Emerson and Goddard (1993), had the occasion to indicate that it is oversimplistic to characterise schools as using one management style exclusively. According to these authors, schools use different styles in different circumstances, and that individual administrators use a variety of styles depending on the person they are working with and the issue involved. All the foregoing indicate that no one style of leadership is always effective, for leadership varies with the people and situations.

School Climate and Its Effect on Participation in Decision-making

The effect of leadership style on participation in decision-making is very crucial because every organisation, despite the similar characteristics that it may share with others, has its own distinctive characteristics that make it unique. Owens (1970) described the differences which mark one organisation from another as the “atmosphere”, the “tone”, or “climate”. According to Katz and Kahn (1966), each specific organisation develops its own distinctive norms and values that are essential components of its climate. These characteristics invariably constitute the culture of the organisation. Synonyms of climate such as “setting”, “milieu”, “feel”, “tone”, “spirit”, “atmosphere”, and “ethos” refer to the internal quality of an organisation, especially as experienced by its members (Asiedu-Akrofi, 1978).

Deer (1980) defined climate as an average of the perceptions individuals have of their daily work environments. Fullan, 1982 (cited in Ntow, 1992) observed that open communication, support, interaction, collegiality, and trust, among others, lead to quality of work relationships and more open climate. Thus, a good organisational climate is equivalent to a healthy school climate.

One major effect of the leadership style of a school head is the determination of the kind of climate or atmosphere that pervades the school. Gould (1988) observed that in a large measure the behaviour and attitude of the head of a school is very vital in the creation of school climate. Thus, the head becomes the “setter” or creator of the school’s climate (Tye, 1974). This supports the view of Holst (1973) that:

The climate of a school is heavily dependent upon leadership. Where a leader makes most of the decisions, where he dictates what is to be done, and where he is aloof from active group participation, the climate will tend to be closed. In such a school there will be little integration between the social emotional needs of the staff and students and the purposes of the school.

Hoy and Miskel (1985) therefore contended that since students constitute a formidable element of a school’s social climate there is the need to fully integrate them into the running of the school.

In their study of schools, Halpin and Croft (1963) identified six broad types of organisational climates, which they described as:

- 1. Open climate: This is characterised by an atmosphere where nothing is hidden. No decision is dictated by the headmaster, rather there is group action or participation. Student life is happy and democratic. There is honesty of purpose and everybody knows what goes on in the school.**
- 2. Controlled climate: In this climate the headmaster is mainly concerned with the work the school has set itself to do. All co-operative tasks of the school are directed toward achieving this goal. Roles take precedence over personal dispositions. There is co-operation but no happiness.**
- 3. Closed climate: This situation marks a situation in which there is no group action or participation in decision-making. Staff and students are displeased**

with everything and are highly apathetic. Students misbehave with impunity.

The headmaster is ineffective in directing the activities of the school and does not look out for the personal welfare of the staff.

4. **Paternal climate:** This climate generally exists in schools where the headmaster is on the average older than the teachers. Teachers are free to do what satisfies them but have little or no opportunity to influence decisions as a group. Decision-making tends to be the monopoly of the headmaster. Teachers get dispirited because their initiative is killed; co-operation is at a low ebb. Students tend to look to the headmaster for everything and discipline suffers.
5. **Autonomous climate:** In this climate a school is run by consensus. Everyone has reason to believe that he is part of the leadership of the school. The headmaster has very little control, his leadership is not easily recognizable. Group leadership is practised, people tend to be satisfied with their work, and co-operation among members of staff is good.
6. **Familiar climate:** In this climate every teacher satisfies his personal needs at the expense of the school task to be perform. There is an atmosphere of congenial sociability at the expense of task accomplishment. The headmaster himself is indifferent to the main purpose of the school and does not emphasise productivity or supervise the work. Teachers do not see the need to work hard and there is poor co-operation.

From all the foregoing definitions and descriptions of leadership effect on school climate, it becomes necessary that in a study of this nature effort should be made to find out the perceptions that the students have of their participation in decision-making, organisational structure for decision-making in the school, and the leadership style of the headmaster, among others.

Review of Previous Research

Some research work which have a bearing on student participation in school decision-making include the following:

Decision-making in the Ghana Education Service

In a case study on decision-making in the Ghana Education Service, Amuzu-Kpeglo (1991) identified four vertical centres of decision-making in the Service as (a) Headquarters, (b) Regional Directors and Regional Managers of mission schools, (c) District Directors and Local managers, and, (d) Headteachers and Headmasters / Principals. He further found out that most members of the Service desired opportunities to participate in the process of decision-making. They believed that increased participation in decision-making increased their commitment to the organisation, personal growth and development, and acceptance of change. An additional rationale identified for participation in decision-making was that many of the problems that the organisation faced had become increasingly complex, requiring knowledge and expertise in many different disciplines. This observation tends to support the call for co-operation by Montagu, 1952 (cited in Wiredu-Kusi, 1990) as a key to survival.

Student Participation in School Decision-making

Reynolds, et al.(cited in Burden, 1981, p. 89) studied student participation in school decision-making with regard to pupils' attitudes to school, teachers' perceptions of pupils' within-school organisation and so on, and found that a number of factors within the school are associated with more effective regimes. These included a high proportion of pupils in positions of authority, low levels of institutional control, low rates of physical punishment, more favourable teacher-pupil ratios and more tolerant attitudes to the enforcing of certain rules.

In a related study, Reynolds and Sullivan (1981) studied eight secondary schools in South Wales from 1974 to 1977 and observed that differences exist between schools in the way that they have attempted to mobilise students towards the acceptance of their predetermined goals. The differences were due to the use of two major strategies: "coercion" or "incorporation". The strategy of coercion involved the use of force to control the students while the incorporation strategy stressed the incorporation of students into the organisation of the school. By the incorporation method, students were involved or incorporated within the classroom management. Outside formal lesson times, students were incorporated into the life of the school in other ways such as the use of prefects and monitors to supervise the activities of other students. According to Reynolds and Sullivan, such a practice appeared to have the effect of inhibiting the growth of anti-school student culture and making prefects supportive of the school. It also had the latent and symbolic function of providing students with a sense of having some control over their within-school lives. It further promoted a strong interpersonal relationship between teachers and students.

Schools that utilized the coercive strategy to a greater extent exhibited no incorporation of students into the authority structure of the school. There were high levels of institutional control over students, strict rule enforcement, high rates of physical punishment, and very little tolerance of student deviations. Such schools had little or no room for students' participation in decision-making primarily because of the coercive or authoritative leadership style used. Discipline had to be rigidly enforced as against the use of the incorporation strategy in which students' involvement in decision-making made them understand the rationale behind the rules and disciplinary measures they were to obey. This understanding facilitated much self-control of students. This is in agreement with the assertion of Glasser (cited in

Charles, 1981, p.46) “that students are rational beings who can control their behaviour”. Glasser, therefore called on teachers to forever try to help students make good choices so that they produce good behaviour and become responsible.

Nature and Causes of Indiscipline in Senior Secondary Schools

Ampah, Crentsil, Gyesie, Dadzie, and Enniful (1998) researched into the nature and major causes of indiscipline, and the disciplinary measures put in place in senior secondary schools in the Cape Coast Municipality. They used pre-tested questionnaires to sample the views of selected students and teachers. On the nature of indiscipline, they found three main forms of behaviour. These were:

1. behaviour that disrupted classroom work,
2. behaviour that was defined as aggressive, and
3. behaviour that was seen as an affront to teachers.

The causes of the indiscipline were found to be:

1. students’ peer influence,
2. teachers’ misbehaviour such as coming to class late or drunk, not caring about students’ problems and showing favouritism.
3. administrative lapses such as not handling students problems in time, and congestion in classrooms and dormitories due to over-enrolment.

Ampah and associates stressed on the administrative lapses as the major cause of the indiscipline and concluded that:

There is the need for the establishment of a democratic system of administration in the decision-making process at the various levels of the students’ education. There should be periodic review of school rules and regulations to reflect current trends. There is also the need for students to be involved in the making and reviewing of such rules in order to give students

the opportunity to understand the rationale behind the rules and regulations. This will put them in a position to ensure the observance of the rules and regulations rather than branding them as too harsh. This is because students tend to obey and respect rules and regulations that they themselves have helped to make through open discussions in free atmosphere. This will make them conscious of themselves as the authors of the laws that they are to obey. A school which offers such opportunities often boasts of happy, well-disciplined, and responsible students. These students are morally sound and show pride in being associated with the school and strive to maintain the good name of their school (pp. 63-66).

Organisational Climate and Student Participation in School Decision-making

Ntow (1992) used the qualitative approach to research into the organisational climate of six selected senior secondary schools in the Cape Coast Municipality. He used pre-tested questionnaires made up of open-ended and close-ended questions to sample the views of selected teachers. He used frequencies, percentages and chi-square to analyse the data collected. The study showed that:

1. Openness and supportive behaviour of the school heads were moderately low.
2. Heads gave opportunity to staff to express their views either individually or collectively.
3. There was virtually no planned and executed orientation programme to introduce new teachers to their new environment.
4. Students were little involved in the formulation of the their school's internal policies; they were almost always at the receiving end.

In his conclusion, he recommended among others that there is the need for a new look at students' role in school life in order to increase their sense of belongingness and commitment to the ideals and aspirations of their school.

From the review of literature, it becomes clear that a better relationship can exist between school heads and their students when the heads allow students to be involved in the affairs of the school. Many forms of decision-making structures exist in our schools, which allow varying degrees of student participation. This stems from the fact that the extent of student participation depends on an interplay of several factors. It is strongly believed that the ability of the school head to effectively utilize his students in the school decision-making process will go a long way to affect their behaviour positively and create the much needed atmosphere of peaceful co-existence.

Summary of Literature Review

Decision-making is a major responsibility of an administrator in any organisation and has been described by many writers as the one universal mark of an administrator. It is a process by which decisions are made and implemented. The Webster's dictionary defines decision-making as "the act of determining in one's own mind upon an opinion or course of action". The school, like all formal organisations, is basically a decision-making structure. Decision-making is therefore, a daily duty that must be effectively performed for the smooth running of the school.

Perceptions in decision-making vary and include views such as co-operation for survival, sharing in common with others, and sharing power to allow subordinates to influence decisions.

Authors such as Musaazi (1982) and Mankoe (2000) have enumerated various ways of encouraging subordinate participation in decision-making as well as some hindrances to effective participation in decision-making.

The gradual acceptance of democratic practices in Ghana is, to some extent, having an impact on the decision-making process in secondary schools. Discontent and demand by students to be involved in the administration of schools have made the old authoritarian method of administration ineffective and prone to violent confrontations. The need, therefore, for students to be involved in decision-making has become a crucial issue that requires consideration. The issue of student participation in school-level decision-making raises questions regarding the areas and what levels at which students should be involved in decision-making in schools. The need to get answers to such questions forms the justification for this research.

The rationale behind the involvement of students in the formulation of decisions at the school level is that the students are the ultimate beneficiaries of the decisions and if their views are not sought and if they do not understand the decisions, they would rebel and kick against some of the decisions. They would not co-operate with the staff and consequently the management of the school would not be smooth.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study is on student perception of their participation in decision-making in Dormaa Secondary School. The study has four main parameters: perceptions of participation in decision-making, the hierarchy and areas or levels of actual student participation in decision-making, desired level of student participation in decision-making, and problems of student participation in decision-making. The study, therefore, investigated students' views and ideas on the concept of participation in school decision-making, the structure, hierarchy, and channels of the decision-making process in the school. It also investigated students' present involvement in the decision-making process and their desired level of participation in decision-making. Finally, the study examined some of the problems that confront student leaders in their participation in school decision-making.

The chapter also describes the research design used for the study. It describes the population, sample, and the research instruments used for the data collection and analysis.

Research Design

By purpose, the study is an applied research. It was conducted to find out and explain how the idea of student participation in school administration is carried out in Dormaa Secondary School. Thus, the study has an immediate value and limitation to the school.

The study is a quantitative research of the positivist science tradition (Creswell, 1994). As a case study, it concerns a context-specific situation in Dormaa Secondary School. In studying factors affecting student participation in school-level decision-making, the complexity of interacting variables such as perceptions of

decision-making, levels or centres for decision-making, leadership styles, school climate and problems associated with participation come into play. The study therefore relied heavily on descriptions of the reality of the situation by the respondents involved in the research.

The study could also be described as a survey research because of the method used. The features of the study fit the description of survey research as Babbie (1990) states. The survey nature of the study was further strengthened by the construction and use of questionnaire and interview guide as the data gathering instruments.

Population

The study was limited to Dormaa Secondary School, a co-educational institution located in Dormaa-Ahenkro, the Dormaa District capital, in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana.

The school is an eight-stream institution with a student population of 1100 and a staff of 48 teachers and 65 non-teachers. The students are organized into 26 classrooms. The school offers a three-year secondary education to students, which leads to the award of the Senior Secondary School Certificate by the West African Examinations Council. Four Senior Secondary School programmes are offered in the school. These are Agriculture, Business, Vocational (made up of Visual Arts and Home Economics), and General (made up of Arts and Science).

The management and administration of the school is done by the headmaster, who is supported by two assistant headmasters, two senior housemasters, a senior housemistress and a principal accountant.

As a case study, the entire student body of 1100 and staff of 113 constituted the target population for the study. All the second and third year students totalling 690 and the teaching staff of 48 constituted the accessible population for the study.

Sample

The sample for the study was made up of 320 students and the headmaster of the school. Twenty students, who had been in the school for at least one year, were randomly selected from each of the accessible 16 classrooms of the second and third year students to constitute the sample for the study. This yielded a total sample size of 321 out of the accessible population size of 739.

The choice of the second and third year students was done on the assumption that a student needs to stay for at least one year in a school to be able to make a meaningful assessment of the decision-making structure of the school and student participation in decision-making. Furthermore, the entire student leadership or prefect body who are involved in school decision-making are found among these senior students of the school.

The sampling design was facilitated by the occurrence of a classification system in the school by which the students are grouped into classrooms according to their academic programme or course of study. This method of sampling enabled students from all the academic programmes or courses to be considered in the sample.

Though the study is basically on students, the headmaster was included in the sample to provide additional views to balance the views of the students. On the premise that the headmaster needs the co-operation of the staff for effective administration and achievement of the school's aims, some background information about the teachers was sought to find out the roles that they play to support the efforts of the headmaster. Background information on a sample of 30 out of the 48 teachers, such as age, sex, length of stay in the school, previous administrative position held, and present administrative position were obtained from the official records of the school. This was done because most administrative positions that require decision-

making are usually assigned to teachers who have been in the school for some time. Such teachers who are usually appointed as housemasters, senior housemasters, heads of department, dining hall masters, assistant headmasters, and school committee members, interact with the students more often than the non-teachers.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire, interview guide and official records were the main research instruments used for the study. A self-designed questionnaire consisting of open-ended and close-ended questions was used for the students. An interview guide was developed and used for the headmaster.

Questionnaire for Students

The questionnaire for the students had two parts. The first part which was on personal particulars, asked the respondents to provide demographic data such as class, age, sex, course of study in the school, any previous leadership position held, and present leadership position, if any. The second part of the questionnaire was on school decision-making and had four main sections, labelled A, B, C, and D. The responses to the close-ended questions in these sections were of two types. The two-option categorical scale of the "YES" or "NO" type was used to measure some of the responses to the close-ended questions. The responses to the other close-ended questions were measured on the six-point Likert Ranking Scale in either a descending or ascending order as follows:

- 6 - totally agree
- 5 - strongly agree
- 4 - agree
- 3 - disagree

2 - strongly disagree

1 - totally disagree

Section A which is made up of 6 items investigated the perceptions that students have of their participation in school decision-making. The respondents were required to indicate their agreement or disagreement with statements to the effect that student participation in school decision-making could promote students' commitment to decisions, and delay actions by the school authorities. For example, the following statement was posed to the students:

Student participation in school decision-making means that students must be consulted on issues that affect them.

Totally agree Strongly agree Agree
 Disagree Strongly disagree Totally disagree

Section B is on the levels of student participation in the school decision-making process. It consists of 16 items which have been designed to explore the structure, hierarchy, and channels of decision-making existing in the school. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which students had been involved in decisional situations such as supervision of students' class activities, and maintenance of discipline in the dormitories. Respondents were further asked to indicate the frequency of students representative council meetings, issues discussed at the meetings, existing channels for them to communicate their views on school related matters, existing school committees and student representation on these committees.

Section C, which has 6 items, examined students' desired levels of participation in school decision-making. Respondents were asked to indicate issues which students should have been made to deal with, but were not, and other areas of school life in which they would like to be involved in decision-making. Respondents

were also asked to assess the headmaster's leadership style and indicate their satisfaction or otherwise with their involvement in school decision-making.

Section D which has 4 items was meant to be answered by only students in present leadership positions. It investigated problems that hinder students' active participation in school decision-making. The respondents were asked to indicate how their involvement in school administration had affected their time, and academic work. They were also required to state other problems that hindered their effective participation in school decision-making. For example, the students were made to respond to the following question:

Student leaders in this school are unwilling to participate actively in decision-making because they feel:

- () it robs them of their time for normal classes.
- () it robs them of their time for private studies.
- () it adversely affects their academic performance.
- () it increases their work load.

Details of the questionnaire for the students are found in Appendix A.

Interview Guide for the Headmaster

The interview guide for the headmaster was structured along the same line as the questionnaire for the students. It had two parts.

Part one was on personal particulars such as age, rank, length of service as Head of present school, any previous school management position held and for how long.

Part two of the interview guide was made up of the same four sections, A, B, C, and D as the questionnaire for the students. However, the questions were re-framed

to be answered by the headmaster. Section A had 9 items. It explored the headmaster's perceptions of student participation in school decision-making. Section B had 19 items designed to get information from the headmaster on existing channels of communication for students, levels of actual student participation in school decision-making, and committees operating in the school with student representatives on them. Section C had 4 items which were structured to get the headmaster's views on additional areas in which the students wish to be involved in the administration of the school. Section D was made up of 6 items. It explored the problems that student leaders face as a result of their involvement in school administration.

Details of the interview guide for the headmaster are found in Appendix B.

Administration of Questionnaire

The questionnaires were personally administered to the students at the beginning of the second term of the 2000 academic year, in May 2000. At an appointed time with the headmaster, the purpose of the research was explained to the students of the school. The questionnaires were then taken to the 16 selected classrooms one after the other. In each of the classrooms 20 students were randomly selected and served with the questionnaire. The random selection was not necessarily done on sex basis, but the class captains were made to include both boys and girls in the sample from each class. The selected students were made to answer the questions and returned the completed questionnaire to their class captains. The questionnaires were collected from the class captains that same day after classes.

The method of meeting the respondents directly to give them the questionnaire and collect their responses later that same day helped to ensure a high rate of return of the questionnaires. The researcher was able to get the responses of all the selected

students. This was mainly due to the fact that the researcher was a member of the staff of the school and was able to follow up the students promptly.

Interview with the Headmaster

At an appointed time, the researcher met the headmaster in his office for an interview. The researcher explained the purpose of the interview to the headmaster. This was to make the headmaster understand that his responses were needed to balance the responses of the students. The researcher had a fruitful discussion with the headmaster. The headmaster provided answers to all the questions posed to him.

Methods of Analysis of Data

The study was a descriptive one, so qualitative and simple quantitative analysis involving frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data. The scores of the various items in each section were tallied and frequency distribution tables were drawn. Percentages were then calculated from the frequency values.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

In this chapter the analysis, presentation and discussion of data are addressed. It gives a description of how the data has been presented in tables, as well as the use of qualitative and quantitative methods such as frequencies and percentages to analyse the data. The chapter also presents a discussion of the analysed results and the main findings.

Three hundred and twenty students were randomly selected to respond to the questionnaire. The headmaster was also interviewed using questions similar to the items in the students' questionnaire. All the student respondents returned the questionnaire they answered. The analysis, presentation and discussion of data in this chapter are organised in two parts labelled one and two as follows:

1. Part one is on background data. It presents a profile of the school based on the demographic data of the headmaster, staff and student respondents.
2. Part two covers student participation in school decision-making. This part is sub-divided into 10 sections according to the ten research questions. Each section deals with the analysis, presentation and discussion of data which provides answers to a research question.

In each of the ten sections mentioned above, the responses of the students were compared views of the headmaster.

Background Data

The demographic data of the headmaster, selected staff and the student respondents were used to provide a profile of the school. The profile begins with a brief survey of the particulars of the headmaster such as age, rank in the Ghana

Education Service, and experience in school administration. The profile then continues with the age and sex of students and teachers, the number of years spent at the school by the teachers, and the number of students and teachers in school leadership positions.

Headmaster's background information

It is obvious that experience gained in school administration could be a factor contributing to a headmaster's present management style, which could in turn affect the level of student participation in decision-making in the school. It was therefore considered worthwhile to find out more about the headmaster's background.

A summary of the background information on the headmaster of the school is as follows:

1. Age: 54 years
2. Sex: male
3. Rank in G.E.S: Assistant Director
4. Number of years served as head of present school: 3
5. Previous experience in school administration:
 - a. Housemaster: 4 years
 - b. Head of Department: 4 years
 - c. Senior Housemaster: 5 years
 - d. Headmaster: 10 years

The background information of the headmaster of Dormaa Secondary School, as shown above, indicates that the school has an elderly and experienced headmaster. He has been actively involved in school administration for about twenty-six years. The interview revealed that the headmaster had been a student of Dormaa Secondary School and that he started his teaching career in the school after graduating from the

University of Cape Coast in 1974, at the age of twenty-eight.

He rose through the ranks of the Ghana Education Service from the grade of superintendent to Assistant Director and also served in various administrative positions including housemaster, head of language department and senior housemaster in the school, before he was promoted and transferred to another secondary school in the Brong-Ahafo Region (Ahafoman Secondary/Technical School, Goaso) as headmaster, in 1987. In September 1997, he was re-posted to the present school, his alma mater, to replace the former headmaster who had retired.

From the foregoing, it is expected that the headmaster's knowledge and experience of the culture of the school both as a student and a senior member of staff would affect his present administrative and leadership style. He may want to maintain the "status quo ante", the situation as it existed previously. However, his 10 years experience as headmaster of another school might have exposed him to a different school setting and culture which might also be a factor contributing to his present leadership style. For example, he might want to introduce some ideas and ways of doing things in his former school to the present school.

Teachers' background information

Background information about the thirty randomly selected teachers covers items such as their age, sex, length of stay in the school, previous administrative positions held, and present administrative position. These were obtained from the official records of the school. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data on the teachers.

Age Distribution of Teachers

The selected teachers were categorized into four age groups, and the frequency

and percentage of occurrence of each group was determined. The information obtained from the age distribution of the teachers is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Age Profile of Teachers

Age	No.	%
Under 30	5	16.7
31 - 40	13	43.3
41 - 50	10	33.3
Over 50	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Table 1, shows that about 60% of the teachers are 40 years old or less. This suggests that the school has a relatively youthful teaching staff. Such a group of young teachers are expected to be dynamic and receptive to new ideas.

Distribution of Teachers by Gender

The distribution of teachers by gender is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Sex Distribution of Teachers

Sex	No.	%
Male	27	90.0
Female	3	10.0
Total	30	100

As Table 2 clearly shows, there are more males than females in the ratio of 1:

9. From the researcher's personal knowledge of the staff of Dormaa Secondary

School, it was not surprising that the males far out number the females. There were only four females teachers on the staff of forty-eight teachers at the time of the research and three were captured in the sample used.

Teachers' Length of Stay in the School

The number of years that the teachers had spent at the school were categorised into four groups. The number of teachers for each group was determined by gender. The findings indicated that all the female teachers had spent less than five years in the school. This means that female teachers were less stable in the school.

The analysis of the data on the number of years that the male teachers had spent in the school is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Years Spent in the School by Male Teachers

Years Spent at School	Male	
	No.	%
Under 5	6	22.2
5 - 10	8	29.6
11 - 15	12	44.4
16 - 20	1	3.7
Total	27	99.9

Table 3 shows that about 77% of the male teachers had taught for 5 years or more in the school. This suggests that male teachers had greater stability of tenure at the school than their female counterparts. Thus, majority of the teachers in the school were stable male teachers who might have known and experienced the culture of the school over the years.

Teachers in School Administrative Positions

Data on the number of teachers who were holding school administrative positions such as Form Master, Housemaster, Senior Housemaster, Assistant Headmaster, committee membership, and so on, indicated that about 83% of the teachers were in school administrative positions. This suggests that majority of the teachers have been working closely with student leaders on school committees and groups which help in the management of different areas of life in the school.

Students' background information

Background information about the 320 student respondents covers items such as their age, sex, course of study in the school, and present leadership position. These were obtained from the students' responses to part one of the questionnaires given to them. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data collected.

Age Distribution of Students

The student respondents were categorized into four age groups and the number of students in each age was determined. The information obtained from the analysis of the age distribution of the student respondents is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Age Profile of Student Respondents

Age	No.	%
Under 17	20	6.3
17 - 18	135	42.2
19 - 20	89	27.8
Over 20	76	23.7
Total	320	100.0

The analysis of data on age of student respondents, as shown in Table 4, shows that about half of the students were aged between under 17 and 18 years. On the basis of the six-year school going age and nine years of pre-secondary education, the 17 – 18 years age group can be described as the normal or required senior secondary school age group for the Form 2 and 3 students who constituted the respondents for this study. The analysis, therefore, reveals that over 50% of the student respondents were over aged.

Distribution of Students by Gender

The distribution of the student respondents by gender is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Distribution of Student Respondents By Gender

Sex	No.	% Of 320
Males	211	65.9
Females	109	34.1
Total	320	100.0

When the student respondents were grouped according to sex, as shown in Table 5, it was found out that the males or boys were about twice the number of girls.

Students in School Leadership Positions

The data on the number of student respondents who were holding school leadership positions, such as class captain, sports prefect, house captain, senior prefect, and so on, were analysed according to age. The results of the data analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Age Distribution of Students in School Leadership Positions

Age of Student	Leadership Position	
	No.	% Of 91
Under 17	8	8.8
17 - 18	45	49.4
19 - 20	32	35.2
Over 20	6	6.6
Total	91	100.0

The analysis of the ages of student respondents who were holding school leadership positions, as shown in Table 6, indicates that majority of the student respondents have no school leadership positions. However, majority of the students in school leadership positions are in the normal age group of 18 years or less, while some 42% are in the over age group of 19 years or more.

It is expected that the views of the students who are holding school leadership positions would help to establish some factors which affect their participation in school decisions-making.

Distribution of Students in School Leadership Positions by Gender

The data on the number of student respondents who were holding school leadership positions were analysed on the basis of the sex of students. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Distribution of Students in School Leadership Positions By Gender

Gender	No.	% Of 91
Male	60	65.9
Female	31	34.1
Total	91	100.0

Table 7 shows that there were more male student leaders than females. The male student leaders were almost twice the number of the female student leaders.

Main Findings on Background Data

The main findings from the analysis of the demographic data of the respondents are as follows:

1. The headmaster of the school is an elderly man with about twenty-six years experience in teaching and school management.
2. The school has quite a stable teaching staff. There are teachers who have spent from one year to sixteen years in the school. Female teachers are not stable; the few on the staff have spent less than five years.
3. Majority of the teachers are in school administrative positions. They are Form masters, or housemasters, or school committee members. Acting in these capacities, they team up with student leaders to participate in school decision-making.
4. There are more male students than females. Majority of the students, over 51%, were quite grown. Their ages range from 19 years to over 20 years.
5. Majority of the students who are in school leadership positions are aged

between under 17 and 18 years. Some other students, over 41%, who are also in school leadership positions are in the over age group of 19 years and above.

The Research Questions

The research was guided by ten research questions. To seek answers to these questions frequency and percentage distributions were used.

Research Question One:

What Are Students' Perceptions of Their Participation in School Decision-making ?

This section was designed to seek information from the students on the perceptions they have regarding their participation in decision-making in the school. The views of the headmaster were also sought to balance the responses of the students. The aim was to establish whether the students and the headmaster recognized student participation in decision-making as an important feature of school administration. This is because the kind of perceptions that the headmaster has regarding student participation in decision-making would go a long way to determine whether or not he would encourage students and create opportunities for them to effectively participate in the school decision-making process. Also, the kind of perceptions that students have regarding their participation in school decision-making would, to a large extent, affect their willingness and active participation.

To provide answers to the first research question stated above, six statements, which reflect various understandings of the effects of student participation in school decision-making, were posed to the respondents. There were three positive statements which were counter balanced by another set of three negative statements, all expressing feelings about student participation in school decision-making. The respondents were required to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statements by choosing from a six-point scale of responses ranging from totally agree,

strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree to totally disagree.

In analysing the data on this section, the three responses which indicate levels of agreement, were grouped together under the heading "agree". The other three responses, which also indicate levels of disagreement, were grouped together under the heading "disagree". This method was followed to provide a clear distinction between those who agreed and those who disagreed with the issues raised in the statements.

The responses of the students on the six perceptions were analysed separately according to age and sex for each of the six statements and then compared with the views of the headmaster. This was done on the assumption that perceptions may vary according to the age and sex of an individual.

Statement 1: Student participation in school decision-making means that students must be consulted on issues that affect them: The perception that when students participate in school decision-making they must be consulted on issues that affect them was examined among the students. The analysis of the responses indicates that about 96% of the students expressed their agreement with the statement. The high percentage of students who agreed with the statement suggests that the students have a strong perception of consultation as a means by which they can participate in school decision-making. It is therefore expected that the students would show much interest in opportunities for dialogue such as meetings, committees and open forum in the school.

The responses of the students reflected the views of the headmaster. In an interview, the headmaster indicated a positive stand for student participation in school decision-making. According to him students should be given the chance to begin to use their leadership talents.

Statement 2: When students participate in school decision-making, their views must always be taken: The perception that when students participate in school decision-making, their views must always be taken was presented to the students for them to indicate their agreement or disagreement. The students expressed varying degree of agreement and disagreement with the statement. The analysis of the responses indicated that about 77% of the students disagreed with the notion that when students participate in school decision-making, their views must always be taken.

A comparison of the analysis of the responses of the students with the views of the headmaster showed that the headmaster had a similar perception as the majority of the students. The headmaster explained further that it should not be the case that student leaders are always given the chance to dictate to the staff. He said “we always accept what we think will be useful to both the school and the students”. Thus, it could be inferred from the headmaster’s response that for students’ views to be taken, they must be balanced, constructive and in the general interest of the school.

Statement 3: When students participate in school decision-making, they become committed to the decisions made: The perception that when students participate in school decision-making, they become committed to the decisions made was examined among the students. The responses of the students show that majority (about 92%) of them hold the view that students become more committed to decisions made when they are involved in the making of the decisions. Only about 8% of the students expressed disagreement with the notion.

It is clear from the analysis that there was a strong positive perception among the students that when students participate in school decision-making, they become

committed to the decisions made. The headmaster also expressed his agreement with the notion.

Statement 4: When students participate in school decision-making, actions by the school authorities are delayed: The perception that when students participate in school decision-making, actions by the school authorities are delayed was presented to the students for them to indicate their agreement or disagreement.

The students gave responses that indicated varying degrees of agreement and disagreement with the notion presented to them. The analysis of the responses of the students reveals that majority (about 62%) of the students disagreed with the perception. Thus, these students felt that their involvement in the decision-making process in the school did not delay actions that needed to be taken promptly. However, it is remarkable to note that about 38% of the students felt that their involvement in school decision-making delayed the prompt execution of actions in the school. This could be taken to mean that a good number of the students would not be positively inclined to participatory decision-making in the school.

It is quite significant to note that the headmaster also disagreed with the notion. According to him, it is not always the case that actions are delayed when students participate in decision-making in the school. He was of the view that the school authorities make much effort to take valid and reliable decisions, and that this takes some amount of time. This implies that delays are not necessarily due to student participation.

This finding that majority of the students did not perceive student participation in school decision-making as a hindrance to the prompt execution of actions, is in marked contrast to other research findings. Wiredu-Kusi (1990) quoted both McCurby and Lambert (1952) and Anderson (1961) as observing that group decision is likely to

be slower than individual's at solving problems. This is because time is required to organise and co-ordinate group members for decision-making.

From the foregoing, it is expected the headmaster of the school would effectively support the students to actively participate in the school decision-making process.

Statement 5: Student participation in school decision-making always brings about conflict between students and the school authority: The student respondents were made to express their agreement or disagreement with the perception that student participation in school decision-making always brings about conflict between students and the school authority. The responses of the students reflected varying degrees of agreement and disagreement with the notion.

The analysis of the responses indicated that about 13% of the student respondents expressed agreement with the notion. This means that they perceive student participation in school decision-making as always bringing about conflict between the students and the school authority. However, majority (about 87%) of the students did not perceive their participation in school decision-making as always causing conflict between the students and the school authority. The headmaster shared this view. He stated that conflicts do not always arise and that responsible prefects always reason out with the school authority. Thus, the students have a perception that they can effectively participate in school decision-making without conflict with the school authority.

Statement 6: A student representative council (S.R.C) is an important organ for decision-making in a school: When the perception that a student representative council is an important organ for decision-making in a school was examined among

the students, it was found that majority (about 94%) of the students expressed agreement with the notion. Only a few students, some 6% or so, expressed disagreement with the notion. Thus, the students have a strong positive perception of a student representative council as an important organ for school decision-making. It is therefore expected that the students of the school would show much interest in the activities of the student representative council and make it function effectively.

The headmaster also took a positive stand on the perception. It is therefore expected that the headmaster would encourage the operation of a dynamic and effective student representative council in the school.

The data analysed above on the six perception statements posed to the students provide answers to the first research question. The answers indicate that the students have positive perceptions of their participation in the school decision-making process. Thus, they recognize the importance of student participation in decision-making in the administration of the school. Therefore, the answer to the first research question is that majority of the students perceive student participation in school decision-making as:

1. requiring school authorities to consult students on issues that affect them. This was the view of 96.2% of the students.
2. enhancing greater acceptance and commitment of students to decisions. This was stated by 92.2% of the students.
3. dependent on an effective student representative council (S.R.C). This view was stated by 94.1% of the students.

Furthermore, most of the students see student participation in school decision-making as not :

1. always accepting the views of students. This perception was held by 76.6% of the

students.

2. delaying the execution of administrative actions. This was the view of 62.2% of the students.
3. always bringing about conflict between students and the school authority. This was the perception of 87.2% of the students.

Research Question Two:

Do The Students' Perceptions Of Their Participation In School Decision-making Differ By Gender?

This research question seeks to further explore, on gender basis, the variations in the perceptions that the students have regarding their participation in school decision-making. This is in response to the assumption that perceptions vary among males and females. To be able to answer this research question, the responses of the students to the six perception statements were further analysed by gender to find out the proportions of male and female students who either agreed or disagreed with the statements. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to present the findings.

The first perception statement presented to the students was that student participation in school decision-making means that students must be consulted on issues that affect them. The results of the analysis on gender basis are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Students' Responses On Perception Statement One By Gender

Statement 1 : Student Participation In School Decision-making		
Means That Students Must be Consulted On		
Issues That Affect Them.		
Gender	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Male	96.7	3.3
Female	95.4	4.6

As shown in Table 8, an overwhelming majority of both male and female students expressed agreement with the perception that student participation in school decision-making means students must be consulted on issues that affect them. The analysis, therefore, revealed that the perception that students must be consulted on issues that affect them did not differ by gender among the students.

The second perception statement presented to the students was that when students participate in school decision-making, their views must always be taken. The results of the analysis of the responses by gender are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Students' Responses On Perception Statement Two By Gender

Statement 2 : When Students Participate In School Decision-		
making, Their Views Must Always Be Taken		
Gender	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Male	24.2	75.8
Female	20.0	80.0

As indicated in Table 9, majority of both the male and female students, over

75% of both sexes, expressed disagreement with the perception that the views of students must always be taken when they participate in decision-making. However, there were some differences in opinion; more girls disagreed than boys. Conversely, the analysis showed that more of the boys, about a quarter of them, want students' views to be always taken than the girls. This stand of the boys has the implication that, in a situation where their views on issues are not always taken, some of them may tend to be apathetic and not show active participation in the decision-making process. They could also rebel. On the other hand, it may also be argued that since majority of the girls felt their views should not always be taken, they may not show much interest and participation in the decision-making process.

The third perception statement presented to the students was the notion that when students participate in school decision-making, they become committed to the decisions made. The results of the analysis of the responses to this notion, by gender, are presented in Table 10

Table 10

Students' Responses On Perception Statement Three By Gender

<u>Statement 3 : When Students Participate In School Decision-</u>		
<u>making, They Become Committed To The</u>		
<u>Decisions Made.</u>		
<u>Gender</u>	<u>Agree (%)</u>	<u>Disagree (%)</u>
Male	92.4	7.6
Female	91.7	8.3

The results presented in Table 10 indicate that an overwhelming majority of over 91% of both male and female students, agree with the notion that when students

participate in school decision-making, they become committed to the decisions made. The results of the analysis therefore shows that the perception that when students participate in decision-making they become committed to the decisions made does not differ by gender among the students. The conclusion drawn is that students of both sexes are convinced that their participation in decision-making would enhance their acceptance and commitment to decisions.

The fourth perception statement presented to the students was that when students participate in school decision-making, actions by the school authorities are delayed. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 11

Table 11

Students' Responses On Perception Statement Four By Gender

Statement 4 : When Students Participate In School Decision-making, Actions By The School Authorities Are Delayed.		
Gender	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Male	33.2	66.8
Female	53.2	46.8

Table 11 shows that there is a marked gender difference among the students on the perception that actions by the school authorities are delayed when students participate in school decision-making. Majority of the girls agreed that actions are delayed, while majority of the boys also disagreed. This suggests that while more boys than girls did not consider their participation in decision-making as delaying the execution of administrative actions and may therefore want active involvement, the majority of the girls who felt actions would be delayed may not show active involvement in the decision-making process.

The fifth perception statement posed to the students was that student participation in school decision-making always brings about conflict between the students and the school authority. The results of the analysis of the responses to this perception are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Students' Responses On Perception Statement Five By Gender

Statement 5 : Student Participation In School Decision-making Always Brings About Conflict Between Students And The School Authority.		
Gender	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Male	12.3	87.7
Female	13.0	87.0

As shown in Table 12, the analysis shows that majority (about 87%) of both the male and female students disagree with the notion. The figures indicate no gender difference among the students on the perception that student participation in school decision-making always brings about conflict between students and the school authority. This suggests that both male and female students have an equally strong perception that they can participate in school decision-making harmoniously with the school authority.

The sixth perception statement presented to the students was that a student representative council (S.R.C) is an important organ for decision-making in a school. The results of the data analysis are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Students' Responses On Perception Statement Six By Gender

Statement 6 : A Student Representative Council (S.R.C) Is An Important Organ For Decision-making In A School.		
Gender	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
Male	96.7	3.3
Female	89.0	11.0

As shown in Table 13, majority of the students, both male and female students, do agree with the notion that a student representative council is an important organ for decision-making in a school. However, there is some difference in opinion: more boys agree than girls. This suggests that almost all the boys perceive the student representative council as the major means by which they could participate in school decision-making. It is therefore expected that more boys would show interest and active participation in the activities of the student representative council of the school than would girls.

The analysis of the students' perceptions by gender, as discussed above, provides answers to the second research question. It is found out that while there are no gender differences among the students on some of the perceptions, there are some differences on other perceptions.

From the foregoing analysis, the answer to the second research question is that the students do not show gender differences in the perceptions that:

1. student participation in school decision-making means that students must be consulted on issues that affect them. Both sexes have that perception.

2. when students participate in school decision-making, they become committed to the decisions made. Both sexes have that perception.
3. student participation in school decision-making always brings about conflict between the students and the school authority. Neither has that perception.
4. a student representative council is an important organ for decision-making in a school. Both boys and girls have that view.

On the other hand, the students showed marked gender differences among them on the perceptions that:

1. when students participate in school decision-making, their views must always be taken. More boys than girls have that view.
2. when students participate in school decision-making, actions by the school authorities are delayed. More girls than boys have that view.

Research Question Three:

At what Levels are Students Involved in Decision-making in the School?

To provide answers to the third research question, the students were asked questions designed to describe the methods or procedures and the hierarchy adopted by the school for making decisions. The aim was to find out the channels of decision-making and communication, and the areas of school administration in which the students are actually involved in decision-making in the school.

The questions analysed in this section are of three types: questions which required the categorical “Yes” or “No” answers, open-ended questions, and other questions which have options to choose from.

The method adopted to analyse the data in this section was to tabulate the “Yes” or “No” responses and group the other responses on the basis of similarity to

determine their frequencies of occurrence.

The analysis, presentation, and discussion of data to answer the third research question are organised under the following sub-headings:

- 1. Meetings with students.**
- 2. Student Representative Council (S.R.C)**
- 3. Disciplinary committee**
- 4. Other school committees**

For each of the four items mentioned above, the responses of the students were compared with the views of the headmaster.

Meetings with students serve as an important approach to participatory school decision-making. Through such meetings or consultations students might be encouraged to play a role in the administration of the school so that responsibilities can be delegated to them.

Possible centres for decision-making in the school include the class level, house level and the general school level. It is expected that decisions taken at these levels or centres of the school would be communicated to the headmaster through three main channels. For example, decisions taken at the class level with the class master usually concern academic work and should be channeled through the heads of department and the assistant headmaster in charge of academic work to the headmaster. On the other hand, decisions taken at the house level with the housemaster usually concern boarding and lodging and should be channeled through the senior housemaster and the assistant headmaster in charge of administration to the headmaster. Furthermore, open fora and other general meetings provide opportunity for the headmaster and the staff to meet the entire student body directly for general discussions on issues of interest to both parties.

The management style of the headmaster goes a long way to influence decision-making in the school. In view of this, the respondents were asked if they had channels for communicating their views to the headmaster. To this, about 99% of the students said "Yes". As a follow up to explore the channels for communication, the students were questioned on the following three levels of meetings: whether the headmaster and staff met them regularly for discussions, whether their housemasters and housemistresses met them for discussions, and whether their classmasters and classmistresses met them to discuss issues affecting them. The results of the analysis of students' responses are found in Table 14.

Table 14

Students' Responses On Their Meetings With School Authorities

Type Of Meeting	Type Of Response			
	Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%
1. General meeting among Headmaster, Staff and students.	256	80.0	64	20.0
2. Housemasters / mistresses meeting with Students at the house level.	214	66.9	106	33.1
3. Classmasters meeting with students at The class level.	308	96.2	12	3.8

The results of the analysis presented in Table 16 indicate that meetings with students occur at all the three levels. This affords the students the opportunity to share ideas with school authorities and thereby participate in the decision-making process, at the class, house and general school levels. However, some few students stated that

meetings did not take place at these levels. This could mean that the meetings were not as regular as expected. Class meetings are officially scheduled to take place once a month but other meetings are held when the need arises. Though general house meetings were scheduled to take place every two weeks, the housemasters and mistresses are required to visit the students as often as possible. It is significant to note that a relatively high number of students (over 30%) stated that house meetings do not take place. This could mean that some of the housemasters and mistresses do not meet their students as expected at the house level to discuss issues concerning boarding and lodging. General meetings between the headmaster, staff and students take the form of open fora, which are held once a term.

To explore other areas of school life in which the students are involved in decision-making, the respondents were asked questions relating to the existence and functioning of the student representative council, disciplinary committee and other school committees.

The student representative council (S.R.C.) has been described as one of the most effective ways of involving students directly in the administration of a school (Ozigi, 1977). In view of the significance of the student representative council, part of this research was devoted to finding out the following: (a) whether there was a student representative council in the school, (b) the composition of the student representative council, (c) the frequency of student representative council meetings, (d) the issues generally discussed at the student representative council meetings, and (f) how the decisions of the student representative council were transmitted to the headmaster.

In deed, from the responses of the students it was noted that there is a student representative council in the school. This was stated by 99.4% of the students.

Furthermore, it was found that the student council is made up of all the general school

prefects, house captains and class captains. The senior boys' prefect is the chairman of the council. The composition of the student representative council of the school suggests that its membership is drawn from a cross-section of the student body. The members hold school leadership positions through which they play significant roles in the administration of the school. It could therefore be expected that the decisions of the council would reflect popular opinions from the entire student body.

On the frequency of student representative council meetings, the responses of the students indicate that the council holds three meetings per term. This has been found to be very encouraging, because it will provide the school administration with a regular feedback on students' views on programmes being carried out and possible suggestions on future activities. This will also afford the school administration the opportunity to explain some policies and actions to the student body.

The question on issues discussed at the student representative council meetings is to confirm that students actually have council meetings and also to have an idea of the relative significance of the topics or issues discussed to the life of the students in the school. It is found that, although 6 students did not respond to this item and that some 54 students stated that they had no idea of the issues discussed at the council meetings, the responses of majority (about 81%) of the students indicate that a wide range of issues are discussed at the council meetings. These are enumerated and discussed under the following headings:

1. Issues affecting students' academic work: these include supply of text books, classroom furniture, teachers' class attendance, state and use of the school library, water and so on
2. Disciplinary issues: these include how to maintain discipline in the classrooms, and dormitories; breaking of bounds by students, and so on. It is

remarkable to note that the student representative council has a disciplinary committee within it, chaired by the assistant boys' prefect. This sub-committee investigates and prescribes punishments within the context of the school rules and regulations to offending students for offences like disturbing in the dormitory, dinning hall, failure to do grounds work, insolence to prefects, improper dressing, and so on.

3. Feeding: issues such as the quantity and quality of food served, late serving of food at some times, cleanliness of the dinning hall and neatness of the pantry staff were discussed. Sometimes the school administration refers changes in the menu to the council for students' views on how the changes should be made. It is significant to note that an assessment format designed by the school administration is completed daily by the dinning hall prefects to indicate the type of meal served for breakfast, lunch and supper, and also give specific comments on the quantity and quality of each meal served. This report is sent to the headmaster through the dinning hall master, matron / domestic bursar and the senior housemaster. Through this system, feeding problems detected are quickly, discussed and resolved. The details of the assessment Form are presented in Appendix C.
4. Entertainment: issues discussed by the students included items to be put on the programme for the term, condition of musical equipment and students' participation. A recommendation from the student council through the headmaster to the Parent-Teacher Association (P.T.A) resulted in the purchase of a new and more powerful set of musical equipment to be used during entertainment and other school activities.

From the foregoing, it could be noted that the student representative council of

the school is an active one that gives opportunity to the students to meaningfully discuss many issues affecting them and send recommendations to the headmaster. The headmaster's views on the issues discussed at the student council meetings gave credence to the responses of the students. According to the headmaster, he neither attends nor is represented by any member of staff at the student council meetings. This was found to be very encouraging because the presence or representation of the headmaster would have defeated the essence of the student council serving as a platform for students to express their views on issues affecting them. It would have created tension and an atmosphere of fear for the student to voice out their feelings.

The responses of some of the students that they had no idea of the issues discussed at the council meetings tend to be a drawback on the council's performance. This could be explained to mean that although the council holds meetings and discusses many issues, the entire student body is not adequately informed of the meetings to enable all of them know the agenda and possibly send their suggestions.

The responses of the students on the mode of transmission of the decisions of the student council to the headmaster showed that: (i) minutes of the meetings are recorded in a note book by the secretary, and (ii) a report, made up of the issues discussed and the recommendations given, is sent to the headmaster directly by the two senior prefects and the councils' secretary.

The headmasters' views supported this procedure. He added that after studying the students' report he discusses it with his senior members of staff for implementation. However, when the school administration has a different view from that of the students, a meeting of the senior staff and students leaders is convened to resolve the differences. The student leaders were then charged with the responsibility of explaining the joint decisions to the student body.

A disciplinary committee is one of the key centres or structures for decision-making in a school system. In view of its dual role of helping to maintain law and order in the school, and also serving as a decision-making body, it became necessary, as part of this study, to find out:

1. whether there was a disciplinary committee in the school,
2. whether students are represented on the committee, and in what proportion, and
3. the role that students play on the committee.

On the existence of a disciplinary committee in the school, the responses of the students indicate that there was a disciplinary committee in the school. This could be explained that disciplinary issues are very sensitive to students and therefore disciplinary decisions spread very fast among students for everybody to know what is happening.

On the issue of student representation on the school disciplinary committee, the finding is that the students are represented on the disciplinary committee of the school. The representation of students on the disciplinary committee is found to be a very positive step that could enhance student participation in decision-making in the school. The reason is that when students team up with teachers to apply school rules and regulations and there is a consensus on the punishment to be meted out to an offending student, then the entire students would understand that the decision was not biased and that they could have taken the same decision by themselves. Such a practice has the tendency of making students develop much confidence in the school administration.

On the composition of the disciplinary committee, it was found that majority (74%) of the students only knew that they are represented on the disciplinary committee but did not actually know the number of students and teachers who form

the committee. Information from about 26% of the students, which was cross-checked with the headmaster's views, indicate that the disciplinary committee is constituted by 8 housemasters, 2 housemistresses, 2 senior housemasters, 4 senior prefects (2 boys and 2 girls), 4 other student leaders selected by the senior prefect, with the assistant headmaster responsible for administration as the chairman of the committee. This gives a total of 21 members, made up of 8 students and 13 teachers, as the composition of the disciplinary committee.

To explore further the extent to which the students are actually involved in decision-making through the disciplinary committee, the respondents were asked to state the role that students play on the disciplinary committee. Due to the open nature of this item, different answers were given. These were grouped on the basis of similarity into six types. The analysis of the grouped responses is presented in Table 15.

Table 15

Students' Role on the School Disciplinary Committee

Type Of Response	No.	%
1. No response given	22	6.9
2. No idea	31	9.7
3. Serve as witnesses	55	17.2
4. Help in investigation	36	11.2
5. Give evidence or information	84	26.2
6. Express their views or make contributions	92	28.8
Total	320	100.0

As shown in Table 15, about 17% of the students do not know the role that

their colleagues play on the school disciplinary committee. However, majority of the students (55%) or more gave responses which indicate that the students play positive roles on the disciplinary committee. These roles include serving as witnesses, helping in investigations, giving evidence or information either in favour of or against offenders, and expressing their views or making contributions on issues at stake.

The roles played by the students on the disciplinary committee, as indicated above, show that the students are actively involved in the work of the committee. They participate in all the functions of the disciplinary committee and are therefore a party to the decisions made.

As a follow up to the roles the students play on the disciplinary committee, they were asked whether the decisions of the disciplinary committee have always been acceptable to them. It is found that majority (about 86%) of the students gave a positive answer. The acceptance of the decisions of the disciplinary committee by majority of the students is an indication that they are satisfied with the decisions. This could be attributed to their active involvement in the decision-making process of the disciplinary committee.

In addition to the general meetings with students, student representative council activities, and the disciplinary committee, students could also be involved in school decision-making through other areas such as the operation of a system of committees with student representations on them. This mode of decision-making offers opportunity to many student leaders or officers to share ideas with the staff and help make decisions that affect many areas of school administration. In view of this, the students were further asked to list committees in the school on which students are represented. The analysis of the responses of the students reveals that five other committees exist in the school. Food committee, entertainment committee, and sports

and games committee are mentioned by all the respondents, while worship and health committees were mentioned by 93.8% and 80.3% of the students respectively. This is an indication that majority of the students, were well aware of the existence and operation of these five committees in the school.

According to Ozigi (1977), how well the committee system functions in an institution depends, among others, on the quality of its leadership and the support given to it by the administrator and the staff. It is important to note that the factors mentioned above are significant to this study.

When asked to assess the leadership style of the headmaster, it was found that majority (about 66%) of the students saw the headmaster as practicing a democratic leadership style while some 34% said the headmaster was using a laissez-faire style. This finding reveals that the headmaster does not use any one particular method of leadership, but a blend of the democratic and laissez-faire styles. By the democratic approach, he would often use group decisions and participation of subordinates to work while by the laissez-faire style he will be advising, motivating and allowing subordinates to be creative and take initiative. The predominantly democratic leadership style of the headmaster, as stated by the students, is an indication of an open school climate that gives much support to participative decision-making. This could be a reason for his reliance on the school committee system with student representations, for decision-making in the school.

Finally, the students were asked to indicate how student officers or leaders are selected in the school. To this, an overwhelming 98 % said their leaders are elected by the entire student body. This was supported by the views of the headmaster. This democratic practice creates further opportunity for the entire student body to participate in deciding who should be their leaders. Through this, they get the feeling

that they have a say in the choice of their school prefects, who will consequently hope to enjoy the co-operation and support of their electors.

From the foregoing analysis of data on the levels or areas of actual participation of students in the school decision-making process, the answer to the third research question is that the students are involved in school decision-making at:

1. the class and house levels where through regular meetings with their class and housemasters and mistresses they help to take decisions.
2. the student representative council (S.R.C) level where a cross-section of the students meet regularly to deliberate and take decisions on a wide range of issues affecting many areas of the life of the school. There is a clear channel for communicating the decisions of the SRC to the headmaster.
3. the committee level. The administration of the school depends to a large extent on the operations or activities of a number of committees with student representations on them. These include the disciplinary, health, food / dining hall, sports and games, entertainment and worship committees.
4. the election of prefects. Student leaders or prefects are democratically elected by the entire student body through the ballot box.

Research Question Four:

In what Other Areas of Decision-making do the Students Want to Participate?

The rationale for seeking responses to this research question is that, the students would not be satisfied with their level of participation in the decision-making process if there were issues that they should have handled but were not given the chance to do so. Such a situation may kill their interest and enthusiasm, and therefore

lower their participation in the decision-making process. In view of this, the respondents were asked some questions which relate to:

1. Issues that the students expected to be referred to them to handle but were not.
2. Additional areas or ways in which students wanted to help in school administration.

The respondents were asked to indicate whether there were issues that in their opinion the headmaster and staff should have referred to the S.R.C or particular student officers to deal with but were not. About 86% of the students indicate that there are no such issues. Some 14% however, indicate "Yes". As a follow up to explore this response further, the respondents were given the opportunity to list the issues concerned. Those students who gave the "Yes" answer listed the following as the issues they felt should have been referred to the S.R.C or prefects to deal with:

1. A junior student refusing to perform duties in the dormitory,
2. A student refusing to attend evening studies,
3. A junior student misbehaving towards a prefect, and
4. Junior students misbehaving in the dormitory.

A possible explanation of these issues is that sometimes when junior students are punished excessively by the seniors, they report to their housemasters who take corrective action. Thus, it could be inferred that the issues raised are from a few senior students who want absolute control over the juniors. The 86% "No" response is therefore an indication that majority of the students are of the opinion that there are no issues that should have been referred to the S.R.C or prefects to deal with but were not.

The issue of additional areas or ways in which students want to participate in school administration was further explored by finding out from the respondents

whether, apart from the student representative council and the school committees, there were some other areas or ways in which the students would like to help in the administration of the school. To this 38.4% of the students do not give any response, 17.5% state "No idea", while 44.1% give responses such as involving majority of the students in the activities of the S.R.C, formation of sub-committees at the house level, more open fora, being allowed to give instant punishment to offending students, and helping to promote discipline. The fact that some 56% of the students do not have any idea or response to give could be taken as an indication that the students did not have any new or additional ways of participating in decision-making. Furthermore, a closer look at the responses given suggests that the items mentioned are not entirely new ways of participation in the decision-making process. It could be that the students are not satisfied with their performance in those areas and therefore need improvement. For example there is a clear indication that the students, especially the leaders, are aware of their authority to help maintain discipline in the school within the limits of the school rules and regulations at the class and house levels.

However, the issue of sub-committees at the house level needs particular mention. This would represent a further decentralization of the administration of the school to give more authority to school prefects and house captains to promptly handle problems at their level without much reference to the staff. This approach to student participation in the school decision-making process, if adopted, will be more meaningful in boarding schools when the staff ensures effective organisation and functioning of the sub-committees. It is probably in line with such a system of participation that Ozigi (1977) commented on student participation in school decision-making from a purely administrative point of view and said that, school heads should encourage it because:

...Students' participation in the life of the school contributes greatly to the efficient and orderly operation of the institution; it will improve communication, lead to better understanding and co-operation and help to resolve many personal and social problems which can be disruptive. Apart from this it is not possible for you and your staff to perform certain duties concerned with students' welfare when such duties can be more efficiently performed by the students themselves. This is because you and your staff have too much to do to be able to attend to certain details of non-academic duties.

(p.35)

From the foregoing analysis and discussion of data, the answer to the fourth research question is that the students want a more decentralized administration at the house level that will operate through sub-committees.

Research Question Five :

Are The Students Satisfied with the Degree of their Involvement in School Decision-making?

This research question was designed to find out whether in the light of the activities that the students go through in the school, they feel that they are involved in decision-making and, if they are involved, whether they are satisfied with such involvement. Two questions were presented to the students on the above issues. The respondents were first asked whether in their opinion they were involved in decision-making in the school. About 73% of the respondents indicated "Yes". To explore the positive response further, the students were asked whether they were satisfied with the degree of their involvement. While some 32% expressed satisfaction, the majority, 68%, did not. This suggests that although majority of the students believed that they were involved in decision-making in the school they were not satisfied with the

degree of their involvement. The expression of involvement in the decision-making process could be explained by the existence of the student representative council and school committees on which some of the student leaders serve. Through these organs, students' views and decisions were carried to the headmaster. Furthermore, meetings with the students at the class and house levels serve as channels for communicating decisions to the headmaster. Despite the use of a democratic leadership style by the headmaster, supported by the staff, and the involvement of the students in decision-making at various levels, the majority appear not satisfied. This non-satisfaction of the students with the extent of their involvement could be attributed, in part, to factors such as (a) the student leadership not adequately informing the entire student body of SRC meetings, issues to be discussed at the meetings for students to make inputs, and feedback from headmaster, and (b) the desire by some senior students for absolute authority to control junior students and do what they felt was good.

From the analysis and discussion of data above, the answer to the fifth research is that the students are not satisfied with the degree of their involvement in school decision-making.

Research Question Six:

Are Male and Female Students Equally Satisfied with the Degree of their Involvement in School Decision-making?

This research question was designed to find out whether there is any gender difference in the satisfaction of the students with the degree of their participation in decision-making in the school. This was done on the assumption that the girls are more apathetic, and would easily express satisfaction with their involvement as a way of avoiding further responsibility. To be able to answer this research question, the responses of the students to the question of whether or not they were satisfied with their degree of involvement, were further analysed by gender. Frequency and

percentage distributions were used to analyse the data and present the findings. The results of the analysis of the responses are presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Students' Satisfaction with their Degree of Participation in Decision-making By Gender

Type of response	Responses by Male %	Responses by Female %
Yes	7.6	79.8
No	92.4	20.2
Total	100	100

As shown in Table 16, majority of the male students expressed dissatisfaction with their involvement than the females. On the other hand, a greater proportion of the female students expressed satisfaction with the degree of their involvement than the males. This finding, therefore, revealed a marked gender difference between the boys and girls with respect to their satisfaction with the degree of their involvement in the decision-making process. This confirms the rationale behind the sixth research question. The answer to the sixth research question is that the male and female students are not equally satisfied with the degree of their involvement in school decision-making. While the males are highly dissatisfied, the females are satisfied.

Research Question Seven:

What Problems do the Student Leaders Face in their Leadership Roles in the School ?

When students have channels for effective communication and opportunities for participation in school decision-making, which are supported by a democratic leadership style of the headmaster, it is expected that they would be satisfied with the degree of their involvement in decision-making.

The rationale for seeking answers to the seventh research question is that the problems that students face in their leadership roles become a crucial factor for effective participation in the school decision-making process. This is because such problems have the tendency of preventing the student leaders from actively participating in the administration of the school, even though they have opportunities and the enabling environment for active involvement. To get answers to the seventh research question, the students were made to respond to questions designed to bring out the effect of their participation on their academic work, and their relationship with staff and students.

The responses to questions in this section were limited to only the students who held leadership positions in the school. This was done to ensure that the student leaders used their practical experience to indicate the problems that they were facing. The student leaders were initially asked to indicate whether the unwillingness of most students to participate actively in decision-making was due to problems with their normal classes, private studies, academic performance, or increased workload. To this question, majority of the student leaders, about 55%, mentioned increased workload, about 27% mentioned normal classes, about 11% mentioned private classes, and about 7% mentioned academic performance. When asked to expatiate on the problems they faced, the explanation given by the student leaders for the adverse effect of participation in decision-making on their academic performance was centered on time for normal classes and time for private studies, which were sometimes used for committee meetings such as disciplinary committee and emergency meetings to resolve problems. According to them such a situation tends to increase their workload or the pressure on them to excel in their academic work. This finding that participation in school decision-making increases student workload is in agreement

with other parallel research findings. Conway (1984) stressed that participation in school based decision-making should not create a situation in which the teacher is not free to teach. Furthermore, Chapman (1988) saw staff participation in school based decision-making as extra work which distracts their classroom teaching. Thus, it could be inferred that participation in school decision-making is also extra workload for student leaders and could prevent them from attending classes fully. It must therefore be emphasised that the issue of time lost during meetings and other leadership work and the problem of effectively managing the remaining time to achieve success could be real problems for students.

Another area of concern that was presented to the student leaders was the problem of conflicts with different groups of people such as classmates, other student leaders, other students of the school and sometimes the staff. About 80% of the respondents emphasized conflict with classmates as a major problem that they were facing. These conflicts probably result from misunderstanding, poor communication and sometimes the failure or refusal of some prefects to act in accordance with laid down rules and regulations.

From the above analysis and discussions, the answer to the seventh research question is that the student leaders face the problems of:

1. increased workload due to loss of time for normal classes and private studies.
2. conflict with classmates and other students.

Research Question Eight :

Do the Problems that the Student Leaders Face in their Leadership Roles Differ by Gender ?

This research question was designed as a follow up to find out whether there is any gender difference in the problems that the student leaders face in their leadership

roles. To be able to answer this research question, the responses of the students to the question on problems that the student leaders face in their leadership roles, were further analysed by gender. The result of the analysis by gender is presented in Table 17.

Table 17

Analysis Of Students' Leadership Problems By Gender

Type Of Problem	Male	Female
Loss of time for normal classes	20.0%	19.4%
Loss of time for private studies	5.0%	9.7%
Poor academic performance	10.0%	6.5%
Increased work load	65.0%	64.4%

The analysis of the data on student leadership problems presented in Table 17 indicates that increased workload is the major problem of both the male and female students. Other problems such as loss of time for normal classes, loss of time for private studies, and adverse effect of participation on academic performance are also salient. Thus, the findings show that the problem of increased work load is faced by both males and females.

Research Question Nine:

Why do some Students Not Participate Actively in School Decision-making?

This section was designed to provide a discussion of the effects of the problems that student leaders face in their leadership roles. The respondents were asked to indicate why some student leaders in the school are unwilling to participate actively in decision-making. To this, the student leaders gave the following reasons:

1. It robs them of their time for normal classes. This was stated by about 27% of the students.

2. It robs them of their time for private studies. This was the view of about 11% of the students.
3. It adversely affects their academic work. This was stated by about 7% of the students.
4. It increases their workload. This was the view of about 55% of the students.

From the explanations given by the students, it was clear that time spent during leadership work makes some of the student leaders miss normal classes. Such a loss of time is accompanied with a loss of all the instructions and explanations given by a teacher during the lesson. Student leaders who find themselves in such a situation have to put in extra effort to cover the lost lesson and also do assignments and prepare for class tests. Such time constraints could sometimes make the student leaders concentrate more on their academic work than on their leadership roles.

The students also identified the problem of conflicts with classmates as a major issue which sometimes discourages student leaders and lower their participation in decision-making. Some classmates regard themselves as equal to the prefects since they are in the same class and therefore do not want to submit to their control and authority. Therefore, the answer to the ninth research question is that:

1. Majority of the student leaders have a problem with time management and therefore cannot combine academic work and leadership work. They sometimes lose time meant for instructions in the classroom, and also time for their private studies. These tend to increase their workload and have adverse effect on the academic performance of some of the student leaders.
2. Some of the student leaders have conflicts with other people, especially their classmates, which hinder their effective participation in decision-making.

Research Question Ten:**Do the Reasons for not Participating Actively in School Decision-Making Differ by Gender ?**

This research question was designed as a follow up to find out whether there is any gender difference in the reasons for which some student leaders do not participate actively in decision-making. To answer this research question, the responses of the students were further analysed on gender basis. Thus, the two major reasons of increased workload and conflicts with classmates were further analysed on gender basis. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 18.

Table 18

Analysis of Students' Reasons for Inactive Participation by Gender

Reason	Male	Female
Conflicts with classmates	35.0%	35.6%
Increased work load	65.0%	64.4%

As shown in Table 18, increased workload is almost equally viewed by both sexes as the major reason for the low participation of some of the student leaders in decision-making. Thus, the fear of increased workload, probably due to their inability to combine their academic work with their leadership roles, has a discouraging effect on them. Also, both males and females almost equally present conflicts with classmates as a second reason for the apparently low performance of some of the student leaders. The unco-operative attitude of some students was cited as a contributory factor in this regard.

From the above analysis and discussion, the answer to the tenth research question is that the reasons for the inactive participation of some of the student leaders do not differ by gender. The reasons are common to males and females.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

An Overview of the Study:

This last chapter of the research presents the summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations for practice and future research.

The concept of student participation in school decision-making and the various approaches that could be adopted have made the practice of student participation in school decision-making differ from one institution to another. Also, the perceptions that students have regarding their participation in decision-making, the type of leadership style of the head, the kind of climate that exists in the school, and the attitude and willingness of the staff all combine in a complex way to determine how effective and successful student participation in decision-making could be in a particular school. The study therefore focused on student perception of their participation in decision-making in Dormaa Secondary School.

Ten research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study aimed at finding out, on gender basis, the perceptions that the students have regarding their participation in decision-making in the school. The levels or areas in which the students are actually involved in decision-making in the school were also explored with emphasis on channels of decision-making and communication. Additional areas in which the students wanted to participate in decision-making were also investigated. The satisfaction of the students with the degree of their involvement in school decision-making, and whether there are any gender differences in the degree of satisfaction were also explored. The study also investigated, on gender basis, the problems that student leaders face as a result of their involvement in decision-making

as well as the reasons why some students do not participate actively in decision-making.

The findings of this study are expected to help the headmaster of Dormaa Secondary School to know his students' expectations regarding participation in decision-making in the school. Furthermore, the findings of the study are expected to guide the headmaster to adopt appropriate management / leadership styles and techniques to effectively manage the student personnel services in the school. Finally, it is hoped that, though the research was a case study and therefore limited in scope, the general principles behind the findings would be applicable to other senior secondary schools to some extent.

The subjects for the study were three hundred and twenty second and third year students drawn from sixteen classes of Dormaa Secondary School. For purposes of balancing the views of the students, the sample included the headmaster. Background information on thirty teachers were also sampled from official records of the school to find out the roles that the teachers play to support the headmaster in the administration of the school. The instruments used for the study were a 37-item questionnaire for the students and a 43-item interview guide for the headmaster. The questionnaire and interview guide were designed to follow the same pattern so as to seek parallel information from the respondents. The summary of findings emerging from the data analysis is presented below.

Summary of Main Findings

Demographic data covering age, sex and school leadership positions held were analysed separately for both the teachers and students. The summary of the findings is as follows:

1. **The headmaster of the school has about twenty-six years experience in teaching and various aspects of school management. He was reported to be using predominantly the democratic leadership style and gives opportunities to both staff and students to participate in school decision-making.**
2. **The school has quite a stable teaching staff. There were teachers who had spent from one year to sixteen years in the school. Majority of the teachers are males who had spent from five to fifteen years teaching in the school. Female teachers are not stable; the few on the staff have spent less than five years.**
3. **Majority of the teachers hold school administrative positions, such as form masters, housemasters, and school committee members through which they team up with student leaders to participate in school decision-making.**
4. **Majority of the students who hold school leadership positions are aged between under 17 and 18 years.**

The first research question was to find out the perceptions that the students have about their participation in school decision-making. The findings on this are that majority of the respondents perceive student participation in school decision-making as:

1. **requiring consultation between the school authority and the students on issues that affect the students.**
2. **enhancing greater acceptance and commitment of students to decisions.**
3. **dependent on an effective S.R.C.**
4. **not always accepting the views of students.**
5. **not delaying the execution of administrative decisions.**
6. **not always bringing about conflict between staff and students.**

Research question two sought to find out whether the perceptions of the students about their participation in decision-making differ by gender. The findings are that both the male and female students agree that student participation in school decision-making means that students must be consulted on issues that affect them, that when students participate in school decision-making, they become committed to the decisions made, and that student participation in school decision-making does not always bring about conflict between the students and the school authority.

The male and female students differ on three issues, however.

1. Both males and females do not believe in the notion that when students participate in decision-making their views must always be taken. The females, however, seem more inclined to oppose that view than the males.
2. More girls than boys tend to believe that student participation in decision-making tends to delay actions by the school authorities.
3. Even though all the student respondents agree that the SRC is an important organ for decision-making in a school, the males tend to be predisposed to this view than the females.

Research question three aimed at finding the levels at which the students are involved in decision-making. The findings are that:

1. There are regular meetings and consultations between the staff and students at three levels or centres of decision-making in the school. According to 96.2% of the students, there are class meetings with their class masters. Information and decisions from a class centre on issues concerning academic work and are sent through the classmaster, head of department and the assistant headmaster in charge of academic work to the headmaster. Feedback from the headmaster gets to the students by the same channel. Secondly, about 70 % of the students

mentioned housemeetings with their housemasters and housemistresses.

Decisions from the house level centre on issues concerning boarding and lodging and are transmitted through the housemaster or housemistress, senior house master, and assistant headmaster in charge of administration to the headmaster. Decisions from the house level are reviewed and collated at a housemasters' meeting before transmission to the headmaster. Thirdly, according to 80.0% of the students, there are general meetings like open fora and emergency meetings between the students and the staff, led by the headmaster. Such meetings provide a direct channel for discussion and communication.

2. There are regular S.R.C. meetings. This is based on the perception of 94.1% of the students and the headmaster. Class and house representatives together with the general prefects constitute the SRC which meets about three times a term to deliberate on a wide range of issues or areas concerning academic work, discipline, feeding, entertainment, health, sports and so on. Decisions and recommendations from the SRC are presented by the senior prefects directly to the headmaster. Feedback from the headmaster is discussed with the senior members of staff and a core of school prefects, after which the prefects inform the general student body.
3. According to all the student respondents, there are disciplinary, food, entertainment and sports committees in the school. There are also worship and health committees in the school. These functioning school committees with student representations on them are a major feature of decentralisation in the school. The committee system operated fairly well as a major approach to decision-making in the school

4. **The democratic election of school leaders or prefects through the ballot box is another major area in which the students are actively involved in decision-making. This was confirmed by the headmaster and 98.4% of the students.**

The foregoing findings in this section clearly indicate that the students have several avenues for participating in decision-making in the school. The success of these structures could be attributed to several factors.

First is the democratic leadership style of the headmaster. According to about 66 % of the students, the headmaster uses group decisions and participation of subordinates to administer the school. This allows students and teachers to be creative and take initiative. This finding is line with the views of Ozigi (1977), Musaazi (1982), and Megginson, Trueblood and Ross (1985). It also confirms the findings of Wiredu-Kusi (1990) and Mankoe (2000) that a democratic leadership style is a key to participatory decision-making and management.

Second, is the attitude and willingness of the teachers to support the democratic style of the headmaster. The teachers have good working relationships with students at the class, and house levels. They also work with a number of student leaders on school committees to achieve participation in decision-making.

Third, is the adoption of decentralization and the consequent establishment of a number of school committees with student representations on them. Through this committees, the students are practically involved in school decision-making. This finding supports the call by Mankoe (2000) for a decentralized administration to encourage participation in decision-making.

Fourth, is the establishment of open vertical and horizontal channels of communication which cover the entire school. From different levels, whether class, house or individual, the students have a clear channel for communicating their views

to the headmaster and for getting feedback.

Fifth, is the respect and recognition given to the S.R.C. to function as a major organ for student participation in decision-making. Through the SRC the students make meaningful inputs for decision-making in the school.

Research question four aim at finding out other areas of decision-making that the students want to participate in. The findings are that the students do not have any issues which, in their opinion, should have been referred to them but have not been referred to them. However, a few students call for a more decentralized administration at the house level that will operate through sub-committees.

The foregoing findings in this section indicate that the students are not deprived of the chance to participate in school decision-making. Indeed about 73% of the students confirmed that they are actually involved in decision-making.

Research question five sought to find out whether the students are satisfied with the degree of their involvement in decision-making. The findings are that most of the students are not satisfied with the degree of their involvement in school decision-making. It is significant to note that in spite of the many opportunities and areas of decision-making that are open to the students in the school, they are not satisfied with their performance. This suggests that there could be some problems or negative influences that militate against the active participation of the students in decision-making.

Research question six was designed to find out whether male and female students are equally satisfied/dissatisfied with the degree of their involvement in decision-making. The finding is that while most of the male respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their involvement in school decision-making, most of the females, on the other hand are satisfied. This implies that the girls may not want to take on

additional leadership roles.

Research question seven aimed at finding out the problems that students leaders face in their leadership roles in the school. The findings are that student leaders lose a lot of their time for classes, private studies, and that they cannot easily manage their time to accommodate losses. Another finding is that classmates and other students, who regard themselves as equal to the prefects, tend to oppose them on many issues. These two problems tend to be negative factors which act against effective student participation in decision-making.

Research question eight sought to establish whether the problems that students leaders face in their leadership roles differ by gender. The finding is that there is no gender difference among the students regarding the problems that leaders face in their leadership roles.

Research question nine aim at finding out why some students leaders do not participate actively in decision-making. The findings are that participation in school decision-making robs them of their time for normal classes, as well as their time for private studies. It also increases their workload, thereby negatively affecting their academic work.

The reasons given by the student leaders suggest that some of them might not be academically strong, and therefore time spent on leadership work has a negative impact on their studies. This is because academically brilliant prefects could spend some time on leadership work and still be able to organise themselves to catch up and cope with their academic work. The tendency, therefore, would be that some of the student leaders would give more attention to their academic work than to leadership work.

Research question ten aimed at establishing any gender difference in the

reasons for not participating actively in decision-making. The finding is that there are no gender differences in the reasons given for non-participation in school decision-making by many leaders.

Conclusion

The findings of the study tend to support the idea that involvement of students in the school decision-making process ensures a smooth school administration, and that effective student participation in school decision-making can be jeopardised if the students are unable to manage their time effectively.

In view of the immense benefits that a school will derive from student participation in the decision-making process, the headmaster of the school should give much attention to this practice. He should know when and how to involve the students in the decision-making process, since the students have strong positive perceptions of their participation in decision-making.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for practice in Dormaa Secondary School in particular, and other senior secondary schools in general:

1. That the school authorities should establish a system of consultation with the students on issues that affect them. This will enhance greater acceptance and commitment of students to decisions since the students perceive consultation as a major means of their participation in decision-making.
2. That opportunities for exchange of ideas, such as open forum, should be regularly organised to: (a) educate the boys on why their views

should not always be taken in decision-making, (b) educate the girls to understand how they can co-operate with the school authorities so that by their participation in decision-making, actions by the school authorities are not delayed.

3. That the school authorities should encourage and strengthen the following centres which involve students in decision-making: class level, house level, student representative council and school committees.
4. As a way of increasing student participation in school decision-making, it is suggested that the students should be encouraged by their housemasters and housemistresses to establish house level committees to deal with issues at their house level. This will promote the making of bye-laws which the students will be committed to.
5. That the school authorities should establish a system of getting feedback from the students to ensure that the entire student body is aware of the activities of the student representative council and the various school committees through which the views of students can be considered in decision-making.
6. The study showed that student leaders miss normal lessons to attend committee meetings and do other leadership work. It is therefore suggested that , as much as possible, committee meetings and other leadership activities should be scheduled in such a way that they do not take too much of students' time for academic work. This will also help the teachers not to cut lessons for committee meetings.
7. As a result of the time management problem identified in the study, it

is suggested that all students, especially the prefects, should be given an orientation on how to plan their work and use time effectively.

8. School authorities should thoroughly vet student nominations for school leadership positions to ensure that academically good students are elected into office. Such students are less likely to be severely affected by loss of time due to performance of leadership roles.
9. The problem of conflicts that student leaders face from their classmates and others should be promptly addressed by the school administration.
10. Suggestion boxes should be provided at vantage points for students, and they should be encouraged to submit their suggestions to the school administration. Though this has the advantage of allowing free expression of ideas, students should be educated to avoid its misuse for issuing anonymous threats, insults, false alarms, and attacks on personalities.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

Introduction

This questionnaire seeks to gather information from students on their participation in the school decision-making process. It forms part of the pool of data for research into the factors affecting student participation in school decision-making in Dormaa Secondary School. The aim is to have information that will be of assistance to both students and the school authorities in the administration of the school.

Every information provided will be treated as private and confidential. Answer each question by writing your answer in the spaces provided, or by putting a tick (-) against or by underlining the alternative(s) of your choice.

Please, return the questionnaire to your class captain, when you finish answering the questions. Thank you.

PART ONE

QUESTIONS ON PERSONAL PARTICULARS

1. Class
2. Age
3. Sex
4. Course (programme) of study in school
5. Present leadership position (if any)

PART TWO

QUESTIONS ON SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING

SECTION A: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING

6. Student participation in school decision-making means that students must be consulted on issues that affect them.

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | (6) Totally agree | (5) Strongly agree | (4) Agree |
| | (3) Disagree | (2) Strongly disagree | (1) Totally disagree |
7. **When students participate in school decision-making, their views must always be taken.**
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Totally agree | (2) Strongly agree | (3) Agree |
| (4) Disagree | (5) Strongly disagree | (6) Totally disagree |
8. **When students participate in school decision-making, they become committed to the decisions made.**
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (6) Totally agree | (5) Strongly agree | (4) Agree |
| (3) Disagree | (2) Strongly disagree | (1) Totally disagree |
9. **When students participate in school decision-making, actions by the school authorities are delayed.**
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Totally agree | (2) Strongly agree | (3) Agree |
| (4) Disagree | (5) Strongly disagree | (6) Totally disagree |
10. **Student participation in school decision-making always brings about conflict between students and the school authority.**
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Totally agree | (2) Strongly agree | (3) Agree |
| (4) Disagree | (5) Strongly disagree | (6) Totally disagree |
11. **A Student Representative Council (S.R.C.) is an important organ for decision-making in a school.**
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (6) Totally agree | (5) Strongly agree | (4) Agree |
| (3) Disagree | (2) Strongly disagree | (1) Totally disagree |

**SECTION B : LEVELS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

12. **Do students of this school have channels for communicating their views to the headmaster?** () **Yes** () **No**
13. **Does the headmaster and staff meet the students to discuss issues affecting the students?** () **Yes** () **No**
14. **Does your housemaster or housemistress meet students of your House to discuss issues affecting members of the House?** () **Yes** () **No**
15. **Does your class master or mistress meet members of your class to discuss issues affecting the class?** () **Yes** () **No**
16. **Is there a Student Representative Council (S.R.C) in the school ?**
 () **Yes** () **No** () **No idea**
17. **List the categories of people who form the S.R.C. in the school.**
For example: Senior Boys' Prefect, House Captains, etc.

18. How often does the S. R. C. meet in a term ?
 1 2 3 more than 3 No meeting
19. What issues are generally discussed at the S.R.C meetings ?

20. How are the decisions of the S. R. C. carried to the Headmaster ?

21. Is there a disciplinary committee in the school ?
 Yes No No idea
22. Are the students represented on the disciplinary committee ?
 Yes No No idea
23. What is the composition of the disciplinary committee of the school ?
 (a) Number of teachers..... (b) Number of students (c) No idea
24. What role do students play to help the disciplinary committee arrive at a decision

25. Are the decisions of the disciplinary committee acceptable to the students?
 Yes No
26. Which of the following school committees have student representatives on them
 Health Committee
 Food / Dining Hall Committee
 Sports and Games Committee
 Entertainment Committee
 Worship Committee
27. How are student officers or leaders selected in the school ?
 Appointed by the S.R.C.
 Elected by the student body
 Appointed by the staff
 Appointed by the headmaster
28. How would you describe the leadership style of the headmaster ?
 Autocratic style: By this leadership style, the headmaster is dictatorial, disregards ideas of subordinates and students, uses authority, orders and economic rewards to get work done.
 Democratic style: By this style, the headmaster uses group decisions and participation of subordinates and students to work.
 Bureaucratic style: By this style, the headmaster uses rules, regulations, and procedures in a rigid manner to get work done exactly as required by higher authorities.
 Laissez-faire style: By this style, the headmaster advises, motivates, and allows subordinates to be creative and take initiative.

**SECTION C : STUDENTS' DESIRED LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN
THE SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.**

29. Are there issues which, in your opinion, the Headmaster and staff should refer to the S.R.C or particular student officers to deal with but are not ?
 Yes No
30. If your answer to question 29 is YES, then state the issues concerned.

31. In addition to the S.R.C and school committees mentioned in Section B above, in what other ways do the students desire to help in the administration of the school

32. In your view, are students involved in decision-making in this school ?
 Yes No
33. If your answer to question 32 is YES, are the students satisfied with the degree of their involvement ? Yes No

**SECTION D: PROBLEMS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN
SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING.
(THIS SECTION SHOULD BE ANSWERED BY ONLY STUDENTS IN
PRESENT LEADERSHIP POSITION)**

34. Students leaders in this school are unwilling to participate actively in decision-making because they feel:
 it robs them of their time for normal classes
 it robs them of their time for private studies
 it adversely affects their academic performance
 it increases their workload
35. Briefly explain your answer to question 34.

36. Which of the following groups of people do you often come into conflict or misunderstanding with during your work as a student leader?
 Headmaster Staff classmates
 other student leaders other students of the school
37. What is the nature of the conflicts indicated in question 36 ?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HEADMASTER

PART ONE
QUESTIONS ON PERSONAL PARTICULARS

1. Name :
2. Age : 3. Rank :
4. Number of years served as Head of this school ?
5. Any previous experience in school administration ?

PART TWO
QUESTIONS ON SCHOOL DECISION-MAKINGSECTION A: PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN
SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING

6. Are you "*FOR*" or "*AGAINST*" the idea that students should be involved in school administration ?
 For Against
7. Please, why ?

8. Are your students involved in decision-making in the school ?
 Yes No
9. Do you think that student participation in school decision-making means the students must be consulted on issues that affect them ?

10. There is the notion that when students participate in school decision-making, their views must always be taken. What do you say about this ?

11. Is it true that when students participate in school decision-making, they become committed to the decisions made ?

12. When students participate in school decision-making, actions by the school authorities are delayed. What do you say ?

13. Does student participation in school decision-making always bring about conflict between students and the school authorities ?

14. What is your view on the notion that a student representative council is an important organ for decision-making in a school ?

SECTION B : LEVELS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

15. What are the existing channels for students to communicate their views to you ?

16. Do you often meet the students to discuss issues affecting them ?
 () Yes () No

17. If *YES*, how and when do you meet them ?

18. Is there a Student Representative Council (S.R.C) in your school ?
 () Yes () No

19. Who constitute the S. R. C. in the school ?

20. How are the students selected to form the S. R. C. ?

21. How often does the S. R. C. meet in a term ?

22. Do you attend or are you represented at the S. R. C. meetings ?

23. What issues are generally discussed at the S.R.C meetings ?

24. How are the decisions of the S. R. C. transmitted to you ?

25. Is there a disciplinary committee in the school ?
 () Yes () No

26. Are the students represented on the disciplinary committee ?
 () Yes () No

27. What is the composition of the disciplinary committee of the school ?
 (a) Number of teachers (b) Number of students
28. What procedure is followed by the disciplinary committee to arrive at a decision ?

29. To what extent are the decisions of the disciplinary committee acceptable:
 (a) to the staff ?
 () to a great extent. () to some extent
 () to a little extent () not at all
- (b) to the students ?
 () to a great extent. () to some extent
 () to a little extent () not at all
30. Which of the following school committees have student representatives on them ?
 () Health Committee
 () Food / Dining Hall Committee
 () Sports and Games Committee
 () Entertainment Committee
 () Worship Committee
31. How are student officers or leaders selected in the school ?
 () Appointed by the S.R.C.
 () Elected by the student body
 () Appointed by the staff
 () Appointed by the headmaster
32. Do students in this school participate in school decision-making to the extent that you expect ? () YES () NO
33. What reasons can you give for your answer to question 32 ?

SECTION C: STUDENTS' DESIRED LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING.

34. Do the student officers or leaders have the authority to control and punish offending students ?
 () Yes () No
35. Do you and the staff refer some issues to the S.R.C or particular student officers to deals with ?
 () Yes () No
36. If your answer to question 35 is YES, then state the issues concerned

37. In addition to the S. R. C and school committees mentioned in Section B above, in what other ways do your students desire to help in the administration of the school?
.....

**SECTION D : PROBLEMS OF STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN
SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING.**

38. Which of the following is / are the reasons why student leaders in this school are unwilling to participate actively in decision-making ?

- () it robs them of their time for normal classes.
() it robs them of their time for private studies.
() it adversely affects their academic work.
() it increases their workload.

39. How would you explain your answer to question 38 ?
.....

40. Which of the following groups of people do your prefects often come into conflict or misunderstanding with during their work as student leaders ?

- () staff () classmates
() other student leaders () other students of the school

41. What is the nature of the conflicts indicated in question 40 ?
.....

42. What is your assessment of the performance of your student leaders as participants of school decision-making ?

- () HIGH () AVERAGE () LOW

43. What reasons can you give for the answer to question 42 ?
.....