

2016

# Transformational Leadership Skills Needed by Private Basic School Proprietors in Ghana

Moses Adu-Gyimah  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Moses Adu-Gyimah

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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2016

Abstract

Transformational Leadership Skills Needed by Private Basic School Proprietors in Ghana

by

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MBA, University of Ghana Business School, 2010

BA (Hons) Economics, University of Ghana, 2007

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

July 2016

## Abstract

Survival of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) is a critical issue for business leaders. The Ghana Statistical Service reported that over 60% of SMEs, including Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools, fail during their first 5 years of operation. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools have used to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. The conceptual framework for this study was Bass and Avolio's transformational leadership theory. Data collection included semistructured interviews to elicit narratives from 3 proprietors from 3 different Ghanaian private basic schools about what leadership skills they used to enhance employee performance. Data also came from a review of relevant school documents and a reflective journal. The data were analyzed with Yin's 5-step data analysis technique. Data analysis included identification of key themes and triangulation of data from interviews and relevant school documents. The main themes revealed that leaders used idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation to enhance employee performance for sustainability of the schools. Findings indicate school leaders can enhance employee performance when they adopt transformational leadership, particularly when leaders articulate a clear vision, encourage teamwork, and involve followers in decision-making. Social implications include helping proprietors of Ghanaian private basic schools enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years to improve student education, enhance employment, and contribute to improved living standards.

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## **Dedication**

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has seen me through this journey. I dedicate this research project to all members of St Peter's Mission School community and all my children. The Lord has blessed us as a family, and I know that more blessings and opportunities await us.

## **Acknowledgments**

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The importance of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) to the economic development of Ghana cannot be overemphasized (Asare, 2014). SMEs account for 92% of all businesses in the Ghanaian economy (Benneh Mensah, & Nyadu-Ado, 2012). The first president of Ghana and several presidents after him attempted and failed to industrialize the Ghanaian economy, leading to the formation of SMEs (Adarkwah, 2012). Transformational leadership skills enhances employee productivity and are important to the sustainability of SMEs (Manaf & Latif, 2014).

### **Background of the Problem**

Asare (2014) asserted that the importance of SMEs to the development of Ghana cannot be overemphasized. Ghanaian policy makers continue to pass legislation to support the development of SMEs in Ghana (Asare, 2014). For instance, Ghana's 1992 Constitution, Article 25, Subsection 2, empowers entrepreneurs to establish and maintain private schools (Singal, Mahama Salifu, Iddrisu, Casely-Hayford, & Lundebye, 2015). This constitutional provision has led to the proliferation of SME basic private schools (Darko, 2013), which constitutes a portion of the 92% of SME businesses in the Ghanaian economy (Benneh Mensah, & Nyadu-Ado, 2012),

Despite the contribution of SMEs to the Ghanaian economy, 60% of SMEs fail within their first 5 years of operation (Amoako, 2013). Several scholars (Abrokwah, Sarbah, & Osei, 2014; Awiagah, Kang, & Lim, 2015; Kiveu & Ofafa, 2012) investigated reasons for the mass failure of SMEs in Ghana, yet none of these scholars considered the leadership fit of SMEs in Ghana, especially in private basic schools.

Leadership contributes to the success or failure of SMEs, especially in the emerging markets such as Ghana (Mwangi, Maina, Sejjaaka, & Canney, 2014). Mesu, Sanders, and Riemsdijk (2015) argued that scholars are uncertain regarding the effectiveness of transformational leadership behavior in large firms as well as SMEs. Small companies tend to operate with an intimate structure reminiscent of the inspirational, individualized, and intellectual stimulation style of transformational leadership (Lam & O'Higgins, 2012).

### **Problem Statement**

Sustainability of SMEs is a problem in Ghana because proprietors of SMEs lack transformational leadership skills (Fening, 2012; Manaf & Latif, 2014; Sloan, Klingenberg, & Rider, 2013; Yasin, Nawab, Bhatti, & Nazir, 2014). SMEs account for about 92% of all businesses in Ghana (Asare, 2014), contribute 70% of gross domestic product (GDP) (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Addo, 2012), and provide 85% of employment in Ghana (Asare, 2014), but 60% fail during their first 5 years of operation (Amoako, 2013; Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Addo, 2012). The general business problem is that the lack of transformational leadership skills of proprietors of SMEs negatively affects employee performance, which contributes to the failure of SMEs (Engelen, Gupta, Strenger, & Brettel, 2015; Manaf & Latif, 2014). The specific business problem is that some proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools lack transformational leadership skills to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. The specific population was proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana that have been in business beyond 5 years and have been rated by the board of the Private Basic Schools Performance Magazine (PBSM) of Ghana as exemplary leaders for 5 consecutive years. The findings from this proposed study may affect positive social change by informing SME leaders in education regarding the effective design of transformational leadership development programs needed to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years.

### **Nature of the Study**

According to Onwuegbuzie and Byers (2014), studies with the goal to explore the lived experiences of participants are best represented with a qualitative research method because this research method is appropriate for interpreting relationships between variables (Yang, 2013). A quantitative study is suitable for testing of theories, examining causes and effects, and making deductive conclusions (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013).

In this study, a quantitative research method was inappropriate because I sought to make sense of the lived experiences of participants in a natural setting and not to test theories. Mixed method research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative, and presents some challenges such as the inclusion of quantitative data in data collection

(Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). I sought to make sense of participants' lived experiences and quantitative data are not needed to research lived experiences.

Qualitative research designs include: ethnography, phenomenology, and case study (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Researchers use ethnographic designs to understand groups with a common culture (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013). The purpose of this study was not to examine group cultural practices, so the ethnographic approach was inappropriate. Researchers use phenomenology to focus on constructing the story of participants' lived experiences (Berterö, 2015), which was not the purpose of this study.

Multiple case study design is an in-depth study of more than one case as a means to understand the perspective of the individuals involved (Rowley, 2012). Case study design is the most appropriate design for this research because a case study design enables researchers to explore a specific and complex phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2015). Case study design uses semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions to understand participants' views. and also uses researcher observation to provide meaning through patterns and themes of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Proietti (2012) Yin, 2014). The most appropriate research approach for my study was a qualitative method using a multiple case study design to explore the lived experiences of proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools with transformational leadership skills to enhance employee performance and sustain their schools beyond 5 years.

### **Research Question**

The central research question that guided this proposed research study was: What transformational leadership skills do proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years?

### **Interview Questions**

I asked the following open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews with small and medium scale basic school proprietors selected to participate in the study.

1. How would your employees describe you as a leader?
2. How do you influence the performance of your employees?
3. How do you communicate your vision to inspire your employees to perform?
4. What leadership skills do you use to motivate employees to improve their performance?
5. What leadership skills have not been helpful to you to enhance employee performance to sustain the survival and success of your school during the past 5 years?
6. What other information would you like to share regarding leadership skills needed to enhance employee performance and sustain your school beyond 5 years?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was the transformational leadership theory. Burns first introduced the theory in 1978, and Bass and Avolio (1997) later expanded on Burns' (1978) work. Bass and Avolio (1997) developed a set of five aspects



that define a transformational leader: (a) idealized influence or attributed charisma; (b) idealized influence or behavioral charisma; (c) inspirational motivation; (d) intellectual stimulation; and (e) individualized consideration.

I selected the transformational leadership theory to serve as the conceptual framework for this study because the exemplary performance of a transformational leader reflects the exceptional output of their employees, which is supported by the work of LePine, Zhang, Rich, and Crawford (2015) and Mittal and Dhar (2015). The components of the transformational leadership theory: (a) idealized influence or attributed charisma; (b) idealized influence or behavioral charisma; (c) inspirational motivation; (d) intellectual stimulation; and (e) individualized consideration guide the enhancement of employee performance (Bass & Avolio, 1997).

Gagnon and Collinson (2014) claimed that idealized influence thrives on the leader's own exemplary achievements and acceptable values. According to Gagnon and Collinson, attributes of a leader's exemplary achievements and values allow employees to identify with the leader and take up leadership responsibilities. Leaders who demonstrate a high level of inspirational leadership engage, inspire, and empower their employees to enhance job performance (Schaufeli, 2015). The intellectual stimulation may enable the follower to challenge the status quo and influence the intellect of employees to innovate productively (Guay, 2013). Joo and Lim (2013) pointed out that individualized consideration involves attending to the individual employee's needs, empathizing, rewarding their achievements, and attending to their welfare needs, which motivates the

employees to excel. The components of the transformational leadership theory enhanced the exploration.

The expectation was that the components of the transformational leadership theory may help: (a) facilitate an in-depth exploration of participants' transformational leadership experiences, and (b) ascertain participants' perceptions concerning the outcome of their transformational leadership skills on employee performance for sustainability of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools beyond 5 years.

### **Operational Definitions**

The following terms were unique and specific to the topic of exploring transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools use to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. The definitions are consistent with their use in peer-reviewed literature.

*Basic education:* Basic education in Ghana consists of 2 years of preschool and 6 years of primary education, followed by 3 years of junior secondary education (Mphale, 2014). Business education is a right guaranteed by the Constitution of Ghana, and underpins other national development goals including development of a more equitable society (Balwanz & Darvas, 2013).

*Idealized influence:* Idealized influence constitutes the emotional traits of a leader's behavior that motivates a follower to perform beyond simple transactional expectations (Yaghoubipoor, Tee, & Ahmed, 2013).

*Individualized consideration:* Individualized consideration behavior entails counseling and providing personal attention to employees toward enhancing employees' performance (Guay, 2013; Joo & Lim, 2013).

*Inspirational motivation:* Inspirational motivation is a leader's visionary and inspirational goals that energize followers to perform productively (Jacobs et al., 2013).

*Intellectual stimulation:* Intellectual stimulation represents the leader's skillfulness in motivating followers to excel in their field of operation (Guay, 2013).

*Leadership:* Leadership is the act of regulating and assisting others in an organization to achieve the shared vision of the organization (Sun & Leithwood, 2015).

*Small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs):* In Ghana, two criteria are used to identify SMEs: (a) the number of employees in a firm; and (b) the value of fixed assets in a firm (Avortri, Bunyaminu, & Wereko, 2013). A company with up to 30 employees and maximum fixed assets of 22,500 GHC (cedis), (about \$5,625 based on the 2016 exchange rate) is classified as an SME (Avortri et al., 2013).

*Transformational leadership:* Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership approach that stimulates and encourages intellectual motivation through inspiration (Qu et al., 2015).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The assumptions, limitations, and delimitations that I made in planning this study are described in this subsection.

#### **Assumptions**

Assumptions in a research study are the fundamental beliefs that validate the study and legitimize the research (Lips-Wiersma & Mills, 2013). Researchers hold an assumption that the subject under study will be of interest to society (Moustakas, 1994). When researchers neglect assumptions, the research findings can become invalid (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). This qualitative multiple case study was based on four assumptions: (a) that leaders of profitable small and medium scale private basic schools have some specific skills to share with other basic school leaders with concerns about employee performance and school sustainability beyond 5 years, (b) that small and medium scale private basic school leaders that exhibit the transformational leadership style sustain employee performance beyond 5 years, (c) that employee performance enhances profitability, and (d) that the study participants openly and honestly provided information about their lived experiences related to strategies that enhance school employee performance.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of a study are predictable and likely weaknesses such as researcher biases and perceptual misrepresentations beyond the control of the researcher, which affects the outcome of the study (Paechter, 2013). Silverman (2013) stated that limitations are inadequacies, circumstances, or influences that cannot be controlled and place restrictions on a research study. Financial and time constraints are reasons researchers sample study populations for data gathering (Paechter, 2013). I restricted data collection to one region, the Greater Accra region of Ghana. Restricting data collection to one region might reduce opportunities for transferability of the findings ( Moustakas,

1994). An additional limitation was the sole collection of data from the perspective of the small business owner. Venkatesh et al., (2013) noted the geographical location of the research participants, sampling method, and the professional affiliation of the participants are research limitations.

The focus of this study was on proprietors of basic private schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana. Drawing participants from only the greater Accra region of Ghana may limit the experiences researched to only this region, and hence the findings may not be transferable to other areas of Ghana or other countries. The selected participants were proprietors of basic private schools, so the findings may not be transferable to other SMEs and non-SME businesses. Selection of participants was limited to proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools that enhanced employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are those decisions under the influence and ambit of the researcher (Bartoska & Subrt, 2012). Researchers select the geographical area for the study, the conceptual framework, and the population to study (Bartoska & Subrt, 2012).

One delimitation of this study was the sample was only from proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools of the greater Accra region of Ghana. Also, I selected the study sample from only one out of the 10 regions in Ghana. Participants were proprietors of businesses classified as SMEs by Ghana Statistical Service (GSS). Qualified participants were proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools who had enhanced employee performance for sustainability

beyond 5 years and had been rated by the board of the PBSPM of Ghana as exemplary leaders five consecutive times. The findings from this research study did not represent the leadership behavior of the entire population of proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools. Other challenges such as interest rate on loans and financial management that affect the success or failure of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools are not included in this study. Some of these challenges that affect the success or failure of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools include a (a) lack of appropriate employee attitudes, (b) quality management, (c) problems in the distribution of loans and repayments, and (d) lack of knowledge.

### **Significance of the Study**

SMEs are the engine of growth in most economies, which necessitates exploring the transformational leadership skills that affect employee performance for sustainability (Amoah-Mensah, 2013). SMEs account for 92% of businesses in Ghana (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Ado, 2012), which indicates the indispensable role they play in the Ghanaian economy. Information on the transformational leadership skills that enhance employee performance for SME sustainability is lacking in developing African countries (Mwangi et al., 2014) including Ghana (Mutoko, 2014; Sloan et al., 2013; Yasin et al., 2014). SMEs are the major source of employment in Ghana, which necessitates exploring the leadership skills and practices that affects their sustainability beyond 5 years (Amoah-Mensah, 2013). SMEs represent more than 90% of businesses worldwide (Kessey, 2014; Inyang, 2013). SMEs account for the largest percent of all businesses in virtually every economy (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Addo, 2012). For instance, in the United States

(Inyang, 2013) and Malasia (Zairan & Zaimah, 2013), 99% of all companies are SMEs. In Ghana, SMEs account for about 92% of all businesses (Benneh Mensah, & Nyadu-Ado, 2012; Oppong et al., 2014).

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The results of this study may contribute to positive business practice by enhancing current knowledge on successful leadership behavior and business sustainability in the private sector of Ghana. Policymakers may incorporate study findings on how effective leaders enhance the performance of their employees into the national leadership and management syllabus in Ghana.

A well-designed training program for leadership skills may reduce the time and cost of training. Findings from the study may influence the restructuring of the leadership training syllabus for SMEs. The content of leadership training syllabi of school consultants in Ghana reflected the contemporary skills that private basic school leaders require in Ghana to enhance the performance of their employees for sustainability beyond 5 years. Also, these trained proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools may mentor their followers to learn the new leadership skills such as (a) idealized influence (b) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration. Results from research by Gupta and Singh (2014) confirmed a positive correlation between leadership behaviors and successful organizational outcomes. Sun and Leithwood (2015) concluded that when leaders exhibit a transformational leadership style, employees achieve more than the usual expectation. Improved employee performance enhances the competitiveness of their organizations, leading to higher

profitability and sustainability (Cherian & Jacob, 2013). Knowledge of how effective leaders initiate and lead change, when carefully considered, could contribute to positive reforms by equipping strategic leaders with the necessary skills to lead change effectively. This knowledge may influence positive social change in all sectors of the Ghanaian economy, especially in Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results of this research may be of significant interest to leaders who have a goal of positive social change in the small and medium scale private basic school system in the greater Accra region of Ghana. Findings from the study may contribute to a clearer understanding of effective leadership behaviors and skills used in successful schools identified as SMEs by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS). Policymakers could use the study findings to design practical learning programs, policies, and strategies to enhance employee performance in these SMEs. In particular, the transformational leadership skills of proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools in Ghana may improve. Findings from the study may enrich the transformational leadership training syllabus at large, particularly the transformational leadership training syllabus of private basic school leaders in Ghana. Well-trained transformational leaders can inspire, stimulate, motivate, and enhance the effectiveness of employees to reach higher goals in their schools. Effective school workers may equip students with the needed skills to transform the Ghanaian society.



### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

This section includes a review of existing literature on leadership styles, employees' performance, and the relationship between leadership and employees' performance. An examination of the conceptual background and foundation of the study is expanded from the initial conversation begun in the conceptual framework as well as a discussion on the concept of transformational leadership detailed by Burns (1978) and Bass (1997). This style of leadership changed the traditional model from a power-based to empowerment-based leadership approach (Carter, Mossholder, Feild, & Armenakis, 2014). According to scholars (Humborstad, Nerstad, & Dysvik, 2014; Messaoud, 2014), empowerment-based leadership motivates employees to operate in the interest of their organization, as opposed to power-based leadership, which leads to employee resentments.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case was to explore transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools use to enhance employee performance for sustainability. The conceptual framework for this study was based on the transformational leadership theory proposed by Burns (1978) and enhanced by Bass and Avolio (1997). This section is divided into three areas: (a) leadership, (b) employee performance, and (c) the relationship between leadership style and employee performance. The section concludes with a summary of the literature review indicating the gaps in the literature and the contribution of this research toward filling that gap.

I used a number of strategies for searching relevant literature for the study, including both electronic and printed books, online searches of articles, conference papers, and journals. Search engines from the Walden University Library website included [EBSCOhost](#), ProQuest, Emerald, and Google Scholar, among others. Main terms for the search included *transformational leadership style*, *leadership*, *employee performance*, *leadership*, *principal leadership*, and *the relationship between leadership style and employee performance*. The references in this study include 95.65% of materials that are less than 5 years from the date of my anticipated graduation and 88.62% peer reviewed articles that meet the DBA doctoral research study requirements (Walden University, 2014), as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Literature Review Source Content*

Literature Review Content	Total #	% Less than 5 years old at graduation date	% Total peer-reviewed less than 5 years old at graduation date
Peer-reviewed Journals	287	278	88.62%
Books	5	2	0
Non-peer reviewed Journals	8	6	0
Total	300	95.65%	88.62%

## **Development of SMEs in Ghana**

The literature on small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) includes several definitions of SMEs. Neelufer and Amri (2014) supported Serrasqueiro and Nunes (2012) that the definition for SMEs varies from country to country. In Germany, for example, companies with 2 to 249 employees are SMEs (Belitz, Eickelpasch, & Lejpras, 2013). The definition of SMEs in Ghana has varied over time and institutions in Ghana have defined SMEs to suit their operational objectives (Oppong, Owiredu, & Churchill, 2014). The Ghanaian government at a time defined SMEs base on the value of investment in machinery, equipment, and working capital (Asomaning & Abdulai, 2015). At another time, the Ghanaian government defined SMEs regarding cost of capital and total sales (Asomaning & Abdulai, 2015). The Trade and Industry Ministry, which regulates the operations of SMEs, defined SMEs regarding the value of installed fixed cost (Avortri et al., 2013). The SSG, the publisher of industrial statistics, defined SMEs as industries that employ 29 employees or fewer (Ocloo, Akaba, & Worwui-Brown, 2014; Oppong et al., 2014). According to the Venture Capital Fund Act 2004 (Act 680) in Ghana, SMEs are either an industry, or project, or economic venture that employs up to 100 people and has total asset value of \$1 million or less (Atogenzoya, Nyeadi, & Atiga, 2014).

SMEs evolved in Ghana during the precolonial era: 1847 through 1957 (Asare, 2014). The smooth evolution of SMEs halted in 1966 with the overthrow of the first president of Ghana (Adarkwah, 2012). Ghana faced a major economic crisis in the 1980s, leading to liquidation of some large-scale manufacturing firms (Amankwah-Amoah &

Sarpong, 2015). Some workers displaced due the closure of the large-scale manufacturing firms established SMEs (Asare, 2014). The government of Ghana, in support of the entrepreneurial spirit of these displaced workers, enacted new private sector development policies (Ocloo et al., 2014). In 1981, Government Act 434 established the National Board for the Small Scale Industries to regulate activities of small-scale industries (NBSSI) in Ghana (Adanu & Boateng, 2015). In 1991 and 1994 respectively, the government of Ghana handed over the operations of Ghanaian Enterprise Development Commission and Cottage Industries to the NBSSI (Adanu & Boateng, 2015; Asare, 2014). In furtherance of the operations of SMEs in Ghana, the government established a private sector advisory group to provide consulting services to local SMEs (Adomako, Danso, & Ampadu, 2015) and introduced the Investment Code of 1985 under the PNDC Law 116, which was meant to promote foreign investment (Asare, 2014). Also, a private sector development ministry was established to encourage private sector developments including the development of SMEs (Asare, 2014). To sustain the operations of SMEs in Ghana, in 2001, the Private Sector Development Ministry provided training and skill based enhancement programs to improve the skills and effectiveness of local entrepreneurs (Asare, 2014). However, researchers Yasin et al. (2014) and Sloan et al. (2013) identified that proprietors of Ghanaian SMEs lack effective leadership skills that enhance employee performance for sustainability. SME sustainability is a measure of effective leadership (Manaf & Latif, 2014). Kaufman (2015) argued that SMEs led by effective leaders would persist in an era of competition through efficient employee performance.

### **Economic Contribution of SMEs**

SMEs play an important role in the economic development and growth of both developed and developing nations (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Addo, 2012). SMEs account for more than half of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) (Kessey, 2014; Inyang, 2013). In Japan, SMEs contribute 55% of the country's GDP, and in South Korea and Hong Kong SMEs' share of GDP is 49% (Kessey, 2014). In Bangladesh, SMEs generate 50% of GDP (Hussain, Farooq, & Akhtar, 2012), and in Ghana SMEs contribute 70% of GDP (Benneh Mensah, & Nyadu-Addo, 2012).

SMEs represent more than 90% of businesses worldwide (Kessey, 2014; Inyang, 2013) and account for the largest percent of all businesses in virtually every economy (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Addo, 2012). For instance, in the United States (Inyang, 2013) and Malaysia (Zairan & Zaimah, 2013), 99% of all companies are SMEs. In Ghana, SMEs account for about 92% of all businesses (Benneh Mensah, & Nyadu-Addo, 2012; Oppong et al., 2014), and 91% of companies in South Africa are SMEs (Inyang, 2013; Kessey, 2014).

Globally, SMEs generate the majority of private sector employment and account for more than 50% of jobs (Kessey, 2014; Inyang, 2013). In the United States, SMEs employ 52% of the workforce (Inyang, 2013). In South Africa, SMEs employ 60% of the workforce (Inyang, 2013), and SMEs account for 85% of manufacturing employment in Ghana (Asare, 2014). Despite the contributions of SMEs to the Ghanaian economy, 60% of SMEs do not survive beyond 5 years (Amoako, 2013). Several scholars (Abrokwah, Sarbah, & Osei, 2014; Kiveu & Ofafa, 2012) have investigated reasons for the mass

failure of SMEs in Ghana. The challenges of SMEs in Ghana include limited access to market and credit (Asare, 2014), limited e-commerce adoption (Awiagah, Kang, & Lim, 2015), lack of technology (Kiveu & Ofafa, 2012) and faulty leadership (Mutoko, 2014).

The importance of leadership to the success of SMEs should not be underestimated (Fening, 2012). Leadership contributes to the success or failure of SMEs, especially in the emerging markets (Mwangi et al., 2014). Small companies tend to operate with an intimate structure reminiscent of transformational leadership style (Lam & O'Higgins, 2012). Transformational leadership skills such as (a) idealized influence or attributed charisma; (b) idealized influence or behavioral charisma; (c) inspirational motivation; (d) intellectual stimulation; and (e) individualized consideration engineer survival of SMEs through inspired employee performance (Wong et al., 2015).

### **Challenges of SMEs**

A globalized competitive marketplace requires leaders who thrive on the challenge of competition and innovation (Bilal & Al Mqbali, 2015). Leaders of SMEs must orchestrate transformational change to strategically position their businesses in a globally competitive market (Bilal & Al Mqbali, 2015). Business sustainability and competitiveness depends on internal variables of organizations (Rodríguez-Gutiérrez, Moreno, & Tejada, 2015), and leaders inability to manage these internal variables results in a myriad of challenges (Ocloo et al., 2014; Sloan, 2013).

Some of these challenges include a lack of appropriate employee attitudes (Mesu, Riemsdijk, & Sanders, 2013), lack of quality management (Owusu-Frimpong & Nwankwo, 2012), problems in the distribution of loans and repayments (Anane,

Cobbinah, & Manu, 2013), and lack of knowledge (Mutoko, 2014). The private sector faces several challenges that explain the low survival rate of SMEs (Mutoko, 2014). The challenges of the private sector include unachievable plans for growth, poor management, and bad record-keeping (Mutoko, 2014).

In Ghana, sustainability and development have been problematic for SMEs because of lack transformational leadership skills (Sloan et al., 2013; Yasin et al., 2014). Other failure factors include: low sales, reduced profit, reduction in liquidity, drop in market share, high operating costs, and high level of debts (Abas-Mastura et al., 2013). Several scholars (Abrokwah, Sarbah, & Osei, 2014; Awiagah, Kang, & Lim, 2015; Kiveu & Ofafa, 2012) have investigated reasons for the mass failure of SMEs in Ghana and suggested solutions, yet 60% of leaders of SMEs in Ghana fail to sustain their business beyond 5 years of establishment (Amoako, 2013; Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Addo, 2012).

According to Cant and Wiid (2013), the high failure rate of SMEs is global. In South Africa, 80% of SMEs do not survive beyond 5 years (Cant & Wiid 2013). In 2012, 86% of SMEs failed in Canada and 53% failed in New Zealand (Industry Canada, 2013; Mason, 2013).

Central to the challenges of SMEs is the lack of leadership skills and the strategies to enhance employee performance for growth and sustainability (Manaf & Latif, 2014; Mutoko, 2014; Yasin et al., 2014). In Ghana, SME leaders lack vision and lack knowledge regarding factors that lead to sustainability in business (Sloan et al., 2013). Leadership contributes to the success or failure of SMEs, especially in the emerging markets (Fening, 2012; Mwangi et al., 2014). SMEs fail because of lack of

transformational leadership skills (Manaf & Latif, 2014). Ghana faces a leadership challenge related to development of transformational leadership skills for sustainability of SMEs (Donkor, 2013; Yasin et al., 2014).

Sustainability and development of SMEs in Ghana is a problem because of lack of vision (Sloan et al., 2013), which is a skill of transformational leaders (Bass & Avolio, 1997). According to Bass and Avolio (1997), transformational leadership skills are fundamental to accomplishing organizational goals. Krishnan (2012) concurred with Bass and several other scholars (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, & Derks, 2015; Long, Yusof, Kowang, & Heng, 2014; Salem & Kattara, 2015; Qu, Janssen, & Shi, 2015) that transformational leadership accentuates employee performance in all industries.

### **The Education Industry**

The education industry is the fastest growing export sector worldwide with only 10 countries dominating the market (Schatz, 2015). In Australia, the education industry is among the fastest growing export sectors (Altbach, 2015). Between 2008 and 2009, international students contributed \$17.2 billion in export income to Australian economy (Altbach, 2015). In the United States, the presence of international students yields \$3.5 billion per year, and in Russia export earnings from international students could compete with earnings from the oil sector (Newton, 2015). The education industry is an export market (Altbach, 2015), especially at the small and medium scale level (Mphale, 2014), and SMEs led by effective leaders will persist amid competition through efficient employee performance (Kaufman, 2015).



Literature is increasing on the correlation between transformational leadership and efficient organizations (Abban et al., 2013; Engelen et al., 2015; Harris, 2012; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013). Transformational leaders engineer and inspire employee performance (Wong et al., 2015). School profitability is a measure of employee commitment and performance, and evidence suggests a strong connection between employee productivity and transformational leadership strategies of school leaders (Cherian & Jacob, 2013). Despite the central role of school leaders in ensuring employee effectiveness (Sebastian & Allens, 2012), the focus of Ghana's several educational reforms, with the intent of developing a competitive education system, has not been on developing the leadership skills of school leaders for global competition (Donkor, 2013).

**Globalized market.** Economists around the world have acknowledged the indispensable role proprietors of SMEs play in employment generation, economic growth, and eradication of poverty (Ocloo et al., 2014). Globalization of economies has led to the establishment of businesses across national boundaries, national cultures, and in all fields of industrial endeavors (Ocloo et al., 2014). For that reason, locally and internationally, proprietors of businesses are faced with the pressures of global competition (Fening, 2012; Ocloo et al., 2014), and requires the ambidextrous behavior of transformational leaders to survival the global competition beyond 5 years (Zacher & Rosing, 2015).

A globalized competitive marketplace, similar to the education industry, requires ambidextrous leadership (Zacher & Rosing, 2015) that thrives on the challenges of global competition and innovation (Fening, 2012; Ocloo et al., 2014; Yasin et al., 2014). School

leaders must orchestrate transformational changes to strategically position their school business for competition in a global marketplace (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Schools need effective leaders to survive the global competition (Ocloo et al., 2014), and visionary leaders can sustain small and medium scale basic private schools in a globalized competitive market (Sloan, 2013).

### **Leadership**

Transformational leadership style affects organizational performance (Carter, Armenakis, Feild, & Mossholder, 2013). Organizational leadership is an important determinant of organizational performance and innovation (Noruzy, Dalfard, Azhdari, Nazari-Shirkouhi, & Rezazadeh, 2013). Leadership stimulates innovation (To, Herman, & Ashkanasy, 2015). Leaders influence, motivate, inspire, and control the efforts of their followers toward achieving organizational creativity (Hu et al., 2013). In other words, leaders facilitate change by affecting the behavior of others (Hu et al., 2013). Dynamic leaders are competent individuals who seek total quality in their operations by making similar demands on their followers and in the end establish a culture of total quality management within their organizations (Kang, 2012). Incorporating quality management strategies as a working strategy and stimulating followers to contribute to the decision-making process in organizations enhance organizational performance (Maringe, 2012).

Effective leadership behavior and successful organizations are synonymous because exemplary leaders create a conducive work climate and culture that attracts self-reliant employees who take progressive steps to work efficiently (Fu & Deshpande, 2014). Zhang et al. (2015) confirmed the argument of Fu and Deshpande (2014) by

postulating that encouraging industrial climate and productive operational culture attract purposeful employees and enhance the employee retention rate (Zhang et al., 2015).

Retaining qualified and motivated employees is required for continuous enhancement and improvement on the processes that lead to sustainable organizational performance (Saiti, 2012). Experienced employees are experts on-the-job and produce services at the lowest possible cost, which enhances the profit ratios of their organization (Chowdhury, Schulz, Milner, & Van De Voort, 2014).

Scholars proposed various definitions for leadership in the literature. Bass (1999) defined leadership as a person's ability, to use little coercion, to influence, and to motivate others to perform at a higher level of commitment. The productivity of committed followers will remain low if the followers lack the requisite knowledge to accomplish the set goals. Yukl (2012) introduced the word *teaching* in the leadership definition. Yukl recognized that leadership is a process of influencing and teaching others to understand why and how certain activities and goals need to be accomplished. The level of commitment and the quality of interaction between a leader and a follower are stronger when both understand that they work toward a common goal. Leadership is a process, which an individual influences the others to achieve a common objective (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Several definitions of leadership reflect both the level of disagreement among scholars on the topic and the diversity of the subject itself.

Research about leadership is increasing, Bass (1999) listed more than 3000 studies on leadership and the list is still growing. A number of researchers (Zopiatis & Constanti, 2012) have confirmed the correlation between personality traits and effective

leadership. Another approach to leadership that gained the attention of researchers (Steers, Sanchez-Runde, & Nardon, 2012; Warwas, 2015) is the contingency theory. Practitioners and scholars alike (Smith, Nagy, Karwan, & Ramirez, 2012; Warwas, 2015) emphasized contingency approach is a heterogeneous leadership behavior influenced by the operating environments of an organization. As the operational environment of the business changes, leaders select leadership style perceived as most effective in dealing with current situations (Xu, Zhong, & Wang, 2013). Another approach to leadership is leadership substitutes (Andrews, Kacmar, & Kacmar, 2015; Nübold, Muck, & Maier, 2013). Substitute for leadership emphasizes the importance of situational influences relative to leadership practices in controlling employee performance in the workplace (Xie & Zhang, 2015; Xu et al., 2013).

The traditional leadership theory is the leader-member exchange (LMX) (Le Blanc & González-Romá, 2012). Several scholars (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, & van den Heuvel, 2015; Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2015; Park, Sturman, Vanderpool, & Chan, 2015) postulated that the LMX is an effective leadership style regarding organizational performance and success. Chiaburu, Smith, Wang, and Zimmerman (2015) and Richards and Hackett (2012) posited that the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is effective in organizational environments where keeping differentiated relationship with employees is a strategy for achieving shared goals.

### **Leadership and SMEs**

Several scholars (Breevaart et al., 2015; Herlina et al., 2015; Kapp, 2012) have argued that leadership is essential for employee effectiveness at the workplace.

According to Breevaart et al. (2015), effective leadership behavior boosts employees' performance. Breevaart's et al. (2015) findings are reminiscent of Herlina, Basri, Kahar, and Ihsan's (2015) contention that leadership skills are necessary organizational tools for sustainability. According to these scholars (Breevaart et al., 2015; Herlina et al., 2015), properly applied leadership behavior strengthens productive relationships with workplace employees, improves employees' sense of belonging; and subsequently, increases the performance of service providers such as schools. These findings suggest the ingredient for success in the emerging school industry is a leadership behavior that motivates school employees to maximize performance for sustainability. According to Kapp (2012), effective school leaders offer mentorship that inspires employees' sense of safety climate and knowledge of corporate goals, which augment individual performance in particular and corporate productivity in general. Another study by Kara, Uysal, Sirgy, and Lee (2013) found that SMEs have to engage the appropriate leadership skills to improve the efficiency of their employees.

Findings from these studies (Kapp, 2012; Kara et al., 2013) indicated that transformational leadership behaviors of proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools have the potential of driving growth and sustainability in their businesses through an upsurge in staff performance. On the other hand, if proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools demonstrate unsustainable leadership behavior efficiency in their organizations will decline, which will lead to a plunge in profitability (Gupta & Singh, 2014; Wang, Tsai, & Tsai, 2014).

### **Antecedents to Employee Performance**

Antecedents to employee performance and SMEs sustainability include (a) employees' self-efficacy and performance of employees (Cherian & Jacob, 2013), (b) political skills and employee performance (Chaudhry, Ashraf, & Jaffri, 2012), (c) human resources management and employee performance (Jiang et al., 2012), (d) family-supportive supervisor and employee performance (Wang, Walumbwa, Wang, & Aryee, 2013), (e) psychological empowerment and enhance employee performance (Yao, Chen, & Cai, 2013), (f) human capital investments and employee performance (Bapna, Langer, Mehra, Gopal, & Gupta, 2013), (h) management communication and employee performance (Neves & Eisenberger, 2012).

### **Transformational Leadership**

**Theory.** Transformational leadership is the next traditional approach to leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1997). Bass and Avolio (1998) identified a set of five dimensions of a transformational leader (a) idealized influence or attributed charisma, (b) idealized influence or behavioral charisma, (c) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration. Idealized influence constitutes the emotional traits of a leader's behavior that motivates a follower to feel better about their work, and they perform beyond simple transactional expectations (Yaghoubipoor et al., 2013).

Inspirational motivation is a transformational leadership characteristic that encourages and moves both teachers and learners to achieve a leader's set goals (Bass, 1985). From 1985 to date, empirical researchers have verified these theoretical tenets. Intellectual

stimulation may enable the follower to challenge the status quo and influence the intellect of both teachers and learners to innovate (Engelen et al., 2015; Guay, 2013).

Individualized consideration stands for coaching and counseling roles of school leaders (Bacha & Walker, 2013). Findings from Bacha and Walker's (2013) research suggested that schools treat their employees like individuals, give them individual attention, and specific mentorship based on the employee's unique situations.

Other scholars such as Bass and Avolio (1997) and Hardy et al. (2010) expanded Burns' research (1978). Hardy et al. (2010) proposed a transformational leadership model that includes eight transformational behaviors to include (a) individual consideration, (b) intellectual stimulation, (c) inspirational motivation, (d) fostering acceptance of group goals, (e) high performance expectations, (f) appropriate role modeling, (g) transactional behavior, and (h) contingent reward. The framework of transformational leadership is an effective leadership model that increases learning in educational institutions (Abbasi & Zamani-Miandashti, 2013; Oude Groote Beverborg, Slegers, Endedijk, & van Veen, 2015). Transformational leadership behavior may be necessary for implementing a new school strategic plan (Aarons, Farahnak, Ehrhart, & Sklar, 2014) as well as achieving organizational goals (LePine et al., 2015; Mittal & Dhar, 2015). López-Domínguez, Enacheb, Sallana, and Simoa (2013) suggested that transformational leadership is at its best when orchestrating transformational changes in organizations, and the education industry is no exception. A review of literature on transformational leadership reveals that leadership behavior enhances business performance, and employees are the core resources at the center of a leader's operations (Hannah, Schaubroeck, & Peng, 2015).

The exemplary performance of a transformational leader reflects the exceptional output of their employees (Hannah et al., 2015). Transformational leaders achieve their goals by exhibiting behaviors that heighten performance of employees toward set goals (Hannah et al., 2015).

The theory of transformational leadership and the teachers' and learners' innovation and implementation behavior are directly linked (Aarons et al., 2014). The transformational leadership process stimulates, motivates, inspires, and provokes both teachers and learners to achieve goals, and in the process, these followers learn to build their leadership capacity to sustain the competitive advantage of their schools (Callow, 2011). Transformational leadership behavior facilitates the relationship between the leader's emotional intelligence and fosters innovative ideas, which allow educational institutions adapt to their changing external environment to grow competitively and productively (Allameh, Pool, Kazemi, & Mostafavi, 2015).

**Emotional intelligence.** Transformational leadership extends the traditional behavioral approach to include the emotional aspects of leaders (Lam & O'Higgins, 2012). Lam and O'Higgins confirmed the plausible relationship between transformational leadership and the leaders' emotional intelligence. Lam and O'Higgins examined the mediating role of transformational leadership style on the relationships between leaders' emotional intelligence and staff outcomes such as performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job stress. A leader's transformational leadership style facilitated the relationship between the leader's emotional intelligence and employee job satisfaction and commitment (Lam & O'Higgins, 2012). Anari (2012) confirmed the



findings of Lam and O'Higgins (2012) by stating that the effectiveness of transformational leadership depends on followers' emotional intelligence. Lawlor, Batchelor, and Abston (2015) investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence across cultures and confirmed the strong relationship between transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. Transformational leadership behavior increases leaders' emotional intelligence capacity to recognize their personal feelings and that of their followers (Lawlor et al., 2015). The emotional intelligence of the basic school leader empowers them to manage the emotional health and performance of their employees (Lawlor et al., 2015).

**Dimensions of transformational leadership.** Transformational leaders use dimensions of transformational leadership to enhance the quality of employees' work performance (Lee, Cheng, Yeung, & Lai, 2011). Ever since Avolio and Bass (1997) used the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) to measure four components of transformational leadership, which are: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individual consideration. A pool of research has emerged to explain the correlation between these individual leadership behaviors and employees' well-being. Lee et al. (2011) uncovered the effect of the individual dimensions of transformational leadership of middle managers on team performance and concluded that only two of the dimensions of transformational leadership were most effective on employees' service quality. Findings from scholars on dimensions of transformational leadership suggest that articulating the vision, intellectual stimulation, and fostering commitment are the most fundamental values of

transformational leadership that influence employees' service quality (Avolio & Bass, 1997; Lee et al., 2011). The implication is that basic school leaders who encourage followers to internalize their values and function as constructive role models personify the nature of transformational leadership (Mahon, Taylor, & Boyatzis, 2014) as well as influence the quality of employees' service delivery.

Transformational leadership dimensions, such as inspirational motivation and idealized influence, have a positive correlation with leadership effectiveness in affecting employees' work attitude (Lo et al., 2010). According to Schaufeli (2015), charismatic leaders use their personal characteristics, behaviors, and relationships to develop and motivate followers to realize extraordinary performance and passion to achieve goals of the organization. Transformational leadership is the most effective leadership style for improving performance of followers, groups, and organizations as well as the attitudes and behaviors of followers (Carter et al., 2013). Implications from the literature encourage SME leaders to adopt transformational leadership behaviors for employee productivity.

Researchers of transformational leadership strategy suggest that effective leadership behaviors inspire trust, group vision, devotion, selflessness, and energize followers to perform beyond the status quo (Carter et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2011). The outcome of studies on dimensions of transformational leadership indicates the effectiveness of the components is contingent on the situation and environment (Carter et al., 2013; Schaufeli, 2015). Small and medium scale private basic school leaders should know the dimensions of the transformational leadership style to emphasize at every stage

of their professional lives to motivate their employees to be resourceful and productive (Carter et al., 2013).

American scholars dominate studies on transformational leadership and the effect of transformational leadership on followers and groups in American context (Yukl, 2012). Asian scholars took steps to break the dominance of Western construct in the transformational leadership literature. The studies of the Asian scholars on transformational leadership are in two broad categories. The first group of studies from the Asian context focused on relationships between transformational leadership and outcome variables (e.g., employee satisfaction, organizational learning, job performance) without considering cultural differences between the West and East (Kim & Kim, 2015; Li, Zhao, & Begley). Most of the earlier leadership theories and empirical analyses were American, which thrived on self-limiting assumptions such as individualism, hedonism, centrality of work, and democratic value orientation (Kim & Kim, 2015; Long, Thean, & Kowang, 2013; Seyal & Rahman, 2014).

The second group of Asian scholars worked on the flaws of earlier researchers and explored the implications of cultural differences on the relationship between the leader and follower (Castaño et al., 2015; Kim & Kim, 2015). These groups of authors examined the cultural effects of transformational leadership by focusing on the cultural values of societies that define what is right and wrong and specific large-scale preferences. Results from these studies, in Asia, showed the transformational leadership model effectively enhances organizational performance (Castaño et al., 2015; Kim & Kim, 2015; Yang & Yang, 2016) regarding growth in return on equity, customer level,

return on assets, and employee performance (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013) in Asia. Ishikawa (2012) and Yang and Yang (2016) argued that cultural values in collectivist societies in Asia moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and work-related outcomes. The authors (Ishikawa, 2012; Yang & Yang, 2016) suggested variations in transformational leadership behavior to account for different organizational and ecological challenges in various cultural settings. Proprietors of successful Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools may have some peculiar transformational leadership skills different from those identified by researchers in America and Asia.

**Employee performance.** Since 2010, the upsurge in global competitiveness necessitates that leaders of firms deliberately adopt effective leadership strategies to enhance employee on-the-job learning and performance (Li-An, 2011). A literature review revealed that not all leadership styles promote employee learning and performance. Smothers, Doleh, Celuch, Peluchette, and Valadares (2016) investigated the effectiveness of transformational and passive-avoidant leadership on learning climate in a Norwegian postal service. Learning climate dimensions used in the analysis were (a) time, (b) autonomy, (c) team style, (d) opportunities to develop, and (e) guidelines. The authors concluded that a strong correlation existed between transformational leadership and the organizational learning climate. Smothers's et al. (2016) contention is in tandem with the point of view of other scholars. Noruzy et al. (2013) argued that transformational leadership heightens organizational learning. These scholars (Noruzy et al., 2013) suggested that if leaders of small and medium scale private basic schools assume a

transformational leadership style, they will enhance the intellectual capacity within their schools. Successively, enriched organizational knowledge will facilitate improvement in employee learning and performance for organizational sustainability (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

By contrast, according to Smothers et al. (2016), significant negative association exists between laissez-faire leadership style and time, team style, and guidelines. Laissez-faire leadership behavior impedes organizational and team learning acculturation (Raes et al., 2013). In summary, the outcome of the research revealed a positive relationship between transformational leadership, creativity, and learning within work settings (Raes et al., 2013).

A symbiotic relationship exists between tactical learning and transformational leadership strategies; evidence suggests that this relationship heightens employee performance (Radzi, Hui, Jenatabadi, Kasim, & Radu, 2013). Radzi et al. (2013) explored the relationship between organizational learning and leadership style. Radzi et al. concluded that organizational learning and leadership collaborate to enhance employee performance within the organizations (Dinkin & Frederick, 2013). Radzi et al. (2013) identified various levels of employee performance in organizations, and the higher the transformational leadership of the leader, the higher the performance of the staff. Several scholars concurred with Radzi et al. (2013). Xanthopoulou and Papagiannidis (2012) and Noruzy et al. (2013) suggested that transformational leadership influences workplace learning across organizations. Loon, Lim, Lee, and Tam (2012) and Theodore (2013) advanced the same school of thought. The outcomes of these studies support the

argument that transformational leadership behaviors ignite effective learning among employees at work. Scholarly works on transformational leadership studies suggest that when employees learn effectively on-the-job, they become efficient and perform productively (Loon et al., 2012).

Transformational leadership skills are effective in motivating learning among employees to an extent that school leaders who exhibit dimensions of this style will influence the needed work efficiency by employees (Beverborg, Slegers, & Van Veen, 2015). Beverborg et al. (2015) posited that only one dimension of transformational leadership boosts continual learning in organizations. The outcome of Beverborg's et al. (2015) work suggested that inspirational leadership of small and medium scale private basic school leaders could promote organizational learning and successively, employee performance. In addition, Mark et al. (2012) claimed that only two dimensions of transformational leadership behavior: (a) individualized consideration and (b) idealized influence enhance job-related learning. The outcome of scholarly work suggests that for leaders to promote learning among employees, they should recognize workers' needs and provide them with personal guidance and job-specific orientation. Also, the application of any dimension or a combination of components of transformational leadership will enhance learning and employee performance.

**Knowledge acquisition.** Job-related learning and workplace creativity as elaborated by Loon et al. (2012) are antecedents to workplace knowledge acquisition, which is an important factor for employee performance. Chang, Bai, and Li (2015) suggested that leaders who exhibit transformational leadership behavior accelerate

knowledge acquisition, which is a necessary tool for employee performance in organizations. Mittal and Dhar (2015) concluded that knowledge creation in organizations thrives on a leadership style that inspires trust, care, empathy, focused review, organizational citizenship, unity, and forbearance. In effect, transformational leadership behavior connotes the aforementioned leadership characteristics (Mittal and Dhar (2015).

Transformational leaders engage their followers and direct their followers' effort toward acquiring new knowledge to enhance both individual and organizational performance. Song, Kolb, Lee, and Kim (2012) argued that a strong positive relationship exists between transformational leadership and organizational knowledge acquisition. Peet (2012) tested the efficacy of a method for retrieving tacit knowledge for validation and sharing among employees and concluded that tacit knowledge of retiring leaders was retrievable to enhance workplace intellectual environment that improved employee performance. Transformational leadership strategies facilitated the process of regenerating such knowledge to enhance employee performance (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Transformational school leaders can strongly influence their employees to acquire the needed knowledge to accelerate organizational performance and sustainability, as well as the ability to cultivate tacit knowledge for growth and effective job performance (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

**Teacher performance.** A plausible relationship exists between transformational leadership strategies and performance of teachers and organizations (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). A significant positive correlation exists between transformational school

leadership and student achievement (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Leithwood and Sun (2012) argued that transformational educational leadership promotes school success through dedicated employee behavior. Leithwood and Sun (2012) emphasized that researchers should concentrate attention on the relationship between leadership practices and the performance of teachers and organizations. A review of literature reveals varying outcomes (Breevaart et al., 2015; Russell, 2013; Samad, 2012; Wegge et al., 2015). Wegge et al. (2015) concluded that transformational leadership dimensions influence employee performance through cognitive-base-trust and a shared sense of optimism among employees. Concurring with Wegge et al. (2015) on the efficacy of the transformational leadership model and employee performance, Breevaart et al. (2015) contended that transformational leadership behavior promotes shared leadership among team members in organizations.

Samad (2012) argued that only the charisma of transformational leaders stimulates employee performance, although other scholars (Russell, 2013; Wegge et al., 2015) contended a strong correlation exists between all the dimensions of transformational leadership and organizational performance. Samad (2012) claimed that only the transformational leadership components of charisma and idealization are effective for influencing worker performance on-the-job learning and innovations. The results of their studies suggested transformational leaders enhance employee performance through organizational learning and innovation.

**Employee innovation.** Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2014) emphasized that transformational leadership accounts for differences in followers' innovative performance



in developing countries. The findings indicate that irrespective of the level of development of an economy, transformational leadership improves employees' innovative performance (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2014). Transformational leadership heightens teacher performance through leadership behavior that inspires followers' creative thought processes in both developed and developing economies (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2014).

Paulsen, Callan, Ayoko, and Saunders (2013) examined the effect of different leadership styles on a variety of innovative practices in businesses from advanced economies and concluded that transformational leadership style fosters more creative and innovative process than the transactional leadership style. Henker, Sonnentag, and Unger (2014) confirmed findings of Paulsen et al. (2013) and Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2014) by asserting that the level of employees' innovation is influenced by the employees' understanding regarding the leaders' support for innovation in the organization. Henker et al. (2014) suggested the existence of a direct relationship between employees' innovative performance and their perception about leader's innovative inclination.

To et al. (2015) concluded that transformational leadership skills affect employees' innovative performance. To et al. concurred with Paulsen et al. (2013) that employees' achievement on innovation is moderated by their perceptions regarding the leader's vision on innovation. Ghasabeh, Soosay, and Reaiche (2015) added that transformational leadership has a direct relationship with employees' innovative performance. According to Ghasabeh et al., employees will successfully innovate to enhance the competitive advantage of their organizations only when they are encouraged physically and cognitively. Li, Zhao, and Begley (2015) reported on the relationship

between transformational leadership and employee innovations with outcomes consistence with findings of Ghasabeh et al. (2015). Nevertheless, Li, Zhao, and Begley (2015) contended that the effectiveness of transformational leadership on employee innovation across functions needs further investigation. The outcome of the studies on innovative employee performance suggests that small and medium scale private basic school proprietors who practice transformational leadership will inspire teachers' creativity and innovation for effective organizational performance and sustainability.

**Organizational performance.** In the literature about leadership, scholars discussed the linkages between transformational leadership and organizational performance in variety of ways. Transformational leadership is a practice widely tested (Mesu, 2015; Posner, 2012), used by many effective leaders in various sectors of the world's economy, and associated with effective performance in a variety of organizations (carter et al., 2013). Research literature on transformational leadership and organizational performance indicated the effect of transformational leadership on a variety of fields such as the military (Hardy et al., 2010), healthcare (Aarons, Ehrhart, Farahnak, Sklar, & Horowitz, 2015), sports (Cronin, Arthur, Hardy, & Callow, 2015), employee learning (Noruzy et al., 2013), and education (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). In addition, several studies exist about the relationship between transformational leadership skills and organizational performance (Balyer, 2012). These studies on transformational leadership included (a) organizational job satisfaction (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013), (b) performance of virtual teams and organizations (Bogler, Caspi, & Roccas, 2013), (c) trust in the leader (Top, Akdere, & Tarcan, 2015), and (d) organizational members' unlawful

absenteeism (Frooman, Mendelson, & Murphy, 2012). The list of the indispensability of transformational leadership may continue endlessly, and the multi-faceted application of the transformational leadership behavior reflects its cross-professional potency in stimulating individual level performance for organizational sustainability (Mesu et al., 2015).

Several scholars (Mesu et al., 2015; Noruzy et al., 2013) have commented on the effectiveness of transformational leadership skills at both individual level performance and organizational performance (Mesu et al., 2015). Noruzy et al. (2013) argued that transformational leaders effectively enhance the performance of their organizations, and suggested that performance of organizations is a sum of individual employees' performances. Noruzy et al. (2013) concurred with Aryee, Walumbwa, Zhou, and Hartnell (2012). Aryee et al. (2012) argued that transformational leadership dimensions influence employees to commit themselves to the success of their organizations. The implication is that transformational leaders influence their followers to perform beyond expectation. Braun et al. (2013) described a positive relationship between transformational leadership and individual follower's performance. Kissi, Dainty, and Tuuli (2013) argued that transformational leadership behavior of portfolio managers enhances organizational performance on projects. Through practice, transformational leaders can transfer their transformational leadership skills to members of their organization (Nilsson & Furåker, 2012). Based on these findings in other research studies, leaders of small and medium scale private basic schools in Ghana should learn transformational leadership skills to improve the effectiveness of their leadership and

schools. Transformational leadership skills of basic school leaders influence school performance on projects, as contended by Kissi et al. (2013). The conclusions reached by Herman & Chiu (2014) suggested that transformational leadership behaviors and skills of small and medium scale private basic school leaders will promote the needed work attitudes for effective organizational performance.

**Feed-forward learning and performance.** The relationships between learning style and leadership studies have attracted attention from researchers. Transformational leadership skills of proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools accelerate learning in their organizations (Berson, Da'as, & Waldman, 2015). Transformational leaders motivate followers to learn from leadership known as feed-forward learning (Berson et al., 2015). Transformational leaders learn from their followers called feedback learning (Berson et al., 2015). The leadership style adopted by team leaders has an operational effect on the development of learning within teams and organizations (Berson et al., 2015). Some new team members learn from the most experienced members (Smits, Bowden, Falconer, & Strasser, 2014). Through feed-forward learning, new members become familiar with the values of the organization (Smits et al., 2014). Familiarity is a predictor of behavioral change among team members (Sieweke & Zhao, 2015). Effective learning among team members is an antecedent to employee performance and organizational sustainability (Berson et al., 2015). Berson et al. contended that a positive relationship exists between transformational leadership and feed-forward learning among employees. Transformational leadership behavior influences employees' demand for feedback on job performance. Berson et al. (2015) argued that occupational self-efficacy

and learning goal orientation positively influences reflection and feedback learning. The implication is when proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools portray transformational leadership behavior, the soft infrastructure of their organizations develops through feedback and feed-forward learning for organizational sustainability.

**Reflective learning.** Transformational leaders use after-event reviews to inspire employees to reflect on their experiences to induce the needed learning for effective employee performance (Clifton, Huggins, Morgan, & Thompson, 2015; Dinkin & Frederick, 2013). Some researchers of transformational leadership found that individuals who participate in after-event reviews improve their performance more noticeably than those who do not (DeRue, Nahrgang, Hollenbeck, & Workman, 2012). After-event reviews afford transformational proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools and their employees the opportunity to learn from failures (DeRue et al., 2012). Learning from failures is important because such learning enhances strategic decisions and employee performance (Carmeli, Edmondson, & Tishler, 2012). Learning from failures ensues when staff members review failures for discussion and map out strategies for the future (Hirak, Peng, Carmeli, & Schaubroeck, 2012). The transformational leadership act of inspirational motivation plays a role in initiating the process of learning from failures (Hirak et al., 2012), which enhances on-the-job learning processes. On-the-job learning affects academic leadership (Li, Hallinger, & Ko, 2016) and employees' performance for organizational sustainability (Beverborg et al., 2015).

Hirak et al. (2012) and Matsuo (2012) found a positive correlation between leaders' reflective behavior and followers' eagerness to review and reflect on failures.

Matsuo (2012) used structural equation modeling and a sample of 228 nursing managers to examine the link between leadership characteristics and workplace learning. Matsuo (2012) found that leaders' reflective practice plays a role in facilitating workplace learning. Hirak et al. (2012) affirmed Matsuo's (2012) school of thought by arguing that leaders who create a congenial atmosphere for follower feedback encourage workplace learning. Also, employee engagement in professional learning activities and reflections are predictors of quality employee performance (Li, et al., 2016). The implication is that proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools who exhibit transformational leadership skills can help promote reflective practices among employees. The outcome of the studies implies that adopting the transformational leadership skill of questioning can promote the act of reflection and commitment to learning among SME employees for higher employee performance and organizational sustainability.

**Employee commitment.** Scholars have confirmed the plausible correlation between transformational leadership and staff commitment (Anari, 2012; Dunn, Dastoor, & Sims, 2012; Peachey, Burton, & Wells, 2014; Top et al., 2015). Employees' commitment to work continues to gain attention for its immense prospective paybacks in institutions (Top et al., 2015). Organizational commitment can be subdivided into affective, normative, and continuance (Anari, 2012). Mesu et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee commitment in service industries. Specifically, inspirational leadership derives followers' affective commitment to organizational goals. Mesu et al. (2015) examined the influence of transformational leadership style on employees' commitment to service industries. Mesu et al. (2015)

posited that there is a correlation between transformational leadership style and followers' personal commitment to organizational goals in service industries. The implication of the outcome of the study suggests that characteristics of successful change agents in organizations include the dimensions of transformational leadership style: (a) idealized influence or behavioral charisma; (b) inspirational motivation; (c) intellectual stimulation; and (d) individualized consideration. More so, the findings suggest that school leaders will be effective agents of school reforms when they adopt transformational leadership, particularly when school leaders articulate a clear vision, encourage teamwork, and involve followers in decision-making.

The level of commitment of employees to school reforms is dependent on the leadership style of the proprietor, as suggested by Peachey et al. (2014). Peachey et al. argued that commitment to work is an important element that promotes employee performance. In a similar study, Wang, Ma, and Zhang (2014) concurred with Peachey et al. (2014) by arguing that transformational leadership influences employee job commitment. The argument that leadership is the fuel of organizational commitment is not in contention (Wang et al., 2014), yet researchers continue investigating the leadership style that most affects employees' organizational commitment for sustainability (Mesu et al., 2015).

**Organizational commitment.** Some scholars investigated the effect of both transactional and transformational leadership on organizational commitment with varying outcome. Rehman, Shareef, Mahmood, and Ishaque (2012) argued that both transactional and transformational leadership enhance organizational commitment. According to

Rehman et al. (2012), transformational leadership has a stronger relationship with organizational commitment than transactional leadership. Tyssen, Wald, and Heidenreich (2013) concluded that both transactional and transformational leadership have significant influence on employee commitment to job performance. Tyssen et al. (2013) concurred with Rehman et al. (2012) that transformational leadership is more effective in motivating employees to commit themselves to work performance. Dirk and Stam (2015) conducted research on how transactional and transformational leadership affect staff performance. Dirk and Stam (2015) agreed with the results of Rehman's et al. (2012) and Tyssen's et al. (2013) studies on the effect of transactional and transformational leadership on staff performance. Dirk and Stam (2015) argued that the effectiveness of transformational leadership on organizational commitment to work is higher and better than the transactional behavior of transactional leaders.

Dirk and Stam (2015) and Dhammika, Ahmad, and Sam (2013) agreed with Ahmadi, Ahmadi, and Zohrabi (2012), and Tyssen et al. (2013) by contending that transformational and transactional leadership enhance employee performance. A point of contrast exist, Ahmadi et al. (2012) and Dhammika et al. (2013) argued that transactional leadership had a higher impact on employees' work commitment than transformational leadership. According to Tyssen et al. (2013), the controversy does not put the efficacy of the transformational leadership in question, but rather indicates the need for further studies. Findings by these researchers indicate that proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools should acquire and deepen their transformational leadership skills to



enhance employee performance and employee commitment to work to enhance school performance for sustainability beyond 5 years.

**School performance.** In an era of global competition in the educational industry, scholars argued that to maintain competitiveness and effectiveness, school leaders must commit themselves to appropriate leadership behavior (Seijts, Gandz, Crossan, & Reno, 2015). The focus of most empirical research on the importance of leadership in a rapidly changing industry has been on transformational leadership in large-scale manufacturing industries (Park & Jeong, 2013; Thomson, Hall, & Jones, 2013; Wilkinson & Eacott, 2013).

Transformational leadership is a critical ingredient in school leadership similar to leadership styles in other efficient and productive organizations (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Transformational school leaders provide individual support, which accentuates employee performance and teacher productivity (Bacha & Walker, 2013). Scholarly arguments suggest that transformational leadership is a catalyst for any transformational change management in organizations and has attracted attention (Aarons et al., 2015). Various authors examined several dimensions of the transformational leadership theory with plausible outcomes (Böhm, Dwertmann, Bruch, & Shamir, 2015; Hopton, Barling, & Turner, 2013; Moriano, Molero, Topa, & Mangin, 2014). Hu et al. (2013) found that transformational leadership accounts for the creative effort of employees. Balyer (2012) found a positive association between transformational leadership style and overall school improvement. These studies underscore the importance of transformational leadership behavior in improving business profitability through enhanced employee performance.

**Culture.** Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, and McKee (2014) argued that the question of how to develop effective leadership behavior was still uncertain in the context of developing countries including Ghana. Information on the effective leadership behavior of proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools in Ghana, Africa, that inspire sustainability of these schools is limited (Darko, 2013; Sloan et al., 2013). The focus of available studies is predominantly on primary and secondary schools in the developed economies (Schechter, 2013; Tatlah & Iqbal, 2012). Information about the effectiveness of transformational leadership in other areas and geographic locations are scant (Bealer & Bhanugopan, 2014). Studies about leadership in developing Africa countries are scant (Mwangi et al., 2014), which includes Ghana (Asare 2014; Yasin et al., 2014). In Ghana, most of the samples of studies on SMEs (e.g., Anane, Cobbinah, & Manu, 2013; Owusu-Frimpong & Nwankwo, 2012) are from manufacturing industries.

A review of scholarly work reveals the importance of transformational leadership traits to effective employee performance (Bealer & Bhanugopan, 2014), however, works of Western academics with samples from the Western individualistic culture dominate the transformational leadership literature to date (Yukl, 2012). An important question is whether the plausible Western theory of transformational leadership is seamlessly applicable in all cultures (Takahashi et al., 2012).

Although Bass (1999) contended that some leadership styles are effective across cultural limits, other researchers have contested the scope of globalized Western-oriented leadership theories (Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012; Littrell, 2013; Littrell, Alon, & Chan, 2012; Littrell & Barba, 2013). According to the

aforementioned scholars, Western theories of leadership are not seamlessly appropriate in other cultures (Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012; Littrell, 2013; Littrell, Alon, & Chan, 2012; Littrell & Barba, 2013). In particular, Takahashi et al. (2012) and Randeree and Chaudhry (2012) questioned if Western theories of leadership are applicable to the same extent in communal Asian countries such as Japan, China, Indonesia, and Thailand. In a meta-analytic review, Takahashi et al. (2012) postulated that Japanese leadership practices are not the same as the Western leadership practices. Takahashi et al. claimed that Japanese leadership practices trace their genesis to unique Japanese culture and business practices. Takahashi's et al. (2012) argument underlines the contextualization argument of Li, Lin, and Wang (2014). Li et al. (2014) contended that leadership should be examined through the cultural lens. Other scholars tend to disregard the contextualization of leadership (Caro, 2015). Because of this discrepancy, some scholars advocate culturally specific studies on leadership behavior (Dickson, Castano, Magomaeva, & Den Hartog, 2012), while other scholars diminished the merits of this argument (Sheikh, Newman, & Al Azzeh, 2013). The disagreement among scholars (Li et al., 2014; Sheikh et al., 2013) on the contextualization of leadership calls for additional research. Researchers could study the cultural dimensions of leadership with an emphasis on leadership in the context of Ghanaian culture. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. The findings may add to the limited literature on

transformational leadership developed in the collectivist cultural environment of a developing country like Ghana, Africa.

### **Transition and Summary**

Section 1 was an overview of the: (a) research, (b) justification, (c) purpose, and (d) the problem statement with the identification of the specific business problem in the context of a general problem. In addition, Section 1 included discussion of the study (a) assumptions, (b) limitations, (c) delimitations, and (d) an explanation of how the outcome of the study contributed to business practice as well as the implications of study findings for social change. The last two subsections in Section 1 were the theoretical framework for this study and the review of academic and professional literature. The literature review included information on three topics: (a) transformational leadership, (b) employee performance, and (c) the relationship between transformational leadership style and employee performance.

Section 2 of the study includes (a) the purpose statement, (b) the role of the researcher, (c) participants, (d) research method and design, (e) population and sampling techniques, (f) data collection, (g) data analysis techniques, (h) reliability and validity, (i) dependability, (j) credibility, (k) transferability, and (l) confirmability. Section 3 includes (a) an overview of the study, (b) presentation of findings, (c) application to professional practice, (d) implication for social change, (e) recommendation for actions, (f) recommendations for further study, (g) reflections, and (h) summary and study conclusion.

## **Section 2: The Project**

This section includes the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, and information regarding the participants of the study. Also included are the research method and design, the population and sampling techniques, and data collection and analysis techniques. Finally, the reliability and the validity of the study are discussed.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case proposed study was to explore the transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. The specific population under inquiry was proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana who have been in business beyond 5 years and are rated by the board of the Private Basic Schools Performance Magazine (PBSM) of Ghana as exemplary leaders five consecutive times.

Lam and O'Higgins (2012) argued that exemplary business leaders use transformational leadership principles in their businesses operations. Transformational leadership affects employee outcomes and survival of SMEs (Engelen et al., 2015; Manaf & Latif, 2014). The findings from this proposed study may affect positive social change by informing SME leaders in education regarding the effective design of transformational leadership development programs needed to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the researcher is a primary instrument for data collection (Bahn & Weatherill, 2013), where the goal is to seek participants' consent to gather reliable data. In this study, I served as a primary instrument for data collection.

Qualitative researchers have a duty to ensure credibility and transparency in the data collection process (Wahyuni, 2012). For that reason, I followed the prescriptions set out by Wahyuni (2012) and did not conceal my own background as related to the data collection.

Since 1990, I have been an entrepreneur in the education industry of Ghana. My relationship with the industry offered contact with role models and accomplished educators. A researcher's background in the field under study may inspire participants to openly disclose more detailed information regarding their lived experiences (Englander, 2012). Researchers should avoid the research threat that Moustakas (1994) identified, in which interviewers become so embroiled with the participants that researchers have difficulties concealing their own experiences from those of the participants. I bracketed my experiences from that of the interviewees by allowing the participants to speak about their experiences with the phenomenon without interrupting them.

One method to eliminate researcher bias is the practice of epoché (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché is a technique used by researchers to describe their experiences about the phenomenon under investigation before data collection to avoid bias (Moustakas, 1994). I engaged in epoché by documenting and suspending all my assumptions regarding the phenomenon under exploration to study the phenomenon from a fresh point of view.

As a researcher, I was responsible for the ethical treatment of all research participants. I combined my knowledge in Human Subjects Research (see Appendix A) and the ethical guidelines suggested in the Belmont Report (1979). The authors of the Belmont Report require researchers to practice three main principles: (a) respect for persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Belmont Report, 1979). Respect for participants includes respecting their ability to make independent decisions. I respected the opinions of each participant and did not share my personal opinions with the participants. Beneficence demands that researchers follow the approved research protocols throughout the process of the study. Among others, I asked the participants the same questions and conducted the interviews at private, secured locations convenient to each participant. Justice requires fair treatment of participants. I respected the independence of participants and sought to protect them from any dangers and risks related to the research process. I assigned an alphanumeric code to participants to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality of all information they provided. Searle and Hanrahan (2011) used a similar method to identify participants. I stored all data in a locked file cabinet that only I can access.

My role as the researcher included identification of possible research biases and mitigating them as postulated by Merriam and Tisdell (2015). Tufford and Newman (2012) suggested that journaling is a good tool for mitigating interviewer bias, and I used a journal to record personal reflections and compared my reflections with the data to mitigate bias in my research process. I used semi-structured interviews guided by open-

ended questions with small and medium scale private basic school proprietors selected to participate in this study to gather data on the lived experiences of participants.

In addition, for an in-depth exploration interview, I asked each participant follow-up questions as needed for clarification of their responses. Barker, Cox, and Sveinsdottir (2012) noted that the focus of a multiple case study is to obtain in-depth information regarding participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) recommended the use of interview protocol in multiple case studies. The interview protocol consisted of the following six steps: (a) an opening statement, (b) semi-structured interview questioning, (c) verification themes, (d) notation and clarification of any nonverbal communication, (e) probing questions when necessary, and (f) a recording of reflexive notes (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). Using an interview protocol ensures an identical scripted interview process and questions to enhance reliability as suggested by Jacob and Furgerson (2012).

### **Participants**

Rowley (2012) said that selecting 10 participants does not guarantee sufficient data needed for a case study. Yin (2014) hypothesized that a researcher can compare two or three cases in a phenomenon to study if there are common experiences among the cases. I interviewed participants and analyzed company documents pertaining to transformational leadership behavior that enhances employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years until I reached data saturation as suggested by Prendergast and Maggie (2013) and Walker (2012).



I interviewed proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools from the greater Accra region of Ghana that have been in business longer than 5 years and have been rated by the board of the PBSPM of Ghana as exemplary leaders five consecutive times. The publishers of the private schools annual performance magazine provide demographic information on the successful exemplary business leaders, which includes telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.

I read the magazine and purposefully selected individuals who received ratings as exemplary leaders from the greater Accra region of Ghana for 5 consecutive years. Each participant: (a) was at least age 18, (b) had served as the proprietor of a small or medium scale private basic school in the Accra region of Ghana, (c) had a minimum of 5 years of success as a private basic school proprietor, and (d) had received five awards as an exemplary leader by the board of the PBSPM of Ghana for 5 consecutive years.

Qualitative researchers choose a purposeful sampling method to select expert participants (Roy, Zvonkovic, Goldberg, Sharp, & LaRossa, 2015). Researchers use purposeful sampling to select participants who will be most likely to contribute information needed to answer a research question (Hays & Wood, 2013). A purposeful sampling technique leads to the selection of participants who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Roy et al., 2015). Participants must have succeeded in enhancing their employees' performance as evidenced by sustainment of their businesses for 5 years or more. After I received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB approval number is 04-27-16-0314977) to recruit participants for the study, I contacted participants by telephone for a brief introduction and expression of

courtesies. I mailed three letters to each participant who initially agreed to participate. The letters included: (a) interview questions that included an overview of the study, (b) an informed consent form, and (c) a participant recruitment letter (see Appendix B). The accomplished small and medium scale private basic school leaders reviewed the overview of the study and the consent forms through an e-mail conversation. In a similar study, Mwangi et al. (2014) contacted potential participants by telephone to provide an overview regarding their study of the transformational leadership behavior of business leaders. Participants received a formal letter detailing the purpose of the research and the approved consent form.

### **Research Method and Design**

According to Yin (2014) and Berger (2015), qualitative researchers seek to gain insight into participants' experiences regarding a phenomenon of interest. In contrast, quantitative researchers interpret and explain relationships between variables, and generalize their findings (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). I sought to explore the lived experiences of participants through this research study.

### **Method**

The research method for this proposed study is qualitative, and my intent was to explore the lived transformational leadership experiences of proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools who have sustained their businesses beyond 5 years and who have been recognized as effective leaders by the board of the PBSPM five consecutive times. According to Whiteley (2012), studies with the goal to explore the lived experiences of participants in a naturalistic setting thrive on the qualitative research

method. I sought an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon under investigation.

Qualitative research is the most humanistic and person-centered approach to understanding the thoughts of a person on a phenomenon under investigation (Berger, 2015). A qualitative researcher investigates what the participant considers the lived reality of a phenomenon (Cibangu, 2013). Scholars suggested that a qualitative research method is most suitable for exploring lived experiences (Berger, 2015; Whiteley, 2012), which is the intent of this study. A quantitative research method did not meet the needs for this proposed study as I sought to understand participants' lived experiences in a natural setting.

A quantitative research method is appropriate for interpreting and explaining relationships between variables and testing hypotheses relating the outcome to a wider populace (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013; Yang, 2013). A quantitative method was not suitable for the proposed study because I did not evaluate variables or test hypotheses. Mixed method research is an integration of both the quantitative and qualitative methods, where during the data analysis one method may have priority over the other (Mayes, Peterson, & Bonilla, 2013). Such integration is inappropriate for the exploration of participants' lived experiences. A mixed method approach did not meet the needs of this study because the research question did not require the collection of quantitative data for statistical analysis to answer the research question. According to Wisdom, Cavaleri, Onwuegbuzie, and Green (2012), a mixed method is appropriate to address complex

research studies that only quantitative or qualitative method cannot address, which was not needed for this study.

### **Research Design**

According to Yin (2014), a research design is a structure necessary prior to data collection. The primary function of a qualitative research design is to enable the researcher to gather the required data to answer the initial research question as clearly as possible (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015). In this study, I used a multiple case design to explore the transformational leadership experiences of proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools who succeeded in enhancing employees' performances to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years.

Moll (2013) claimed that a case study design is a standard research design for in-depth exploration of data in the context of business practices. A multiple case study was the most appropriate design for this study, because it enabled me to ask *how* or *what* questions to participants, as suggested by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012).

A multiple case study is an appropriate design if participants are representatives of the same group in the phenomenon under study (Lotfi, Nayebzadeh, & Debnavi, 2014; Yin, 2014). I interviewed participants to explore, describe, and explain the phenomenon in a real-life context as recommended by Yin (2014) and examine company documents pertaining to performance to review employee performance records (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012; Yin, 2014).

According to Englander (2012) and Rowley (2012), all participants must have experienced the phenomenon under investigation to describe the phenomenon of interest.

The purposefully selected participants in this study had lived and experienced the phenomenon under examination. The focus of each interview was on aspects of participants' career or lived experiences with the phenomenon. Robinson (2014) noted that interviews focused on career histories might be useful for exploring how the leadership experiences of participants enhanced their employees' performance.

Several designs are used in qualitative research (Bahn & Weatherill, 2013). These designs include phenomenology, ethnography, and case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative researchers select the most appropriate design for their study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

In ethnography, the researcher focuses on describing the culture of a group of people (Verner & Abdullah, 2012). Researchers use an ethnographic design to describe, investigate, and understand groups with a common culture (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013). An ethnographic design is useful when considering observational questions that examine group cultural beliefs, values, and practices (Moustakas, 1994). An ethnographic approach did not meet the needs for this study because the purpose of the study was not to investigate the culture of schools.

A phenomenological design requires researchers use at least 20 participants and a great deal of time to conduct the study from the beginning to the end (Bevan, 2014). A phenomenological design does not include the utilization of a secondary documentation to implement methodological triangulation (Yin, 2014). I considered the use of a phenomenological design to explore the transformational leadership skills of proprietors of successful Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools from their

perspectives and to uncover and analyze themes that could have developed from the use of interviewing participants (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014). A phenomenological design is not the most appropriate method to explore a particular and complex phenomenon within its real-world context, which was the intent of this study (Yin, 2014).

The concept of data saturation is appropriate for multiple case study researchers who use interviews as the primary source of data collection (Marshall et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Data saturation is achieved when data are sufficient to replicate the study (Prendergast & Maggie, 2013), and additional interviews do not add new information (Walker, 2012). I continued interviewing proprietors of successful Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools and analyzing relevant school documents until no new data or themes emerged from the data, to assure data saturation for this study.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this study consisted of three proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools in the Accra region of Ghana. Researchers use purposive sampling that represents the same group when conducting an exploratory multiple case study (Edwards, 2014; Yin, 2014). Roy et al. (2015) added that purposive sampling methods are appropriate when selecting participants with specific knowledge and experiences of a phenomenon. The drawback linked to purposive sampling places restrictions on a sample size (Roy et al., 2015). I used a purposeful sampling technique to select participants for this study. In qualitative studies, participants must have lived the phenomenon under investigation to be informed on the topic (Roy et al., 2015). In

addition, when a specified research problem and defined population are under consideration, a purposive criterion sampling is the preferred selection technique (Prendergast & Maggie, 2013). The research problem in this study is to explore the transformational leadership experiences of proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana.

In this study, I purposefully selected participants from a population of proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana that (a) were at least age 18, (b) served as the proprietor of a small or medium scale private basic school in the greater Accra region of Ghana, (c) had a minimum of 5 years of success as a private basic school proprietor in that school, and (d) had received awards as an exemplary leader by the board of the Private Basic Schools Performance Magazine (PBSPM) of Ghana for 5 consecutive times. In Ghana, the PBSPM is published annually. The board of the PBSPM selects and publishes names of proprietors of private basic schools who exhibit exemplary leadership behaviors to enhance the performance of their employees for sustainable school business. Exemplary leadership is measured by (a) employee performance regarding rate of customer retention (Leithwood & Sun, 2012), (b) enrollment growth rate, and (c) return on equity (Li-an, 2011). Proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools whose names appeared in the PBSPM consistently for the last 5 years ending in 2015 qualify for participation. Interviewing successful and experienced proprietors who are consistently listed in the PBSPM enhanced my ability to gather data on their individual leadership experiences and skills that accounted for their recognition by the board of the PBSPM as exemplary leaders.

A researcher has reported the population size should be large enough to bring credibility and reliability to the study, yet small enough to provide in-depth and richness of the case (Rowley, 2012). A population size of three cases is suggested by Yin (2014) when conducting multiple case studies, and three cases are enough as a prediction of accurate replication of real-life experiences within the context of the phenomenon. Researchers conducting multiple case studies with a population size of three may obtain rich data using interviews and second source of data to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Rowley, 2012; Yin, 2014). Notwithstanding, theme saturation depends on the depth of lived experiences told by the interviewees (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). After the initial interview with the selected sample members, the interviews must continue until the data become repetitive and no new themes emerge (Dworkin, 2012). Data saturation does not depend on the size of the sample, but rather data saturation is about the depth and richness of the data (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). I continued interviewing participants and reviewing relevant school documents until no new data or themes emerged. Data saturation is reached when sufficient information is available to replicate the study (Marshall et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Prendergast & Maggie, 2013).

I purposefully selected participants from proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana whose names have appeared in the PBSPM of Ghana as an exemplary leader whose leadership behaviors enhanced the performance of their employees for sustainable school business. Second, each participant's name must have appeared in the PBSPM of Ghana as an exemplary leader



for 5 consecutive years. Third, each participant must be willing to grant a face-to-face, in-depth interview. All participants granted a face-to-face, in-depth interview at their chosen locations. Last, each potential participant would agree to an audio recording of his or her interview and sign a consent form. All participants signed a consent form and permitted an audio recording of the interview. I used Audacity 2.06 recording software to record the interview. Many of the digital recorders designed specifically for recording interviews are expensive (Tessier, 2012) and the reasons I chose one over the other were based on cost and effectiveness. I used Olympus WS-852 instead of Sony ICD PX333 or Sony ICD-PX440 as a low cost interview recorder because Olympus makes better digital recordings as noted by Adams (2015).

The interviewees were proprietors of small and medium scale private basic schools in both urban and rural parts of the greater Accra region of Ghana. The working environments in both sectors differ slightly. Selecting participants from different locations brings balance to the data, and choosing participants from different locations enhanced purposeful transferability of the study findings in both urban and rural small and medium scale private basic schools. The selection of participants was by personal contact, and each participant signed a letter of consent. The interviews took place at a location, date, and time convenient to each participant and in an enclosed business private room behind a closed door away from each proprietor's place of work. Marshall et al., (2013) advised that interviews must be conducted in a nondestructive environment.

### **Ethical Research**

The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires researchers to follow certain ethical standards. My use of Walden University ethical guidelines and the Belmont Report protocol (Belmont Report, 1979) ensured adherence to ethical principles and standards in the course of this research study. I complied with the three basic ethics of research involving human subjects, which are (a) the principles of respect of persons, (b) beneficence, and (c) justice (Belmont Report, 1979). Among others, research ethics require that researchers seek the consent of participants prior to an interview (Flick, 2014). Informed consent encompasses the interviewees' rights to protection throughout the research exercise (Flick, 2014; Lambert & Glacken, 2011). As the researcher, I had a duty to review all issues that may be detrimental to any participant in the course of the data collection. Participants were made to understand that the outcome of the research project was beneficial to society. Researchers have a duty to educate participants on the importance of their studies to society (Yun, Han, & Lee, 2013), and in the case of this study, the benefits go to the education industry, SMEs, and society. Participation in this study was voluntary, and I provided the participants with information they needed to decide whether they desired to enter into the research study. I treated each participant in an ethical manner. I protected them from harm by keeping their identifiable information anonymous.

I (a) provided each participant a copy of the consent form, (b) reviewed the form with them, (c) answered participant's questions pertaining to the study, and (d) asked for their signature as evidence of their voluntary consent to participate in the study.

According to Wahyuni (2012), participation in a research study must be voluntary. By signing the consent form, participants acknowledge their understanding and willingness to participate in the research. I sought the consent of participants to audio record their interviews. Prior to the interview, I informed participants, orally and in writing, of their right to withdraw their participation at any stage of the data collection process and have me delete any recordings obtained in their presence at the point of their withdrawal.

Participants can withdraw from this study at any time during the study without penalty, even after data collection is completed. Participants may announce their withdrawal from the interview with any medium of communication convenient to them including (a) by telephone, (a) email, and (c) verbal. All selected participants participated throughout the research process. The content of the consent form reiterates confidentiality of participants and their voluntary right to withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse consequences, even after the completion of data collection.

The identities of participants remains confidential. The protection of participants' privacy is obligatory to guarantee compliance with required ethics and standards in this study as suggested by (Yun, Han, & Lee, 2013). The privacy rights of the participants in this doctoral study include (a) location privacy, (b) electronic communication privacy, (c) individual information privacy, and (d) public place privacy (Yun, Han, & Lee, 2013). As recommended by Yun, Han, and Lee (2013) for the protection of privacy, I protected participants' confidentiality by using alphanumeric codes for their identities. I used P1, P2, and P3 instead of names of participants and their organizations. I coded the identities of participants and their organizations to protect their privacy. Each participant has the

right to choose a convenient and secure location for his or her interview. I stored all electronic data on a password-protected personal flash drive. All printed data collected will be stored in a locked file storage cabinet in a private, secure, and locked location accessible only by me for a period of 5 years after the conclusion of this study. At the end of 5 years, I will destroy all data including audio taped, digital, and printed information. I will destroy the data by shredding all papers and erasing electronic files. I showed appreciation to all participants by providing each of them a copy of the study findings as an expression of gratitude and sharing of knowledge as recommended by Gonzalez, Stein, Shannonhouse, and Prinstein (2012). No participant received other incentives for participating in this study.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. The purpose of the study dictates the instrument for data collection (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Whiteley, 2012). In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (Codie, 2012; Sarker, Xiao, Beaulieu, 2013). As the researcher, I served as the primary data collection instrument for this study. Types of qualitative data include (a) interviews, (b) documents, (c) observations, (d) focus groups, and (e) artifacts (Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, & Robertson, 2013). When the research project is exploratory, detailed data are desirable, and an open-ended interview protocol is suitable for collecting interview data from participants (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013).

For that reason, I used two sources to support the data collection, which were (a) semi-structured interviews and (b) observation.

Yin (2014) argued that in a multiple case study instruments for data collection include open-ended questions, semi-structured interview, and researcher observation. I presented each respondent a set of open-ended questions through a semi-structured interview. According to Ginsberg and Sinacore (2013), open-ended questions enable the interviewees to provide rich information regarding their lived experiences. The use of open-ended questions allows the researcher to explore in full the interviewees' lived experience with the phenomenon along a particular pattern in alignment with the research question (Cooper et al., 2012).

I used open-ended questions administered through semi-structured interviews with basic school proprietors selected to participate in the proposed study to gather data through the face-to-face interviews. Bredart, Marrel, Abetz-Webb, Lasch, and Acquadro (2014) recommended that researchers should use a flexible questions guide and follow-up questions to gain clarity and important details of the subject in question. Participants should answer follow-up questions when needed (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013). I asked follow-up questions to probe responses and sought clarity when necessary.

Prior to each interview, each participant signed and returned an inform consent form. The face-to-face interview of each participant took place in a secured and private location at a time suitable to the participants. Conducting interviews at the participants' convenience will provide an environment in which participants can tell their live

experiences in a relaxed and informal manner (Gibbons, Woodside, Hannon, Sweeney, & Davison, 2011).

The interview process for this study followed the procedure recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012): (a) the interview focused on participants' analysis of their experiences; (b) the interview depended on the relationship between participant and interviewer; and (c) the personal data gathered may create some ethical responsibilities for a researcher. A researcher must take care not to force their own opinions on interviewees, and the interviewers must be flexible with the questions and must adjust any question when necessary (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). The open-ended face-to-face interviews lead to an open discussion and allow participants time to give in-depth information regarding their lived experiences (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). In a similar semi-structured in-depth interview conducted by Thelin, Lundgren, and Hermansson (2014), each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. In this proposed study, each interview lasted at between 45 to 60 minutes. I began each interview with a welcome and an overview of the purpose. I (a) reviewed the consent form, (b) asked if they had questions or concerns, and (c) obtained a signature on the form. Each participant received a copy of the consent form to retain for his or her records. I presented each interview question to each participant in the same order to mitigate bias that could be introduced from question ordering as recommended by Moustakas (1994). I asked follow-up probes for clarification on a participant's response to a question as suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012). I ended the interview by thanking each participant and reminded them that I transcribed their interview and summarized their responses, then contacted them for

member checking to verify that my interpretations of their responses are accurate. Member checking is a process of ensuring that the interpretations of responses to questions are accurate and reflect the exact lived experiences of participants (Harper & Cole, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Member checking is a feedback procedure for seeking clarification where researchers share their understanding of participants' lived experiences with the interviewees (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The member checking process helps researchers counter check their understanding of the phenomenon from the participant's viewpoint (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After conducting and transcribing the participant's interview, I asked each participant to conduct member checking. Member checking was completed to strengthen credibility and trustworthiness of the interpretation of the participants' responses.

### **Data Collection Technique**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. In qualitative research, the main sources of gathering data are interviews, observations, and review of documents (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). The qualitative method provides many avenues for exploratory research, and in a multiple case design, the interview is the most popular technique for data collection (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013).

I used semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions as a primary source for data collection. In the process of the data collection, I bracketed my own

experiences from that of the participants. Moustakas (1994) suggested that researchers should mitigate bias by bracketing their own experiences from that of the participants by allowing the participants to describe their experiences of the phenomenon without interruption. Also, to mitigate bias, the researcher must put aside their beliefs and prejudices (epoche) regarding the phenomenon in question (Kim, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). To obtain accurate and reliable data, I put aside any prejudice as suggested by Kim (2011) and Moustakas (1994). When a researcher facilitates epoché, they can increase the rigor of their research project (Yu, 2014). Researchers concluded that too much time on an emotionally challenging topic could lead to research challenges as well as skew the interpretations and findings (Pfaff, Baxter, Jacks, & Ploeg, 2014; Ponterottos, 2014). As recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I developed a reflexive journal that included the purpose for undertaking the research. Moustakas (1994) posited that the journaling process includes the use of bracketing techniques to identify biases.

Researchers use bracketing to identify and avoid potential biases to view the phenomenon under investigation from the participants' perspective (Moustakas, 1994). I compiled a journal to express personal assumptions and clarify individual belief systems to identify and mitigate any probable bias that could affect the study results. I mitigated bias while studying the phenomenon by not having personal or professional connections to the participants or organizations in this my study. Given my experience as a school proprietor, the relationship between my experiences and the research topic may develop during the process of this qualitative research as suggested by Ponterotto (2014). To protect my study and myself, I applied a multiple case record epoche by putting aside all



beliefs I held about the study and suspending judgment so that one's perceptions are more representative of the experience as noted by Kim (2011) and Moustakas (1994). Yin (2014) suggested researchers apply conceptual frameworks to literature, theories, and results of the study to mitigate research bias. I compared data from interviews and relevant school documents and applied them to the conceptual framework and the literature to draw conclusions.

Researchers should attempt to establish an open and trusting interview environment (Moustakas, 1994). I conducted each interview in a quiet, relaxed location at a convenient time agreed upon by each participant. In addition, researchers should adopt the right interviewing technique to understand and record the exact stories of the participants (Seidman, 2012). Throughout the interview process, I did more listening and avoided sharing my ideas and opinion with the interviewees. The appropriate interviewing technique requires researchers to do more listening than talking (Seidman, 2012). Seidman (2012) stressed the need to give complete and focused attention to participants as they tell their stories. As participants told their stories, I listened attentively and recorded the data with Olympus WS-852 hardware and an Audacity 2.06 recording software. I used follow-up questions to sought clarity for participants to provide detailed and rich descriptions of their lived experiences by Bloomberg and Volpe (2012). Kim (2011) argued that lucid information heightens the quality of participants' responses.

I began recruiting study participants immediately following the IRB's approval of this study (IRB approval number is 04-27-16-0314977). I checked the validity of the

interview questions before conducting interviews. To ensure the reliability of the interview questions, I used the expert validation approach after IRB's approval of my proposal. An expert validation approach includes giving the interview questions to experts for their reviews and comments (Lash et al., 2014). Lee et al. (2016) claimed that an expert review method is efficient to ensure validity and quality for the interview questions. An expert review provides an assessment, feedback, and insight based on the experts knowhow of the phenomenon under study (Heikkinen, Huttunen, Syrjälä, & Pesonen, 2012). In contrast, a field expert's subjectivity and prior experiences may affect the outcome of the expert review process (Heikkinen et al., 2012). I selected expert practitioners with extensive expertise in private basic school leadership. The subject experts included the president of private basic school leadership consulting firm, Dr. Bonny (2015). Dr. Bonny has more than 15 years experience in private basic school leadership consulting.

I audio-recorded interviews with the written consent of each participant. Interviews took place in secured locations at a date, time, and place suitable to the participants. Prior to the start of the interview, each participant signed the informed consent forms, and I answered participants questions regarding the study. I presented each respondent a set of open-ended questions through a semi-structured interview. A face-to-face interview enables the interviewer to observe the participants and capture emotional and facial expressions, which may be important to understanding the data (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The face-to-face interviewing

process permits the participant to elaborate on their responses and the researcher can ask probing questions to clarify the phenomenon of interest (Whittemore, 2014).

Face-to-face interviews lead to in-depth information, though they may be more costly (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). However, with face-to-face interviews the participant may keep important personal information from the researcher (Onwuegbuzie & Byers, 2014). I transcribed the interviews using the audio recording and returned my interpretations of their responses to each question via email to conduct member checking. Member checking enhances the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data. Member checking is a procedure for achieving accuracy and trustworthiness in a study (Harper & Cole, 2012). In addition, member checking is a means of ensuring the transcript reflects the exact lived experiences of participants (Harper & Cole, 2012). Member checking is important to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Harper & Cole, 2012; Rennie, 2012). Member checking is a time sensitive process, and is best done within a certain time frame following the interviews as suggested by Harper and Cole (2012) and Torrance (2012). When too much time elapse between the data collection, data interpretation, and member checking process, the participants may have forgotten their statements or unable to remember or validate important data (Harper & Cole, 2012; Torrance, 2012). To ensure credibility and accuracy of the data, I conducted member checking within day 5 after conducting and transcribing each participant's interview and completion of document interpretations. I sought verification by phone from participants of my interpretations of each participants responses to each interview question by asking (a) if the transcript contained their intended interpretations or required

additional clarification, (b) if the completed transcript accurately interpret participant's lived experiences, and (c) if the participants wished to share other information that may provide clarity to the interpretations to their responses as recommended by Harper and Cole (2012). Each participant spent between 20 to 30 minutes member checking the transcribed responses and the analysis of relevant documents.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

The use of open-ended interview questions offers interviewees latitude to tell their stories in the context they experienced the phenomenon (Englander, 2012), and this creates an exceptional need to concentrate on accurate organization of data. In a research project, accurate organization of data is important to the credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) because authentic synthesis and investigation depend on a lucid data structure (Yin, 2014). I audiotaped the interviews with a digital recorder as recommended by Cooper et al. (2012).

Qualitative researchers focus on assuring reliability and validity of their findings through member checking techniques (Harper & Cole, 2012). Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulated that validation of transcript enhances the reliability of a study. Incorrect interpretation of data is a threat to validity of study findings and conclusions (Littvay, Popa, & Fazekas, 2013).

Proper data organization is a prerequisite for effective data storage and data analysis (Korhonen, 2014). During the interviews, I used a reflective journal to record the date and time of each interview, participants' demography, the recruitment process, and any other information necessary for the study. I used alphanumerals (e.g., P1, P2) instead

of participants' names and organizations. For proper organization of data, I created a Microsoft Excel database with four columns: (a) participants; (b) interview notes; (c) direct quotes from respondents; and (d) interview data. The creation of a Microsoft Excel database enhances verification processes (Camfield & Palmer-Jones, 2013). I uploaded the data from the interview transcript interpretations into NVivo 10 software and used NVivo to organize the coding for data analysis. NVivo 10 software enabled me to organize the raw data into themes identifiable through my literature review and conceptual framework.

Member checking is an important validation technique and enables participants to gain insight regarding their lived experiences (Harper & Cole, 2012). For that reason, after interpretation of the interview responses, I asked participants to verify their accuracy through member checking. Once participants verified the accuracy of their responses to the interview questions, I examined the transcribed data for coding. I coded my reflexive journal notes to mitigate any bias and tracked the codes in NVivo v10 software to organize the text data, coded the text, manipulated the text data, and displayed the codes as recommended by (Da Mota Pedrosa, Näslund, & Jasmand, 2012). According to Da Mota Pedrosa et al. (2012), coding is part of an analysis in which researchers label and group data according to content. The coding process helps researchers to identify each subject as described by the informant and group common perspectives among all interviewees (Da Mota Pedrosa et al., 2012; Hammer & Berland, 2014).

I created a file to store consent forms, transcripts of interviews and any other documents pertinent to the study as recommended by Anyan (2013) and Kaczynski, Salmona, and Smith (2014). I will store (a) the code sheet, (b) the raw data from the transcribed interviews, (c) journals, (d) audio recordings, and (e) any additional information pertaining to the study in a locked file storage cabinet in a private, secure, and locked location accessible only by me for 5 years. At the end of 5 years, I will destroy all data including all audiotape and digital information. I will destroy the data by shredding all papers and deleting electronic files as recommended by Walden University Center for Research Quality (2014).

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research follows a certain protocol, which includes establishing codes, themes, and descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). In a qualitative study, the goal of researchers is to explore and deduce meanings from the stories that participants tell (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). In addition, data analysis reveals the experiences that participants intended to share (Ginsberg & Sinacore, 2013). According to Paull, Boudville, and Sitlington (2013), qualitative researchers adopt innovative ways of making sense out of participants' stories. Sense making is a tool researchers use to enhance the interpretation of data (Paull, Boudville, & Sitlington, 2013).

Data analysis in the proposed qualitative multiple-case study is integral to the complete process of making plausible conclusions of the open-ended data collection using in-depth interviews (Yin, 2014). The data analysis of a case study is a repetitive and dynamic method to identify unique emerging themes to improve subsequent

phenomenon (Smith & Firth, 2011). The research design is a multiple-case study, and the central research question that guided this research study was: What transformational leadership skills do proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years?

Data analysis involves (a) identifying and selecting relevant themes, (b) coding, and (d) linking themes into the phenomenon under study (Silverman, 2013). Conceptual framework serves as a connection between the literature, research method, and results of the study (Gough, Thomas, & Oliver, 2012). The conceptual framework for a qualitative study has a significant relationship to the development of a research question, the approach to the literature review, design, and analysis (Smith & Firth, 2011). I analyzed the data through the dimensions of the transformational leadership theory first introduced by Burns (1978), and later expanded by Bass and Avolio (1997): (a) idealized influence or attributed charisma; (b) idealized influence or behavioral charisma; (c) inspirational motivation; (d) intellectual stimulation; and (e) individualized consideration.

Data analysis of case studies requires protocols to ensure accuracy and explanations known as triangulation (Stake, 2014; Yin, 2014). Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012) posited that triangulation enhances the reliability of findings when researchers use two or more approaches to investigate the phenomenon. Hoque, Covaleski, and Gooneratne (2013) concluded that using two or more independent measures to confirm the reliability of data reduces uncertainties of interpretation. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) identified four forms of triangulation, which are (a) data triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) methodological triangulation, and (d) theoretical triangulation. Data

triangulation entails gathering data through several sampling strategies at different times and social situations with a variety of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). The investigator triangulation uses more than one researcher to gather and interpret data (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). Methodological triangulation uses more than one method for gathering data (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Guion et al., 2011). The theoretical triangulation uses more than one theoretical position in interpreting data (Guion et al., 2011). The data investigator and theoretical forms of triangulation were not suitable for this study because I was the sole researcher using one sampling strategy, and I interpreted the data.

In this qualitative multiple case study, methodological triangulation was appropriate because I used data from interviews and relevant school documents obtained from participants (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Guion et al., 2011). The purpose of this qualitative multiple-case study was to explore the transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. As part of the methodological triangulation using multiple data sources, I analyzed data collected through interviews and analysis of documents from the schools of selected participants as a second data source. As suggested by Yin (2014), I conducted data analysis by organizing data using (a) recordings, (b) handwritten notes, and (c) transcripts. I summarized, categorized, and identified linking patterns and themes in the data as recommended by Yin (2014). Smith and Firth (2011) posited that data analysis is an inductive process where strong evidence supports the data collected. The data analysis in this study is an inductive process in



which I identified themes and patterns to provide strong evidence of findings from the interview transcripts and documents.

Researchers can use qualitative data analysis software for creating themes and patterns (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Several software programs exist to help with qualitative research (Guest et al., 2012). The regularly used qualitative software programs include Dedoose, ATLAS.ti, and NVivo (Franzosi, Doyle, McClelland, Rankin, & Vicari, 2013; Guest et al., 2012). Dedoose assists researchers in analyzing large amounts of mixed methods data (Guest et al., 2012). The Dedoose software program was inappropriate for this study because I did not conduct a mixed methods study. Both ATLAS.ti and NVivo enable researchers to associate codes with text, sounds, pictures, or video to search for patterns and to construct classifications of codes that reflect models of the conceptual structure of the primary data (Woods, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). The NVivo 10 software program enables a researcher to handle large text (Humble, 2015) and unstructured data better than Atlas-ti (Guest et al., 2012).

NVivo enables users to collect and organize unstructured data for qualitative analysis (Guest et al., 2012). I used semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions as a primary source for data collection. The NVivo 10 software is most appropriate for organizing data gathered through semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions (Guest et al., 2012). The advantages of using NVivo 10 include the ability to keep data in a single location with easy access to information and the ability to use a continuous coding scheme (Humble, 2015).

Procedures for qualitative data analysis include axial coding, open coding, thematic coding, and selective coding (Starker, Xiao, & Beaulieu, 2013). Yin's 5-step approach to data analysis enables researchers to analyze textual data (Yin, 2014). I used Yin's (2014) 5-step approach to data analysis and NVivo 10 data software to organize data gathered from the proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools in Accra, Ghana to identify patterns and themes. NVivo 10 software is an effective tool for data analysis and an important research tool because NVivo 10 software enhances accuracy in the analytical processes as well as saves time in data analysis (Anney, 2014). Yin's (2011) 5-step approach to data analysis enabled me as the research to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' lived experiences of the investigated phenomenon under.

Analysis of data gathered from the interviews followed the 5-step multiple case study data analysis procedure described by Yin (2015). Yin's (2015) process includes (a) compiling the data, (b) disassembling the data, (c) reassembling the data, (4) interpreting the meaning of the data, and (e) concluding the data. In step one, I compiled the data to develop groupings. I disassembled the data to reduce and eliminate invariant themes of the phenomenon in step two. For step three, I reassembled the data and cluster core themes. I checked patterns against the interview transcripts, reflexive journal, and documents to interpret the meaning of the data in step 4. Finally, in step 5, I summarized the data into an individual structural description of the experiences. To ensure that I do not develop a biased view of the phenomenon under investigation, I coded and analyzed the interviews and school documents to examine if findings from the multiple methods

lead me to draw the same or similar conclusions as recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (2011).

Employing NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software, I analyzed data gathered from the interviews for expressive descriptions and themes. Scholars argued that the use of qualitative data analysis software enhances the transferability of qualitative data (Fielding, 2012). According to Trotter (2012), NVivo 10 is a qualitative software used by researchers for coding thematic categories and establishing themes from a research interview to answer a research question. I used NVivo 10 software to organize (a) the text data, (b) code the text, (c) manipulates the text data, and (d) display the codes. After the interviews, I used Yin's (2014) five-step data analysis process to analyze the data. Next, I exported the text data into NVivo 10 to correlate themes with the literature and the conceptual framework in this study. In addition, I collected relevant school documents on employees' performance and the proprietors' leadership strategies from the schools of the selected participants to code and categorized the emerged themes from the documents in NVivo 10 software to organize (a) the text data, (b) code the text, (c) manipulate the text data, and (d) display the codes as recommended by Gibbons (2015).

According to Yin (2014), researchers can use five procedures to analyze case studies (a) pattern matching, (b) explanation building, (c) time series analysis, (d) logic models, and (e) cross-case synthesis. Pattern matching is recommended when a researcher compares two patterns to establish their similarities or differences (Yin, 2014). The pattern matching strategy is not suitable for the proposed study as the intent is not to test an observed pattern with the expected pattern. The explanation building technique is

appropriate when a researcher is seeking to build an explanation in the case (Yin, 2014). The explanation building technique was not suitable for the proposed study because I did not sought to provide an explanation about a case. Instead, the intent was to identify the transformational leadership skills proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years? In time-series analysis, the researcher matches the observed trends of data using either a theoretically significant trend or a rival trend (Yin, 2014). The time-series analysis was not suitable to this study because I did not compare existing trends. The cross-case synthesis was the most suitable technique for analyzing data for the proposed study. According to Yin (2014), cross-case synthesis is applicable to the analysis of three cases (Yin, 2014). The cross-case analysis is a replication sampling logic where additional cases are chosen to yield predictable findings (Cousins & Bourgeois, 2014). The cross-case analysis involves identifying patterns occurring across some cases identifying differences, similarities, frequencies, and common themes (Lee & Chavis, 2012). I used the cross-case synthesis technique when examining multiple cases using interviews with proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools.

I continued compiling identified transformational leadership skills used to improve employee performance and compare emerging themes within each interview as suggested by Zheng, Guo, Dong, and Owens (2015). I continuously scrutinized and classified themes reciprocally while analyzing interviewee responses and school documents until the data reach saturation as recommended by (Senden et al., 2015). Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, and Hodder (2015) concluded that data saturation could be a

signal to the researcher there is little need for conducting more research. Yin (2014) argued that exploring more than two cases produced even richer study results. I used three cases from three private basic schools in my study. I collected and sorted all research data into themes to correlate the key themes with the literature conceptual frameworks used in this study. I used member checking again during my data analysis to verify the interpretation of all the data collected from the study (Oberoi et al., 2015; Senden et al., 2015). After my data analysis, I asked each participant to conduct member checking.

I compared the emerging themes and codes from the data analysis with the literature to ascertain if the analyzed data are similar to or different from the transformational leadership framework described by Bass and Avolio (1997). Bass and Avolio (1997) developed a set of five categories to brand a transformational leader, which were (a) idealized influence or attributed charisma, (b) idealized influence or behavioral charisma, (c) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration. Thereafter, I constructed a textual and structural description of participants' experiences with the phenomenon and finally outline the meaning and essence of participants' experiences with the phenomenon.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are means of achieving research trustworthiness (Wahyuni, 2012). The procedure for ensuring reliability and validity in qualitative and quantitative methods varies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In quantitative research, reliability is the degree to which future studies are comparable over time using the same

quantitative instruments (Charleston, 2012). To establish research trustworthiness in qualitative research, researchers must use member checking, establish protocols, audit trails, and perform data triangulation (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Venkatesh et al., 2013).

Reliability is the degree to which the collection and assessment of information is consistent and free from mistakes (Hess et al., 2014; Luria & Yuval, 2013; Oluwatayo, 2012). A key method for assuring credibility, dependability, and transferability of findings from qualitative studies is following protocols for data collection that show how participants answered the questions (Malhotra, Mukhopadhyay, Xiaoyan, & Dash, 2012; Narayanan, Greco, Reeves, Matthews, & Bergin, 2014). In this study, I asked each respondent the same questions to gain understanding of their lived experiences pertaining to the phenomenon. In addition, I ensured reliability by (a) aligning activities and interview questions with the central research question, (b) documenting and storing data, (c) securing data and protecting confidential information, and (d) applying standard analytical approaches as suggested by Grosseohme (2014).

**Credibility.** Member checking is an activity central to ensuring the credibility of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The processes for achieving credibility in a study include interviewees scrutinizing the analysis and the findings to assess whether the analysis and findings are true reflections of their lived experiences (Harper & Cole, 2012; Petty, Thomson & Stew, 2012; Zohrabi, 2013). I asked participants to review the analysis and findings for comments that enhanced the credibility of my conclusions. In addition, I reviewed the data continuously and crosschecked the emerging codes to minimize errors as recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). The NVivo 10 software has a query and

report tool that documents the process of data analysis, which further enhances the credibility of the analysis and findings.

**Dependability.** Dependability is based on study information that will enable another researcher to follow the audit trail of the initial researcher (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011; Venkatesh et al., 2013). To ensure dependability of a qualitative research study, the collected data, interpretation of findings, and reported results must be consistent and follow a dependable procedure (Venkatesh et al, 2013). I used an interview protocol guide during each interview and made notations for comparison as part of the reflective process to verify consistency or note variations between participant interviews, which contributed to the audit trail. I created audit trails by (a) describing the purpose of the study, (b) describing the process for selecting participants for the study, (c) describing the data collection process, (d) describing how the data were interpreted for analysis, (e) discussing the research findings, and (f) communicating techniques to determine credibility of the data as suggested by Thomas and Magilvy (2011).

**Confirmability.** The strength of a qualitative study depends on the validation strategies adopted by the investigator (Harper & Cole, 2012). Several researchers (Anney, 2014; Harper & Cole, 2012) developed their notions of confirmability that they classify to be more suitable. According to Harper and Cole (2012), the strategies to enhance confirmability may include (a) triangulation, (b) peer review or debriefing, (c) clarifying researcher bias, and (d) member checking. Triangulation is a qualitative research quality control activity where the researcher adopts various approaches to cross examine the validity of the data (Anney, 2014). I compared my analysis of documents on leadership

strategies and employee performance to data provided by the participants through the interviews. If I detect disparities between the two sets of data, I conducted a further check as recommended by Anney (2014). I also kept a reflective journal, documenting procedures, and use Nvivo 10 reporting tools to validate key word searches and themes.

Another approach to confirmability is member checking (Harper & Cole, 2012). The researcher takes steps to ensure that their judgment is not blurred by personal biases, but rather a vivid transcribing of data as told by participants (Sangasubana, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited that member checking is the most important means to achieve trustworthiness. For that reason, after carefully analyzing the audio-taped data and checking to ensure that all data are vividly captured, I emailed copies of my interpretations of responses to each question to the participants to review and determine if they are representative of their lived experiences as told. I asked participants to verify my interpretations by asking (a) if the transcribed data reflected their intended interpretations or required additional clarification, (b) if the completed transcript accurately interpreted participant's lived experiences, and (c) if participants had additional information to share that may provide further clarity to the interpretations to their responses as recommended by Harper and Cole (2012). After conducting and transcribing the participant's interview, I asked each participant to conduct member checking. I incorporated into each transcript concerns that were raised by participants.

**Transferability.** Transferability in a qualitative study is the ability to transfer research findings or methods from one group to another (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). According to Anney (2014), a purposeful sampling method ensures transferability of the



enquiry. Transferability requires researchers to provide a vivid explanation of all the research processes from data collection and context of the study to the finalization of the report (Anney, 2014). I used a purposeful sampling method to gain access to participants, and I provided a detailed explanation of all the research process and research methods by (a) utilizing an interview protocol checklist, (b) following the established interview questions, (c) keeping a reflective journal, and (d) uploading all relevant information to the NVivo 10 database for analyses and identification of themes as suggested by Anney (2014). A decision regarding the transferability of findings from a qualitative study is left to the reader.

**Data saturation.** Data saturation is a criterion to ensure the collection of adequate and quality data to support a study (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Data saturation occurs when the researcher analyzes the data and does not find additional new information or identify new themes or codes do not reveal additional new information or identify new themes and codes (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). I continued compiling identified transformational leadership skills used to improve employee performance and compared emerging themes within each interview as suggested by Zheng et al. (2015). I continuously scrutinized and classified themes reciprocally while analyzing interviewee responses and relevant school documents until the data reached saturation (Davis, 2013; Senden et al., 2015). Oberoi, Jiwa, McManus, and Hodder (2015) concluded that data saturation could be a signal to the researcher there is little need for conducting more research. Yin (2014) argued that exploring more than two cases produced even richer study results. Data saturation is reached when sufficient information is available to

replicate the study (Marshall et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Prendergast & Maggie, 2013).

The concept of data saturation is appropriate for multiple case researchers who use interviews as the primary source of data collection (Marshall et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Data saturation is achieved when data are sufficient to replicate the study (Prendergast & Maggie, 2013), and additional interviews do not add new information (Walker, 2012). I continued interviewing proprietors of successful Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools and reviewing relevant school documents until no new data or themes emerged from the data to assure data saturation for this study.

The use of (a) a set of semi-structured interview guided by open-ended questions, (b) reviewing relevant school documents, and (c) observation of each participant during the interviews are the techniques that I used to help assure that a sufficient amount of data is collected to identify when the data reached saturation as suggested by Dworkin, (2012). Data saturation is a thorough exploration and completion of data collection (Dworkin, 2012). Zheng et al. (2015) suggested that researchers should compare responses. According to O'Reilly and Parker (2012), data reaches saturation when the participants offer no new information after verifying notes and my journal notes from other participants previously interviewed. I compared the answers to the interview questions to ascertain common themes in experiences among participants (Bedwell et al., 2015; Senden et al., 2015) by continuously examining and categorizing themes reciprocally while analyzing interview responses and note in my reflexive journal until the data reached saturation as recommended by Senden et al. (2015).

### **Transition and Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. The topics in Section 2 includes my role as the researcher, the study participants, the research method and design, the study population and sample, ethical research practices, data collection, data analysis technique, and the dependability and credibility of the research. I explained how the qualitative multiple case study research design applies to conduct this study. In this study, I used qualitative research methods and a multiple case design to explore transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. I collected data from a minimum 3 participants as prescribed by Yin (2014). I administered semi-structured interview through open-ended questions with each participant and recorded the interview with an audio recorder before transcribing. I also included a discussion of the data collection instrument and technique, data organization techniques, and data analysis in this section. An explanation of how I established credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and data saturation.

In Section 3, I presented findings of this study. The findings included a detailed description of the analysis of the semi-structured interview responses of the proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools and the themes that emerged to answer the research question for this study. In section 3, I presented data analysis and interpretation of the data for meaning, codes, and themes. In addition, I presented the

overview of study, presentation of the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action, recommendations for further study, reflections, summary, and conclusions of the study.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Section 3 includes a detailed review of the data collected, the conceptual framework, and the findings of the research study on the transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian private basic schools need to enhance employee performance. Section 3 includes an overview of the study, applications to professional practice, and implications for social change. This section also includes recommendation for actions, recommendations for further study, and my own reflections. Finally, the section concludes with a summary.

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. Akinboade and Kinack (2012) stated that the failure rate of SMEs, including private basic schools, was a concern to policy makers in Ghana. The focus of this research was to explore the transformational leadership skills that enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years.

The participants for this study consisted of three proprietors of Ghanaian private basic schools who were selected by the board of PBSPM as exemplary leaders for 5 consecutive years. I conducted semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions with participants to answer the overarching research question for this study: What transformational leadership skills do Ghanaian private basic school head teachers need to enhance employee performance? Participants answered six open-ended interview

questions and follow-up probes for clarification of their responses. I also reviewed relevant school documents such as strategic documents, school registers, and financial statements. I used my reflective journal with my personal observations and notes for each interview, as suggested by Yin (2014), to triangulate and confirm interview data.

Comparing data from relevant school documents such as strategic plans, school registers, and financial statements, in addition to my reflective journal with my personal observations and notes for each interview, along with results from interviews, lead to a comprehensive analysis suggested by (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The resulting themes were the dimensions of transformational leadership: (a) idealized influence or attributed charisma, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. Based on participants' experiences and the emergent themes, I found that the initial research findings for this study matched the attributes of transformative leadership skills as proposed by Bass and Avolio (1997).

### **Presentation of the Finding**

A case study approach serves as an efficient way to investigate a phenomenon in multiple real-life settings (Cronin, 2014; Yin, 2014). The overarching research question for this study was: What transformational leadership skills do Ghanaian private basic school head teachers need to enhance employee performance? The four main themes that emerged were (a) idealized influence (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration.

The following themes that emerged under idealized influence were: (a) trustfulness, (b) personal business ethics and value system of participants, (c) personal

exemplary performance of participants, (d) selflessness, and (e) prioritization of employees needs. The main themes under individualized consideration were: (a) individual-focused and (b) caring and nurturing. Themes under inspirational motivation included: (a) communication of shared vision and (b) inspiring to employees. Themes under intellectual stimulation were: (a) problem solving, (b) creativity, and (c) innovation.

### **First Theme: Idealized Influence**

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of participants' responses and relevant school documents was the idealization influence of transformational leaders. Participants' responses to the first and second interview questions indicated their idealized influence and behavior. Extant literature supports the emerging themes of: (a) trustfulness, (b) personal exemplary performance, and (c) selflessness and focus on employee's needs (see Table 2). A leader's trustfulness, selflessness, personal achievements, and values are antecedents to employees' improved performance (Krishnan, 2012). Employees honor, appreciate, and trust business leaders with idealized influence as suggested by Downey, Werff, Thomas, and Plaut, (2015) and Seyal (2015). All participants linked idealized leadership to employee performance. They suggested proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools who effectively apply idealized leadership skills enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years.

Table 2

*Frequency of Occurrence Idealized Influence*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>% of occurrence</i>
Trustfulness	5	35.71
Personal exemplary performance	5	35.71
Selflessness and employees needs	4	28.57

*Note.* *f* refers to the frequency of occurrence of the nodes.

**Trustfulness.** Almost all the participants said, "let trust be first." P1 stated, "I make deliberate effort to win the trust of my employees." P3 claimed that if employees trust their leaders, they happily follow their leader and that trustfulness is a good characteristic that enhances employee performance. P2 asserted, "My employees have reciprocated trust with their loyalty and with little supervision they work their hearts out." Employee trust in a leader connotes loyalty and dedication, which enhances employee job performance (Brown, Gray, McHardy, & Taylor, 2015). Downey et al. (2015) concurred with Brown et al. (2015) by stating that trust is a necessary ingredient for employee performance in any endeavor. Nübold, Dörr, and Maier's (2015) findings in a study were consistent with those of the previous scholars, Brown et al. (2015) and Downey et al. (2015). Nübold et al. (2015) concluded that trust in leadership enhances employees' performance.

A review of strategic plans from the schools of P1 and P3 revealed deliberate school policy to enhance the perception of trust between management and employees. We shall be transparent to our staffs at all times to enhance the sense of corporate



citizenship and trust in the organization as stated in their [P1 & P3] schools' strategic plan (2015). Leaders who are transparent, reliable, and uphold high ethical standards increase employees' performance (Wong and Laschinger, 2013).

**Personal exemplary performance.** P3 said, "I always tell them [the employees] about my career achievements, and what I did to reach that far." Several participants mentioned leadership by example. P2 iterated, "I work hard and practically participate in the day to day activities of my staff." According to P1, "when you come to the work place you will not see the boss and the worker; we all do the same things together." P1 asserted, "My workers know that I work hard and they follow suit."

Several scholars stated that the exemplary performance of leaders affects the entire staff, leading to organizational synergy, which confirmed the efficacy of a leader's personal exemplary performance in relation to employee performance (Gill & Caza, 2015; Owens & Hekman, 2015). Hannah et al. (2015) posited that exemplary output of proprietors promotes performance by enhancing followers' beliefs in their own capabilities. All participants (P1, P2, & P3) said they do what they expect from their workers. P3 said, "I internalize and practice values I expect from my employees."

The leader's attributes and the leader's personal behavior drive idealization (Wang, Meyer & Jackson, 2013). Idealized attribute measures the follower's perception of the leader's exemplary achievements and values, while idealized behavior measures the employee's observation of the leader's behavior (Northouse, 2012). Gagnon and Collinson (2014) concurred with Northouse (2012) by arguing that idealized influence thrives on the leader's own exemplary achievements and acceptable values. According to

Gagnon and Collinson (2014), attributes of a leader's exemplary achievements and values allow employees to identify with the leader and take up leadership responsibilities. A review of the schools' attendance registers validated participants' exemplary leadership behavior. The proprietors were among the first to report to work at their schools on a daily basis (Attendance Register, 2016).

**Selflessness and employees' needs.** Leaders with idealization characteristics consider the needs of their employees and are selfless (Aggarwal & Krishnan, 2013). Selflessness and prioritization of employees' needs were some of the common nodes that emerged from the analysis. Examination of the financial statement of P2's school revealed that staff car loans were prioritized ahead of the proprietor's need for a car. Selflessness and prioritization appeared as twin leadership behaviors that generate work enthusiasm among employees. P1 and P3 said they pay their staff first before they consider their own salaries. P2 added, "I consider my staff's needs before my own needs," and P1 indicated, "I live for my staff and their welfare is my highest priority." According to P1, if the employees perceive you to be kind, sharing, generous, and selfless, they reciprocate that with productive attitudes.

The perceptions of employees regarding the selfless attitude of their leaders motivate them to dedicate themselves selflessly to the goals of the organization, leading to efficient performance (Aggarwal & Krishnan, 2013). In a similar study by Wang et al. (2013), Wang et al. concurred with Aggarwal and Krishnan (2013) and posited that leaders with exemplary behaviors and values stimulate employees' commitment to organizational goals. Participants agreed with interviewees of other studies that

employees' perception of leaders' idealized attributes are associated with improvement in employees' performance as suggested by Aggarwal and Krishnan (2013). Holstad, Korek, Rigotti, and Mohr (2014) agreed with the above scholars that idealized leaders earn the trust of their employees for enhanced employee productivity.

Idealized influence includes leadership attributes such as charisma, high ethics, and moral values (Sosik, Chun, Blair, & Fitzgerald, 2014). Idealized influence appeals to the values and belief systems of employees and motivates followers to admire leadership for higher profitability (Holstad et al., 2014). Financial statements from the three schools revealed a systematic growth in profitability from 2013 to 2015.

Idealized leadership inspires employees to identify with, trust, and acknowledge leadership, which enhances productivity (Aggarwal & Krishnan, 2013). A study of 5 years of statistics on enrollment from the three schools showed incremental growth in enrollment from the 2010/2011 academic year to the 2015/2016 academic year. According to Wang et al. (2013), idealized influences such as trust and support between the employee and employer leads to growth in employee productivity. The three schools were among the best included in the greater Accra of Ghana regional examination league table.

### **Second Theme: Individualized Consideration**

Participants' responses to the third and fourth interview questions indicated individualized consideration. Three main themes emerged under individualized consideration: (a) individual focus, (b) caring and nurturing, and (c) supervision and

monitoring (see Table 3). All participants connected individualized consideration to employee performance.

*Table 3*

*Frequency of Occurrence of Individualized Consideration*

<i>Themes</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>% of occurrence</i>
Individual-focus	6	46.15
Caring and nurturing	4	30.76
Supervision and monitoring	3	23.07

*Note.* *f* refers to the frequency of occurrence of the nodes.

**Individual focus.** P1 said, "Some of the employees come with unique talents. I mentor them as individuals to develop their unique skills to enhance division of labor in the school." Leaders high in individualized consideration behavior act as mentors for followers, training and shepherding them towards higher productivity and growth (Bacha & Walker, 2013). P2 added that focusing on employees as individuals creates a platform for the development of individual creativity. P3 stated, "I meet my staff one-on-one to know their personal and career challenges."

All the emerged nodes were consistent with the existing literature on individualized consideration of the transformational leadership paradigm and organizational performance. For example, participants concurred with Bass and Avolio (1997) that individualized consideration involves the leader being caring and nurturing regarding the individual talents of employees for job innovations and personal creativity. Participants agreed that leaders' support for employees' creativity in their schools

increased employee job innovations and performance, which is consistent with conclusions reached by Paulsen et al. (2013) in an earlier study. In a recent study, Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2015) concurred with the conclusions drawn by Bass and Avolio (1997) and Paulsen et al. (2013). According to Slåtten and Mehmetoglu (2015), honoring, pricing, and supporting individual followers' unique talents influence the tendencies of fine tuning existing processes and establishing new efficient work procedures to enhance productivity.

**Caring and nurturing.** Participants indicated that employing excellent staff members is not a guarantee for high productivity. Employee productivity and high level performance depends on how a leader cares for and nurtures the individual employees. P1 stated, "When they are employed, with care and counseling I customize them." Individualized consideration behavior entails counseling and providing personal attention to employees toward enhancing employees' performance (Joo & Lim, 2013). Leaders high in individual consideration show that they care by giving individual attention to their staff members and listening to followers' challenges for workable solutions (Bass, 1999). Holstad et al. (2014) concurred with Joo and Lim (2013), and Bass (1999). Holstad et al. (2014) pointed out that individualized consideration involves attending to the individual employee's needs, empathizing, rewarding their achievements, and attending to their welfare needs. All participants conceded that a leader high in individualized consideration trains and coaches employees for enhance productivity as suggested by Zacher, Pearce, Rooney, and Mckenna (2014).

**Supervision and monitoring.** Findings also indicated that an effective monitoring and supervision system was helpful as both transformational leadership strategies enhance employee performance. Goh (2012) postulated that an effective monitoring and supervision strategy helps in improving employee performance, which is consistent with the findings of this study. My analysis of the schools' strategic plans and participants' responses indicated that effective monitoring and supervision strategies play an important role in improving employee performance. All participants stated the leader's visibility strategies to enhance supervision and productivity in their strategic plans. According to P2, sporadic movement in the school corridors announces a leader's presence, which psychologically prompts employees to conduct spontaneous review of their own performance. P2 added, "My presence enhances employee self-assessment mechanisms. An employee seeing my car parked at the car park alone is a sufficient check on them (P3). P1 said, "Through supervision and monitoring, I understand individual training needs of my employees and offer on the job training." From the school strategic plans of participating proprietors, I reviewed proprietors' monitoring and job appraisal strategies. All participants have linked effective supervision and monitoring to enhanced employee productivity and identification of employee innovations for institutionalization and reformations. In line with the transformational leadership theory (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2014; Kang, 2012; Hu et al., 2013), a proprietor's monitoring and supervision are crucial in the formulation and institutionalization of employee performance enhancement strategies. Kang (2012) suggested that individualized monitoring and coaching enhance the creative skills of the monitored. A conclusion

reached by Hu et al. (2013) in a related study is in tandem with Kang's suggestion. According to Hu et al., effective supervision and monitoring of employees lead to incremental innovations. Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2014) concurred with Kang (2012) and Hu et al. (2013) by submitting that monitoring individual employees enhances growth-based training programs.

All participants suggested that employees are more likely to work towards efficiency when they receive ample support through effective monitoring and supervision. In a review of documents from all three schools, I noted that monitoring and supervision programs were for (a) employee inspiration, (b) promotion and reward, and (d) nurturing cordial relationship between management and employees. P3 explained that managers use monitoring and supervision programs to identify work procedures that need improvement. Monitoring and supervision is a twin activity that enables feedback seeking on employee's skills and work performance for improved productivity (P3; Smits et al., 2014). By appreciating diversity and serving employees selflessly, leaders influence productive attitudes among their employees (Hu et al., 2013). Giving employees individual attention is an essential leadership skill for growth in productivity (Syrek et al., 2013). According to all the participants, by ensuring personal consideration, they influence appropriate productive habits among their employees. When proprietors of businesses develop leadership of differentiation, nurturing, and caring employee productivity will accentuate as suggested by Kang (2012) and Hu et al. (2013) and concurred by all participants.

### Third Theme: Inspirational Motivation

Participants' responses to interview questions numbered three, five, and six indicated inspirational motivation. Two main themes emerged under inspirational motivation: (a) communicating a shared vision and (b) motivation (see Table 4). As participants shared their experiences, the recurring element under the inspirational leadership theme was the use of oral communication to motivate employees. All participants indicated that inspiring employees with the vision of the school keeps them motivated and focused. Study participants asserted that regularly reminding employees of the vision of the school stimulates and motivates employees to improve their performance.

Table 4

#### *Frequency of Occurrence of Inspirational Motivation*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>% of occurrence</i>
Communication	5	55.55
Motivation	4	44.44

*Note.* *f* refers to the frequency of occurrence of the nodes.

**Communication.** Participants P2 and P3 mentioned that they remind themselves of their school's vision at staff meetings. P1 said, "I energize my staff with the vision of my school. P3 claimed, "At the least opportunity, I remind my employees of our vision." The data reflected interviewees believe in the importance of sharing, communicating, and educating their followers on school vision. P2 stated that, "A shared vision is a shared responsibility." P3 said, "During staff meetings, I communicate my vision to the



employees." P1 expressed, "I endeavor to educate them [staff members] to understand my point of view." P1 on several occasions consulted with his staff members and stated that, "I hold frequent management meetings with heads of departments and educate employees on the school's vision." The body language of the study participants depicted influence and motivation. Participants viewed goal setting as a collaborative effort. Designating time to communicate and outline inspiring goals for institutions and employees is a practice that promotes organizational employee performance (Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, & Lings, 2015). Several researchers confirmed that effective communication influences healthy working relationships and employee productivity (Jalalkamali, Ali, Hyun, & Nikbin, 2016; Karanges et al., 2015). P1 associated employee effectiveness to leaders' communication skills. P1 described communication skills as the ability of leaders to engage in open dialogue where job expectations are articulated and discussed. P1 stated, "Every December we hold annual meetings where we discuss goals for the following year." P3 stated that during staff meetings all employees are involved in reviewing corporate vision and goals creating opportunity for employees to provide inputs. Boies, Fiset, and Gill (2015) confirmed that a characteristic of a transformational leader is the ability to communicate lucid company goals and offer specific expectations for employee performance.

**Motivation.** Motivation is an indispensable ingredient in promoting employee job performance (Shuck & Herd, 2012). According to Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, and Brown (2014), the inspirational leader is able, through excellent communication skills, to inspire others to internalize their vision. Internalization of organizational vision by

employees is antecedent to organizational engagement and employee job performance (Mahon et al., 2014). Findings are in line with extant literature. Participants agreed with Berson, Halevy, Shamir, and Erez (2015) that inspirational motivators communicate high performance expectations that activate employee commitment to work. Also, the transformative and communication skills of leaders create a sense of belonging among employees, and the employees in turn work toward achieving job targets (Aggarwal & Krishnan, 2013).

The participants said they make deliberate effort to inspire their employees. According to Aarons, Ehrhart, Farahnak, and Hurlburt (2015), articulation of inspiring vision at the workplace encourages positive expectations and sustains employees' interest in the organization. Hannah et al. (2015) agreed with Aarons et al. (2015), and stated that inspired employees internalize organizational goals that enhance employees' beliefs in their own capability to reach higher targets. Leaders who demonstrate a high level of inspirational leadership engage, inspire, and empower their employees to enhance job performance (Schaufeli, 2015). Both P2 and P3 recommended increasing opportunities for employee empowerment and development. P3 stated employees' opportunities for job empowerment play a significant role to enhance employees' performance. All participants stated that they use inspirational messages and emotional appeals to stimulate employee performance.

Inspirational motivation is a leadership strategy proprietors adopted to inspire employees to desire a brighter future and work towards a better tomorrow (Strategic Plan, 2015), which enhanced employee productivity (District League Table, 2015).

Inspirational leaders motivate their employees by directing and engaging them in a way that inspires them to meet production targets (Hannah et al., 2015). According to P1 and P2, they exceeded their enrolment targets in the 2014/2015 academic year. Employees are inspired to work hard because they are motivated to expect more from management (P3, Syrek, Apostel, & Antoni, 2013). Through inspirational motivation, leaders can cultivate an alignment between the employee's individual interest and organizational interest, which facilitates the enhancement of employees' performance (P1; Schaufeli, 2015).

#### **Fourth Theme: Intellectual Stimulation**

Participants' responses to interview questions numbered two, three and six indicated Intellectual stimulation. The three common key themes that emerged were (a) innovation, (b) employee empowerment, and (c) learning (see Table 5). Some participants used creativity and innovation interchangeably. All participants acknowledged involving employees in decision making and problem solving processes help to develop the learning and creative skills of the employees.

Table 5

#### *Frequency of Occurrence of Intellectual Stimulation*

<i>Theme</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>% of occurrence</i>
Innovation	4	33.33
Employee Empowerment	4	33.33
Learning	3	27.27

*Note.* *f* refers to the frequency of occurrence of the nodes.

**Innovation.** All participants mentioned the importance of innovation to the survival of their schools. P1 and P3 stated that they always lead their employees to brainstorm on how to develop effective and efficient new working procedures. To et al. (2015) concluded that the transformational leadership dimension of intellectual stimulation affects employees' innovative performance. To et al. concurred with Paulsen et al. (2013) that perception regarding the leader's vision on innovation moderates employees' achievement on innovation. P1 and P3 mentioned that they give special attention to innovative activities and encourage all employees to develop better work processes. According to Ghasabeh et al. (2015), employees will successfully innovate to enhance the competitive advantage of their organizations only when they are encouraged physically and cognitively. P2 and P3 posited that they give special awards to employees who successfully develop and institutionalize a new way of service delivery. Li et al. (2015) reported on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee innovations with outcomes that are consistent with findings of Ghasabeh et al. (2015). Businesses that spend time on innovation are more likely to improve their employees' performance, growth, and sustainability (Camisón & Villar-López, 2014). The relevant school documents and participants' responses contained information regarding innovative policies and processes aimed at achieving improved employee performance. Transformational leadership is a significant factor in promoting innovation within an organization (Li et al., 2015). The outcomes of studies by Camisón and Villar-López (2014); and Li et al. (2015) on innovative employee performance suggested that small and medium scale private basic school proprietors who practice transformational

leadership inspired teachers' creativity and innovation for effective organizational performance and sustainability.

**Employee empowerment.** Participants expressed occurrences of empowered behavior in their organization illustrated through problem solving, decision-making, and knowledge sharing. Paulsen et al. (2013) posited transformational leaders encourage employees to engage in creative activities. P2 stated, "I like to have creative people around me". Compared to the results of research conducted by Lin and Hsiao (2014) on the relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and organizational citizenship behavior, participants in this study described occurrences of knowledge sharing among employees and enhanced meaning attributed to work tasks. Participants agreed that allowing employees to participate in making decisions about the school increased their personal worth. P3 stated, "It's important to raise the self-worth of the employee and give them some level of ownership. P2 offered that, "I do give them opportunities to have input that we use as a group, and they see me use [their ideas] on things that we try to implement." P1 said, "My employees know that I am always open." All participants linked employee performance and empowerment to the intellectual stimulation process of brain storming with employees. P3 asserted, "My employees feel empowered after each problem solving session." According to Beverborg et al. (2014), empowering and coaching employees help them rethink new strategies to handle old job challenges. P1 and P3 asserted that they deliberately pose mock operational business problem statements to provoke their employees to brainstorm. P2 added that to enhance employees' creative ability and confidence on the job, they seek the opinions of their

employees on pertinent business challenges. P2 said, "Do not think alone; think with them to enhance individual and organizational learning."

**Learning.** Intellectual stimulation promotes organizational learning (Ayoubi & Khalifa, 2015; Smothers, 2016), and enhances employee creativity and innovation (Seyal & Rahman, 2014). Participants stated that leaders high in intellectual stimulation promote organizational learning that yields positive business outcome as suggested by Berson et al. (2015). Therefore, Ghanaian private basic school proprietors high in intellectual stimulation enhance employee performance beyond expectations. Enhancing employee stake in the organization, creating awareness of pending challenges, and accentuating their ability to think through problems in diverse ways drive learning and performance (Mitra, 2013; Rust, Moorman, & van Beuningen, 2015).

Transformational leadership behavior of intellectual stimulation includes encouraging employees to learn from their creative and solve old problems in innovative ways (Syrek et al., 2013). Decision making and creative reasoning are leadership traits associated with innovation and employee empowerment (Beverborg et al., 2014). Through intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders challenge existing assumptions and integrate employees' perspective prior to decision making (Seyal & Rahman, 2014). Intellectual stimulation is a leadership strategy proprietors use when encouraging employees to push beyond mediocrity, which fosters employee productivity as suggested by the participants and concurred by Beverborg et al. (2014) and Seyal and Rahman (2014).

## Summary

Themes emerging from this study on proprietors of successful Ghanaian private basic schools were: (a) idealized attributes, (b) idealized behaviors, (c) individual consideration, (d) inspirational motivation, and (e) intellectual stimulation. These are consistent with the dimensions of transformational leadership skills as propounded by Bass and Avolio (1997). The themes were in tandem with the conceptual framework underlying the study, which was the transformational leadership theory as developed by Bass and Avolio (1997). The narratives of the participants indicated that direct relationships exist between transformational leadership style and employee performance as suggested by Bronkhorst, Steijn, and Vermeeren (2015). Findings from the study are consistent with extant literature on the transformational leadership paradigm and employee performance. Several researchers (Graves, Sarkis, & Zhu, 2013; Holstad et al., 2014; Lam & O'Higgins, 2013; Mohr, 2014; Syrek et al., 2013) confirmed that transformational leadership behavior is linked to productive employee outcomes including (a) satisfaction, (b) motivation, (c) performance, (d) emotional needs, and (e) organizational performance. Participants asserted that their leadership by example behavior, inspirational skills, and selfless attitude influence and empower their employees to excel. According to the literature, transformational leaders use (a) exemplary behaviors, (b) inspiration, (c) brain storming, and (d) selfless attitude (Aggarwal & Krishnan, 2013) to empower (Moore, Cangemi, & Ingram, 2013) and influence performance of employees (Aggarwal & Krishnan, 2013). Holstad et al. (2014) postulated that transformational leaders exemplify leadership skills and stimulate

employee interest and commitment to shared goals for enhanced productivity. Findings from the study aligned with Holstad's et al. postulation that leadership by example stimulates positive employment outcomes.

The outcome of this study aligns with Men's (2014) study of 400 participants in U.S. medium-sized companies. In the study, Men posited that transformational leaders engage employees in effective communication that improves the circulation of tacit knowledge in the organization and employee satisfaction. Kamisan and King (2013) showed that effective leadership is only possible through a transformational leadership approach, which aligns with the results obtained from this study. The results of this study also align with the conclusion from Matzler, Bauer and Mooradian (2015) on the linkage between transformational leadership behaviors and staff's work engagement and organizational knowledge creation. All participants stated that when they brainstorm with staff members on a problem, even after the meeting, discussions on the subject matter continue among the employees.

Transformational leaders exemplify behavior that stimulates followers' commitment to organizational goals (Holstad et al., 2014). The findings from this study align with the body of evidence on transformational leadership study propounded by Bass and Avolio (1997), and the findings show that transformational leadership skills of proprietors of Ghanaian private basic schools enhance employee performance.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

This study is important to understanding the leadership style proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee



performance. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. Findings from the study and recommendations will serve as the basis for the development of the leadership skills of proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools to achieve competitiveness for a greater global market share. The results could guide struggling proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools in Ghana to exhibit appropriate leadership behavior to perfect employees' commitment, innovation, and productivity. The findings from the study are in line with the transformative nature of transformational leaders as suggested by Mittal and Dhar (2015). Study results indicated that leadership strategies that brought new ideas and innovations enabled proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools to enhance employee performance and to remain competitive on the global market of private basic schools suggested by Matzler et al. (2015). Transformational leaders stimulate employees to be innovative and solve existing problems in ways that enhance productivity. When transformational leaders inspire and motivate employees, employees' functional capacity and productivity improve (Sangar & Rangnekar, 2014). Through a transformational leadership style, business leaders can stimulate employees to do things in a unique and creativity way (Mittal & Dhar, 2015). Inspiring followers to be productive, stimulating employees to be innovative, and developing individual skills of employees are hallmarks of transformational leaders (Den, Hartog, & Belschak. 2012).

Study findings are relevant to professional practice, as this study identified practical solutions for proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools to lead their businesses. In addition, the findings provide a practical guide for business owners to change their leadership skills and improve employee performance to increase growth and market share. This study's findings and recommendations added to the knowledge of business development through identifying the needed leadership skills that enhance employee performance.

### **Effective Business Practice**

The study's results are consistent with existing literature on effective business practices and emphasize the impact of transformational leadership on employees' performance. The rapid economic development along with increased globalization created the need for effective leadership, which can induce employee innovation and accentuate organizational competitiveness (Ghasabeh et al., 2015). Ghasabeh et al. (2015) concluded that transformational leadership facilitates tacit knowledge creation and propels employees' innovative skills. Accordingly, Ghasabeh et al. established the competency of transformational leaders in transforming organizations into a competitive entity in globalized markets. Through a transformational leadership style, leaders develop employee creativity to do things in innovative ways (Mittal & Dhar, 2015).

Findings from this study support effective business practice. Transformational leadership skills improve (a) employee-leader relationships, (b) business ethics, and (c) business performance. Findings from this study align with existing literature on transformational leadership and effective business practice. In conclusion, the

transformational leadership style of proprietors of Ghanaian private basic schools enhances the competitiveness of their schools through higher employee performance.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Effective leadership is indispensable for business competitiveness in the current global market (Kamisan & King, 2013), and ineffective leadership is a major cause of employees' poor performance (Islam & Ali, 2013). Studies by Caillier (2014) and McKnight (2013) indicated that leadership skills account for improved employee performance. According to Matzler et al. (2015), transformational leadership dimensions have higher leadership effectiveness on employee performance and business competitiveness in the global market than other leadership styles.

The implications for positive social change include the potential to develop leadership strategies for high employee productivity in basic private schools in Ghana. Economic growth occurs when employee productivity increases profitability and reduces unemployment in the Ghanaian economy. Increasing productivity of SME employees might reduce poverty because SMEs employ the poor (Kumi, Owusu-Mensah, & Winful, 2014). The failure of SMEs has contributed to the increase in poverty in Ghana because the majority of the population depends on SMEs for their livelihood (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Ado, 2012). Implementation of findings and recommendations from this study may contribute to proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools developing strategies for sustainability, which may reduce the unemployment problem in Ghana. Study findings may encourage business owners to adopt leadership practices that promote growth in employee performance. The study could affect social change because

when businesses are expanding, the demand for labor may increase and reduce the unemployment rate. Improved performance of employees of private basic schools could improve the educational standards of students, thus increasing the education success and potential employability of students. Well educated students could influence economic transformation and enhance the social well-being of the entire populace.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The study findings indicate identified relationship exists between transformational leadership behaviors and employee performance. Based on these findings, I recommend that business leaders review their leadership strategies and adopt transformational leadership behavior. Transformational leadership skills among proprietors of Ghanaian private basic school have proven effective in enhancing employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. Training in transformational leadership skills should dominate leadership training programs for supervisors, managers, head teachers, and leaders of private basic schools.

Any business entity that wants to increase productivity through enhanced employee performance may introduce their leaders to the transformational leadership style. Opportunities may arise to present the results of this study at professional conferences. I plan to publish this study in the ProQuest/UMI dissertation database and other scholarly journals. Also, I will write a white paper for the office of National Board of Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) in Ghana to consider incorporating findings in their training programs.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian private basic schools need in order to enhance employee performance. In this study, the main limitation was the sample size of participants. Future studies should include larger samples and quantitative or mixed methods to produce findings that will be generalizable to a larger population. This research study is limited to three private basic schools in the greater Accra region of Ghana; I would therefore recommend further studies with participants from other regions in Ghana. Bacha's (2014) study on the correlation between transformational leadership and performance was as geographically limited as this research project.

### **Reflections**

I had the opportunity to interview proprietors of Ghanaian private basic schools who are managing successful schools as businesses and have been in business for more than 5 years. This research project broadened my knowledge of doctoral research. My knowledge and understanding of leadership in small businesses, and specifically in small and medium private basic schools, grew through this study. Through purposeful sampling, I accessed participants that were relevant to the study, and all participants willingly accepted the invitation to participate.

All participants shared their lived experiences with enthusiasm. After exhausting interview questions, the participants and I discussed general business issues in Africa. The participants were at ease with me, as they educated me on matters of successful

business leadership. The findings from this study have changed my personal perception of leadership and employee productivity.

### **Conclusion**

Small and medium enterprises in Ghana, which include some private basic schools, are the mainstay of Ghanaian economy as 92% of all businesses in Ghana are small businesses (Benneh Mensah & Nyadu-Ado, 2012). SMEs are the main source of job creation (Amoako, 2013). One major challenge uncounted by SMEs in Ghana is the lack of transformational leadership skills to enhance employee productivity, as 60% fail within 3 to 4 years after inception (Amoako, 2013). The purpose of this study was to explore transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian private basic need to enhance employee performance. The study findings that participants used transformational leadership skills to enhance employee productivity for sustainability beyond 5 years will serve as a basis for the development of transformational leadership skills among Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools leaders to achieve economic growth in Ghana. According to Carmingnani (2009) effective business leaders, lead viable small, micro, and medium-sized enterprises in Ghana.

The findings from this study indicated that transformational leadership practices contribute to the survival and prosperity of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools. Developing a transformational leadership program for SMEs business leaders in Ghana will enhance employee productivity and the survival rate of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools. Adoption of these findings may assist

business executives improve their transformational leadership skills to enhance employee performance.

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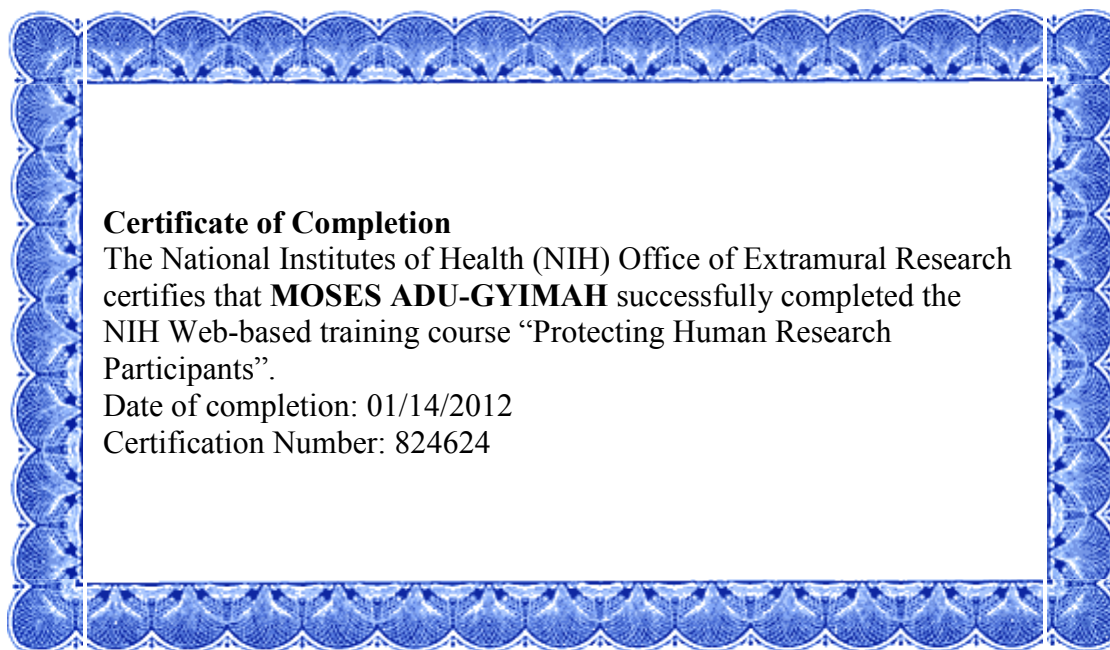
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## Appendix A: Human Subjects Research Certification



## Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in the Study

**WALDEN UNIVERSITY**  
Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

Date:

Re: Doctoral Study Research that may interest you

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Moses, a doctoral student in the Business Administration Program at Walden University. As part of my doctoral research study, I invite you to participate in my research study on transformational leadership skills that proprietors of Ghanaian small and medium scale private basic schools need to enhance employee performance for sustainability beyond 5 years. You must (a) be at least age 18, (b) have served as the proprietor of a small or medium scale private basic school in the Accra region of Ghana, (c) have a minimum of 5 years of success as a private basic school proprietor, and (d) have received 5 awards as an exemplary leader by the board of the PBSPM of Ghana for 5 consecutive years. If you accept my invitation to participate in this study, I will arrange for a face-to-face interview in a private and comfortable place at a time and date that are convenient for you. The interview will be recorded and will last approximately one hour, or until you feel you have answered the interview questions.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time, even after the interview. You will have the opportunity to ask questions before deciding to participate in this study. I assure confidentiality of all the information discussed during the interview as well as the identity of the participants and their organization. The interview will be

recorded for analysis, and the summary is reported in the study. Your individual responses will not be disclosed or published. I will also request you to review my summary of interview to ensure I have summarized the information accurately, which may take approximately 15 to 30 minutes. How do I contact you if you are interested in participation? Attached are the interview questions that I will ask each study participant.