

DECLINE IN ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN COMMUNITY 'A' AND 'B' JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS AND THE ROLE OF THE GHANA EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN (2010-2020)

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Abstract

This was a study aimed at exploring the causes of the decline in academic performance of pupils despite the implementation of Ghana's Strategic Plan on quality education in the Mumford Community A and B Junior High Schools in the Gomoa West. As a qualitative study, it adopted a case study design. In all, the researcher selected 24 participants for the study comprising of two headteachers, 14 teachers and eight immediate past pupils from a population of basic school teachers, pupils and graduates from Basic Education Certificate Examinations. The primary method employed to collect data was interview guide. The study revealed that inadequate infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning resources and poor communication were the main factors impeding the effective implementation of the Education Strategic Plan. The study concludes that the strategic plan does not address other factors affecting academic performance including home related and pupil characteristic issues which have been identified in this study. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the District Assemblies should prioritise the provision of school infrastructure and teaching and learning resources in their areas of jurisdictions for effective implementation of the Education Strategic Plan. Also, there should be broader stakeholder consultation and involvement in the process of developing and implementing strategic education plans.

Keywords: Education Strategic Plan, Implementation, Poor Academic Performance, Junior High School

Introduction

One management tool that has been acclaimed internationally as effective in improving the performance of private enterprises and state-owned organisations is the use of a strategic plan (Arasa & K'Obonyo, 2012). The value of strategic planning for any organisation is that it determines the organisation's success or failure (Bryson, 1988). Strategic planning identifies an organisation's mission and vision and how it is going to get there. It is the process of defining the direction of the institution and allocating resources to pursue this strategy (Mutuku & Mutuku, 2009). According to Chang (2008), a strategic plan is a living document that includes policy direction, implementation strategies, actions and benchmarks for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the expenditure framework which allows adjustments in areas for developments during execution.

The Introduction of strategies and plans in education had been to promote quality education and effective self-management. Such methods and procedures can lead to school's effectiveness, improvement and development when adequately implemented. Improving quality education has always been a primary policy objective of any educational system globally.

An educational system must therefore have a coherent educational improvement strategy to enhance quality and improve students' academic achievement (Childress, Elmore & Grossman, 2006; Childress, Elmore, Grossman & Johnson, 2007). An educational strategic plan has, thus, become an essential means through which countries seek to promote quality education and enhance the academic achievements of pupils at all levels of the educational system. Ghana, for example, implemented its fifth Education Strategic Plan (ESP) between 2010 and 2020. The plan spells out the strategies of the government for the education sector for the period, and it builds upon its four predecessors and 'visionary' designs such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). In doing so, the Ghana government aims to ensure that education makes a positive and permanent contribution to our national and international development goals.

Statement of the Problem

Hoyle (1986) argues that schools are established by individuals and the state to impart knowledge and skills to those who attend them. The success of any educational institution is measured by the performance of pupils in academic and non-academic contexts. The position of Hoyle (1986) is supported by Yusuf (2012) when he contended that the performance should not only rely on test and examination result. Despite these, the use of students' achievement in academic work to assess the success of educational institutions has gained ground. According to Ankomah, Koomson, Bosu and Oduro (2005), high academic performance, as measured by the examination results, is one of the primary goals of a school. However, there has been overwhelming evidence of poor academic performance among pupils of public schools in Gomoa West District. An analysis of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results of the District between 2012 and 2016 revealed an average percentage pass of pupils in eight subjects was 32%. The enormity of the problem of poor academic performance in the Gomoa West is highlighted by the researcher when the BECE results of basic schools like Mumford Community A&B Junior High Schools which are in a peri-urban town of Mumford were analysed. It revealed that the average percentage pass of pupils in the two schools between 2012 and 2016 was 19% for both schools.

In dealing with the issue of improving the quality of education and academic performance, the Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Education, has over the years adopted the use of educational strategic plans. One of such plans was the Ghana Strategic Plan on Quality Education (2010-2020) (Ministry of Education, 2012), which was implemented with the view to improve the

academic performance of primary school pupils in the country. However, despite the implementation of the plan, academic performances were low in the Basic schools in the Gomoa West District in general and Mumford Community A&B Junior High School (JHS) in particular. The study, therefore, was to find out the causes of poor academic performance in the Gomoa West District and to explore the best ways the Ghana Education Strategic Plan can be used to improve the academic performances of pupils in the District.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated by the researcher to guide the study.

1. What are the causes of the poor academic performances of pupils in Mumford Community A and B Junior High Schools in the Gomoa West District?
2. What factors impede the effective implementation of the Ghana Strategic Plan on Quality Education in Mumford Community A and B Junior High Schools leading to the poor academic performance of the pupils?

Factors Influencing Pupils' Academic Achievement

Researchers have given various factors for the poor performance of students. Rothstein and Gill (2000) argue that learning is not only a product of formal schooling but also of communities, families and peers. Socio-economic and socio-cultural forces can affect learning and thus, school achievement. They argue that the relative effects of home-related, school-related, student characteristics and teacher-related factors influence pupils' academic performance.

A child's performance in school can be influenced by a range of household factors. These include socio-economic status (education, occupation and income), size of the household, type of discipline at home, family structure, the level of parental involvement and interest in child schooling are all factors which affect performance in school. Environmental factors that have generally been identified as influencing academic performance include the availability of instructional resources, school location and quality of the physical facilities, class size and pupil-teacher ratio, teacher qualification and experience, and supervision. Instructional resources provide information, organise the scope and sequence of the information presented, and provide opportunities for pupils to use what they have learned (Lockheed & Verspoor, 1991). Students usually perform better when they have books or study aids to foster their learning. These study aids or material resources could be textbooks, teachers' guides, wall pictures, maps, atlases and other learning aids. The availability and use of teaching and learning materials affect the effectiveness of a teacher's lessons.

Several pupils' characteristics have generally been identified as influences to their academic performances. These characteristics include time with books and homework, attendance in school, pupils' attitude towards schooling, pupils' self-concept and motivation, health and nutritional status of pupils. According to Engin-Demir (2009), regardless of intelligence, students who spend more time on assignments and homework are critical are likely to improve their grades. The amounts of time students invest in reading, and other related activities have also been found to be strongly related to motivation. Etsey, (2005) found homework to be a correlate of academic performance.

Teacher factors which influence academic performance of pupils have been identified as teacher attendance in school, teachers' interest and motivation, and teaching effectiveness and methods of teaching. Teacher regularity in school is essential in terms of both children's access to education and the nature of that access. A widespread problem of teacher absenteeism is likely to contribute to poor pupil performance (Akyeampong et al. 2007).

Education Strategic Plan

Strategic planning in the educational situation has been defined differently by a number of writers. According to Kisembe and Were (2014), strategic planning is a process that is designed to move an educational organisation through the steps of understanding changes in the external environment, assessing the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organisation, developing a vision of the desired future for the organisation and some ways to achieve that mission, developing specific plans to get the organisation where it is to where it wants to be, implementing these plans and monitoring that implementation so that necessary changes or modifications can be made. Bryson (1988) also defines strategic planning as a “disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what a school is, what it does, and why it does it” (p.74). Johnson et al., (2008) however posit that to deliver the best results, strategic planning requires broad yet effective information gathering, development and exploration of strategic alternatives, and an emphasis on future implications of present decisions.

Ghana’s Strategic Plan on Quality Basic Education and Academic Performance

The Ghana’s Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2010 – 2020 spells out the strategies of the government for the educational sector. The plan builds upon its four predecessors and earlier visionary designs such as Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). The Strategic Goal for Basic Education under the ESP is to provide equitable access to good quality child-friendly universal basic education, by improving opportunities for all children in the first cycle of education at kindergarten, primary and junior high school levels. As indicated above, the issue of quality education at the primary level is allied to the crosscutting theme of ‘educational’ which seeks to improve quality of teaching and learning as well as promoting science and technical education;

1. Ensure that Basic Education (BE) pupils have access to relevant, up-to-date teaching/learning materials by 2012
2. Ensure that all Primary 6 graduates are literate and numerate (in English and a Ghanaian language)
3. Provide all BE schools with an up to-date curriculum relevant to personal and national development (Ministry of Education-Education Strategic Plan 2010 Vol.1 pg 25)

The specific targets of the strategic plan at the junior high school (JHS) level are as follows:

1. JHS textbook ratio of 1:1 for core subjects by 2012.
2. Computer teaching lab per JHS (10% of schools by 2015, 25% by 2020)
3. All Basic Education teachers have access to teaching support materials, including library facilities, by 2012.
4. Basic Education curriculum revised in 2012. BECE based on and examines the revised curriculum from 2013. (Ministry of Education-Education Strategic Plan 2010 Vol.2 pg 10)

Factors Affecting Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation is a connecting loop between formulation and control. Herbiniak (2006) argued that while strategy formulation is complicated, making strategy work and executing it is even more difficult. Similarly, Cater and Pucko (2010) concluded that while 80% of firms have the right strategies, only 14% have managed to implement them well. According to Mashhadi, Mohajeri and Nayeri (2008), among the factors that negatively affect the successful implementation of a Strategic Plan include organisational structure, organisational culture, information and communication technology, reporting systems, motivation and reward systems, the availability of adequate resources,

decision-making process, effective communication, education, capabilities and skills. Babaoglan (2015) further asserts that implementation of the strategic planning process requires a thorough analysis of the values in the organization, functional and situational plans and establishment of an effective communication network among school stakeholders. Although most authors agree that these factors affect strategy implementation, each factor's impact is at a different level and carries a separate force.

Methodology

This was a qualitative study underpinned by the interpretive paradigm. As a qualitative study, the researcher adopted the case study design to explore the causes of poor academic performance in the Mumford Community A&B Junior High School despite the implementation of the Ghana Strategic plan on quality education. The case study strategy was of particular interest to the researcher because he wished to gain a rich understanding of the phenomenon under study. According to Morris and Wood (1991), the case study strategy will be of particular interest to a researcher if he or she wishes to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research and the processes being enacted.

The researcher adopted a semi-structured interview as a tool for data collection. In all, the researcher selected twenty-four (24) participants comprising of two (2) head teachers, 14 teachers and eight immediate past pupils for the study. This sample size was chosen because such a size was manageable to achieve the purpose of the study. Creswell (2005), cited in Kusi (2012) argues that selecting a large number of interviewees for qualitative research, in particular, will result in superficial perspectives with the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site.

The recorded interviews were played and transcribed. The transcripts were thoroughly read through while the researcher underlined and noted all vital issues relevant to the research questions. The relevant issues were categorised according to their similarities and then developed into themes for the discussion. To attribute statements to the participants, the two headteachers were given pseudo names, Mr Avron and Mr. Keen while teachers were given the serial number PT-1 to PT-14, where PT represents a participating teacher. The eight old pupils were given the serial number POP-1 to POP-2, where POP stands for participating old pupil. In interpreting the data, the researcher identified emerging issues as they were narrated by respondents, how the problems relate to each other and meanings were drawn and discussed. The researcher again identified essential accounts, which he used to substantiate his claims in the analysis and discussions of the issues.

Discussions

The key issues that emerged from this study were related to the causes of poor academic performance of pupils in the selected schools, factors that impede the effective implementation of the Ghana Strategic Plan on Quality Education and the support systems needed for effective implementation of the Strategic Plan. The findings relating to each of these issues are presented and discussed below.

Causes of low academic performances of pupils in Mumford Community A and B Junior High Schools.

It emerged from the interview data that one teacher-related causes of poor academic performance were the use of Ghanaian language (Fante) as a medium of instruction by teachers at the Junior High School level. Some of the teachers interviewed confirmed this assertion:

“ ... Most teachers in this school use Fante in teaching because they believe that the kids do not understand the English language and therefore have to use the local

dialect. But the more they do that the more the pupils are unable to express themselves or write well in the English Language''. (PT-3)

Another teacher related factor for poor academic performance which emerged from the data is teacher absenteeism. As one teacher participant commented:

" ... Most of the teachers do not live with their families in this community, because of this; they normally leave school before the lessons end on Friday and return late on Monday. This result in teachers not teaching some topics before the end of the academic year". (PT-7)

The implication of the above comment is that teachers, rush to organise extra classes for the pupils before their final BECE, which negatively affect the performance in the final analysis. The findings of this study also identified pupils' characteristics that cause poor academic performance in the Mumford Community A&B Junior High Schools as absenteeism and poor attitudes towards homework and assignments. From the (Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results, the head teachers noted truancy and absenteeism as contributory factors to their poor academic performances. They explained that the community in which the schools are situated has fishing as its major economic activity. The pupils of these schools are, therefore, children and wards of fishermen, fishmongers and other workers in the community fishing industry. During the fishing season, most of the pupils absent themselves from school and engage in the fish business at the beach. These absentee pupils loose contact hours. The perennial absenteeism come to play when they write their final examination. Most of them fail abysmally.

This view was corroborated by all the teachers interviewed. A comment by an interviewee captures the views of the teachers on this matter:

" ... Sometimes when you are in the classroom teaching, and the pupils see people in the community carrying loads of fish in trays (brass pans) from the beach, it's an indication that there is fish at the beach and they (pupils) will be leaving the class one after the other until there is almost an empty class". (PT-13)

The above revelation affirms Allen, Meares, Washington and Welsh (2000) assertion that low attendance such as truancy or unexcused absence from school, cutting classes, tardiness, and leaving school without permission is seen as essential in determining pupils' academic achievement.

The data also revealed that another pupil related factor for the poor academic performances is the failure to do their home assignments. Majority of the teachers (9 out of the 14) indicated that pupils do not spend time on their books after school. Therefore, they do not work on assignments given to them. As noted by a participant teacher:

" ... I gave a child an assignment to be presented in two days, but for two weeks this child had not finished with the assignment".

A majority (6 out of the 8) of the old pupils interviewed indicated that they were unable to do assignments or homework given to them when they were in school because they had no one to help them with these assignments in their various homes. It could be deduced from the responses that pupils are not motivated to do the home works as their parents do not supervise nor encourage

them to do their home works. What it means is that teachers are not motivated to give pupils home works to complement contact hours in school. This attitude of the pupils goes finally to affect their academic performances negatively.

The above revelation regarding assignments and academic performance is supported by the literature. The amount of time students invests in homework, and other related activities are strongly related to motivation. Butler (1987, quoted in Etsey, 2005) found homework to be a correlate of academic performance. He stated that ‘homework bore a positive relationship with learning outcomes when it is relevant to learning objectives, assigned regularly in reasonable amounts, well explained, motivational and collected and reviewed during class time and used as an occasion for feedback to students’ (p. 3). Homework is, in reality, an interaction between school and the home, and an essential ingredient of the educational process when measuring academic achievement (Harbison & Hanushek, 1992; Alomar, 2006). Therefore, the teachers should find strategies to motivate the pupils to take their home works seriously.

With respect to home-related factors for the poor academic performance of pupils in the two schools understudy, the central issue that emerged from the analysis was the low economic status of parents of pupils. Below are the comments of the headteachers on the issue:

“ ... Most of our pupils live with their grandparents who make them sell every day after school; the kids do not study after school”. (PT-5).

I” ... t can be imagined, pupils engaging in trading activities to fend for the home. What this means is that they will not do their home works. They will come to school and lose concentration on the lessons taught because of the psychological pressures from home. As a result, such pupils are not motivated enough to learn, and this manifests itself in their poor academic performances.” (PT-8)

It also emerged that as a result of the low economic status of parents and guardians of pupils in the schools, some of the JHS girls are into sexual relationship with elderly men in order to secure their needs which parents and guardians are unable to provide. This behaviour, according to the majority of the teachers, has become a norm in the society which leads to some of the girls being pregnant during examination periods. The following comments captured from respondents represent this view.

“ ... It was only last year that my school did not record an incident of teenage pregnancy among the girls who wrote BECE”. (PT-11)

“ ... Can you believe that as a teacher, I once went to inquire about a girl who was absent in school in the morning in her house and I was told by the mother that she went to a sleepover at a man’s place and had not returned. (PT-14).

The implication of the above is that some of the parents of the girls are irresponsible as they do not care about the consequences of the sexual escapades of their teenage girls. Thus, some of the girls end with poor academic results.

Another home-related cause that emerged from the data was parental irresponsibility. As it emerged from the data, the main economic activity of Mumford is fishing, and this activity involves a lot of migration to other fishing community to work. As a result, most pupils in the community have little or no care regarding their education, and this adversely affects their academic performances. On this, one of the headteachers expresses his view by saying:

“ ... Sometimes these children are left to take care of themselves by their guardians in school.....even what they will eat is a problem..... and these affect them academically”. (PT-5).

The teachers interviewed supported this view as it emerged that parents or guardians are not willing to help their wards with supplementary reading books for pupils to use at school and in the house. This situation was explained as mainly due to the low economic status of some of these parents. A teacher commented as follows:

“ ... Parents are not willing or are unable to buy learning materials such as textbooks to support their wards. Meanwhile, some of them have their children in private schools, and there they provide them.....we try to organise extra classes for them but even that one, attendance and payments are not encouraging”. (PT-2).

On their part, six of the old pupils interviewed admitted that they sometimes play truancy to engage in fishing activities at the beach to fend for themselves, which led to their academic performances. Literature available supports this revelation. According to Asikhia (2010), pupils from low homes are forced out of school and made to engage in hawking, selling, packaging drinking water and the likes to save money for their school expenses. Most of the time, they cannot afford instructional materials and are always at the mercy of examiners during the examination period. The persistence of this experience in the life of an individual student may spell doom for his academic success.

Furthermore, parental involvement tends to influence children's school achievement. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1987) indicated that pupils with parents who are involved in their education tend to have better academic performance than pupils whose parents are not involved in their school. But in the case of the two schools understudy, the same cannot be said.

It was also revealed the lack of indigenous role models has also contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils. This was mentioned by eight of the teachers interviewed who noted that there are no people in education. Therefore, the pupils are not motivated to pursue education with all seriousness. As commented by one of the teachers:

“ ... One other situation is that, it is difficult to find people from the community who attended this school and through education has become successful. Most of such members of the community live in the bigger cities and hardly visit the community. The existence of such people within the community could have encouraged parents and pupils to be more serious with their education”. (PT-7)

It has also emerged from six of the old pupils (which forms the majority) interviewed, that they were not living with both parents. The demographic information shows that six out the eight pupils interviewed were living with only their mothers, one was living with his father whiles the remaining one was living with her grandmother. There were only three who lived with both parents. Broken homes are known to have adverse effects on the academic performance of children. Such families are faced with financial challenges, assumption of new roles, and reorganisation of routines and schedules (Agulanna, 1999). These conditions are not conducive for effective parenting. This is because when the single parent is overburdened with responsibilities and by their own emotional reaction to

their situation, they often become irritable, impatient and insensitive to their children's needs. Such conditions do not provide a conducive environment for academic excellence (Uwaifo, 2008).

With respect to school-related causes, the researcher was considering how school environmental factors have contributed to the poor academic performance of its pupils of the schools under study. Data from headteachers, teachers and pupils have been analysed and discussed to illuminate the school-related factors.

One of the headteachers was of the view that the School Management Committee was ineffective.

“ ... The children do not come to school during the fishing season and parents do not take responsibility either, and the SMC that is supposed to take action was not functioning’ (Pat-5).

This position was corroborated by eight of the teachers interviewed as it is captured by the response of one of them.

“ ... I have been teaching in this school for the past five years, and I do not remember one single time the SMC has met teachers to discuss about the welfare of the school”. (PT-4).

In Ghana, it is required by an act of parliament (Education Act, 2008) that each school community has a School Management Committee (SMC). The role of the SMC is to monitor the pupils' performance and engage with leaders and authorities to enhance the quality of education. Besides members of the community, an SMC consists of representatives from the school, Ghana Education Service (GES) and the District Assembly (DA). However, even though these two school communities have an SMC, they are dormant according to the interviewees.

“ ... I think the Circuit Supervisors have also contributed to the poor academic performance of pupils in this school. This is because all that they are interested in is the inspection of lesson notes and not the method of delivery by teachers” (PT-2).

Another school-related cause of the poor academic performance of pupils that emerged high is pupil population. Education quality is much higher when the pupil-teacher ratio is much lower, and this improves students' achievement. It was however revealed that both schools were two stream schools with a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:60.

The following comments by some participating teachers highlight the issue:

“ ... Our pupil population per class is quite high.....I am for instance handling more than fifty pupils in a class, and as a core subject teacher, I sometimes teach all the classes from JHS 1-3 in a day which is too much. With this, you are unable to give enough exercises and assignments. (PT-9)

“ ... With my class size, I spend more time in maintaining discipline in class rather than teaching’ (Participant teacher). (PT-11)

Alderman, Orazem and Paterno (2001) contributed to this discussion; their study concluded that higher student-teacher ratio had a consistently negative effect on student achievement, particularly on language skills.

Factors Impeding Implementation of the Strategic Plan

A number of factors, namely inadequate infrastructure, material resources and management related issues were identified as impediments to the implementation of the Education Plan in the schools under study.

One of the infrastructural issues about the Education Strategic Plan revealed was inadequate classroom blocks. Both headmasters stated that the classroom block available is not adequate to accommodate their pupil population. According to one of the headteachers, his school has a total enrollment of 314 pupils which is accommodated by a six-unit classroom block. Comments such as “we need more classrooms for our school”, “the classrooms are not enough” by most of the teachers interviewed supported the view of the headteachers.

Unavailability of computer laboratories was also revealed as a factor impeding the implementation of the strategic education plan in the schools under study. It was also revealed that there is no public computer laboratory for the cluster of school in the Mumford community.

Further to the unavailability of computer laboratories were inadequate computers for practical lessons. It was revealed that there was an average 20 computers in each of the schools under study which is used by about 300 pupils in each school. The following comments of the teachers interviewed supported this revelation:

“ ... I organise pupils into groups of about five and assign them one computer during practical lessons, and this does not make lessons effective enough”. (PT-6)

“ ... since the computers are not enough, there is so much pressure on them and as a result, they break down frequently”. (PT-15)

The old pupils corroborated this. Some of them indicated that they hardly had practical lessons in computing when they were in school. As commented by a participant,

“ ... Computer lessons?.....I did not touch any computer in my school all through my stay in school. There is this computer training centre in town which gave us the opportunity to physically see how a computer looks like.”. (POP-3)

It was also revealed by the headteachers that none of the schools had access to electricity thereby impeding practical lessons in Information Communication Studies.

This is contrary to the target of the strategic plan which aims at providing 10% of basic schools with computer laboratories by 2012 and 25% by 2020.

The study further revealed that none of the schools has a library. Again, this is impeding the effective implementation of the strategic plan to improve academic performance as the plan aims at providing access to libraries for all basic schools by 2012.

The Ghana Education Strategic Plan aims at ensuring that Basic Education pupils and teachers have access to relevant, up-to-date teaching/learning resources. It specifically targets the following:

- JHS textbook ratio of 1:1 for core subjects by 2012.
- All BE teachers have access to teaching support materials by 2012.

The core subjects for Junior High School pupils are English language, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Both headteachers and teachers interviewed indicated that they have been receiving supplies for three of the core textbooks namely English, Mathematics and Science which almost every student have access to one. However, text books for social studies are not provided. Some of the comments of the head teachers and teachers on this issue have been captured as follows:

“ ... In the 2014/15 academic year I received 60 text books each for English, Science and Mathematics for 62 JHS 1 pupils, in the 2015/2016 academic year we were supplied 65 text books each of the same subjects for 70 JHS 1 pupils, so for the core text books I can say that all pupils have access to one in the school except social studies books”. (PHT-2)

“ ... We get supplies for English and mathematics text books but the problem is the other subjects”. (PHT-1)

“ .. Ever since I came to this school, I have never seen a text book for ICT before.. because of this you have to spend major part of instructional time copying notes and drawing diagrams on the chalkboard instead of teaching”. (PT-4)

The interviews further revealed that pupils are not allowed to send text books home as result pupils do not have access to reference books when they are home. This is captured by the comment of one of the headteachers interviewed.

“ ... pupils do not have enough text books as a result, they use them in groups.... also they are not allowed to send the books home so they have no reference books for studies in the home and their parents are not ready to buy them some...some years back we allowed them to send the books home with the caution that parent will pay if the books are destroyed or missing but we couldn't enforce the sanction while most of the books were not returned”. (PHT-2)

This comment by the head teacher was supported by the old pupils as all of them indicated that they had access to few textbooks when they were in school.

With regards to teaching and learning materials, the head teachers indicated that the school seldom receive teaching and learning materials and most of what they have are either out of date or completely obsolete. Seven of the teachers interviewed revealed that they have to personally finance the purchase of TLR's they need. Three of the teachers also indicate that they improvise TLR's. As asserted by Lockheed and Verspoor (1991), instructional materials provide information, organise the scope and sequence of the information presented, and provide opportunities for pupils to use what they have learned. Pupils usually perform better when they have books or study aids to foster their learning. These study aids or material resources could be textbooks, teachers' guides, wall pictures, maps, atlases and other learning aids. The availability and use of teaching and learning materials affect the effectiveness of a teacher's lessons. The absence of text books and TLMs is seen

as an impediment to the implementation of the Ghana Strategic Plan on Education and literature available support this. According to Mashhadi et al (2008), among the factors that negatively affect the successful implementation of a Strategic Plan include the availability of adequate resources.

The first management issue which served as an impediment to the implementation of the strategic plan on education was lack of knowledge about the plan. It was revealed that all the head teachers and teachers interviewed had no knowledge about the Ghana Strategic Plan on Education at the basic school level.

As stated by one of the participant head teachers,

“ ... I am not aware of any strategic plan on basic education.....when the circuit supervisors are given information by the district directorate regarding some of these issues they do not provide us with detail information.”

Fulmer (1990) mentioned that human resources management plays an important role in the effective implementation of strategic plans. It is important for both organisation departments and employees to be enthusiastic about the strategy implementation. The lack of knowledge about the Ghana Strategic Plan on Education by head teachers and teachers is thus an impediment to the effective implementation of the plan.

All the head teachers and teachers interviewed indicated instructions in their school are based on the revised 2012 syllabus as prescribed by the strategic plan. It was however revealed that having access to the revised syllabus is a challenge. This comment by Pat-5 support this revelation,

“ ... our teachers are guided by the new syllabus for basic schools in all subject areas but the challenge we have is that these syllabus are not provided in hard copies.....we are given in soft copies on CD's and most of these soft copies are unable to open when we bring them to school.”

Regarding training on the new syllabus, responses were mixed. The head teachers responded that they have received training on the syllabus. Nine of the teachers indicated that they have never received any training on the syllabus they are using to teach. Five of the teachers indicated that they received training on the syllabus in their subject areas during their training in the training college and the university while two indicated they have been trained in the new syllabus.

Conclusion

The findings suggested that the Ghana Strategic Plan on Education (2010-2020) (Ministry of Education, 2012), addresses issues such the provision of infrastructure (Classroom blocks, Library and Computer Laboratory), materials resources (Core text books, computers and teaching and learning materials), review and update of curriculum to meet current demands of education which are all aspects of school and management related issues to enhancing quality education. These targets are saddled by impediments such as inadequate infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning materials, and poor communication at the schools under study. Furthermore, the strategic plan does not address other factors affecting academic performance like the home related and pupil characteristic issues which have been identified in this study. Hence the continual poor academic performance of pupils of Mumford Community A & B Junior High Schools irrespective of the implementation of the plan since 2010 to date.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that District Assemblies should prioritise the provision school infrastructure and TLR's in their areas of jurisdictions for effective implementation of the Education Strategic Plan. Also, there should be broader stakeholder consultation and involvement in the process of developing and implementing education strategic plans. This consultation will first ensure that all issues relating to the schools improvement are adequately catered for. Furthermore, head teachers, teachers and community members through the School Management Committees (SMCs) should be educated on the strategic plan so that they can adopt the National Strategic Plan to develop school specific strategic plans.



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