School and Community partnership in promoting Quality education in Ghana: Issues from Atwima Nwabiagya District

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Abstract: **It has become obvious in recent years that Ghanaian public education system is struggling to connect with the specific communities, families and more especially the children it serves. Hence, the study was conducted to unearth schools and community partnership in promoting quality education in Ghana. Descriptive survey design was the research design for the study. In all 16 junior secondary schools in the Atwima Nwabiagya district of Ashanti Region of Ghana were sample. The respondents were 24 head teachers, 148 teachers and 73 community members. Questionnaire was the data collection instrument. Pearson correlation and multiple regression procedure were used to analyse the data. The analysis led to a conclusion that school community relations in Atwima Nwabiagya district were effective. Among the conclusions of this research was that there are so many strategies that can be employed to connect schools and their communities to achieve quality education. The study recommends that schools should necessarily understand the opinion of communities regarding both broad educational issues and day to day operation of the schools. Again, vigorous effort should be made at both the state and local government level to sensitize citizens on the need for their participation in the education of their children.**

*Keywords***: Parent-Teacher Association, School Management Committee, School-community partnership, Quality education, School community relation**

I. INTRODUCTION

There have been various platforms as well as many opinion leaders lamenting about poor performance of Basic Education Certificate Examination (B.E.C.E) results, with some schools scoring as low as zero percent (Wadja, 2019). If the school and the community are well connected, these unpleasant situations and if not totally eliminated, will be brought to the barest minimal. Epstein (2018) believes that it is indeed necessary for families and community institutions to collectively agree upon their goals and decide how to reach the very schools within their catchment areas. Undoubtedly, it is only when these are done that every benefit in context values, culture and learning the school provides for their students can be accomplish (Bruner, 2020).

Considering secondary education reforms in Ghana in recent times, one can say that it has brought about increase in enrolment and has resulted in infrastructural deficit such as classrooms, offices, workshops, among others, Nyasor, (2017). This therefore require the provision of these key educational tools for optimal students' performance. In fact, these resources cannot be provided solely by the government if community educational stakeholders are working as expected. While, the parents are expecting so much from the government, the later seems satisfied of what it is doing towards education Roodsaz, (2018).

The focus of this study which is on Junior high Schools in Atwima Nwabiagya district also cannot survive without their communities. Communities in Atwima Nwabiagya district have over the years have paid lip service to their schools in terms of ownership Komey, (2016). Observations made by the researchers seem to suggest that these communities have not done much in the areas of fund-raising, provision of facilities, teaching and learning. According to Stamp, (2019) schools have to do everything possible to bring these communities closer to reap the benefits needed for the survival of the two institutions. A closer look at the schools' resources such as library, workshop, furniture and classrooms are either not available or in good shape. With this state of affairs every necessary effort should be put in place to connect the school and the communities to contribute their quota to develop and provide quality education to these schools.

1.1 Statement of the problem

In the bid of the government to improve basic education delivery in Ghana, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the efforts of Education for All (EFA), 1991 approaches have been implemented. These notwithstanding, basic education delivery in Ghana over the years has witnessed several challenges hence affecting its quality. Teacher quality and retention still remains unachievable. Scholars agreed that teachers matter for students' learning, but there is much disagreement about how to best strengthen

teaching quality (Johnson, 2012). It is a fact that education in Ghana continues to be guided by various education Acts, and programmes, (Fielmua, 2012). Despite the above, Atwima Nwabiagya District schools have suffered myriads of educational challenges with respect to infrastructure and effective teaching and learning. These reasons above motivated the researchers to undertake this study in order to investigate how communities and schools in Atwima Nwabiagya District are connecting one another to promote quality education among schools in the district.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The study was undertaken to investigate the school and community partnership in promoting quality education in the Atwima Nwabiagya District of Ghana. Specifically, the objective of the study was to determine whether or not there is cordial relation between JHS schools and communities in Atwima district of Ashanti Region of Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What strategies can connect the schools and community partnership in promoting quality education?
2. What is the relationship between schools and community partnership in promoting quality education?

II. REVIEW LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Exploring concepts: Community, Partnership and School-community partnership Community

2.1.1 Defining the term 'Community'

There are two ways to define the term "community." To begin with, it refers to where people live. This viewpoint implies that people separated by a specific boundary do not form a single community. Second, the term "community" refers to individuals or organizations who share a common cultural heritage, language, social interactions, and shared interests and vision within or beyond local boundaries (Brower, 2020; Goel, 2018). The second meaning demonstrates that a community, in terms of people and organization, is not bound by geographical boundaries. This implies that the shared heritage, shared interests, language, and social interactions of individuals or organizations from various geographical areas bind such individuals or organizations to one community. Following Brower and Goel, the current study argues that defining school-community within the confines of local boundaries may have a negative impact on the success of school-community partnerships. As a result, schools may fail to identify potential contributors in school-community partnerships if they will only consider communities as being constrained by their local boundaries. As a result, members of a school community should be determined by their interests in the school's affairs rather than by their ethnicity. Hence, the researchers define school-community as the stakeholders who may have an interest in a school in a specific area but do not

live in the same geographical area as the school. Businesses, higher education institutions, research institutes, government departments or agencies, faith-based organizations, and other non-profit organizations that may be interested in a school's work, and usually interact with schools are included in this definition of school community.

2.1.2 Defining the term 'Partnership'

The term "partnership" comes from the business world (Blok, 2019). A contractual relationship between two or more (but not more than twenty) individuals or organizations who agree to share profits and losses incurred by an undertaking is defined as a partnership in the business discipline. The business perspective appears to have a significant impact on how this concept is understood and applied in education. For example, Naidu, Joubert, Mestry, Mosoge and Ngcobo (2008) employ a similar meaning of the concept and define partnership as "an association of two or more people in an undertaking, sharing risks and profits". Other authors, such as Adams and Smith (2003) and Patton (2002), have used the terms "partnership" and "collaboration" interchangeably. According to these authors, "collaboration" is rooted in an understanding of interdependence among different people or organizations. They add that collaboration is defined by the mutual and reciprocal provision of services by the two groups or individuals. The implication is that in collaboration or partnership, partners collaborate and share responsibilities and outcomes, and there is a strong belief that both partners can contribute to collaborative initiatives. As a result, the researchers broaden their definition of partnership in this study to include a process of combining intangible and tangible capacities of individuals or groups with the goal of achieving collective goals of all partners.

2.1.3 School and Community partnership

The concepts "community" and "partnership" are embedded in the concept "school-community partnership." As a result, school-community partnerships can be defined as connections formed between schools and individuals, organizations, and businesses in order to directly or indirectly promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Following this usage in the literature, Valli, Stefanski, and Jacobson (2018) define school–community partnerships as deliberate efforts to establish long-term relationships between schools or school districts and community organizations. This definition of school-community partnerships, according to Zuckerman (2019), aims to address the challenges of contemporary governance by bringing together partners from various private and public sectors in formalized collaborations to make decisions in a specific school. Zuckerman's view suggest that school-community partnerships should take a more holistic approach by addressing factors that contribute to low school achievement, such as early childhood education and out-of-school learning, preventative physical and mental healthcare, and family engagement and support. Similarly, in this study, school-community partnership has been conceptualised as a process in which some or all of the

stakeholders mentioned (e.g., universities, government organizations, local non-profit and faith-based organizations, and families) collaborate with the school to achieve common goals.

2.2. Way's school and community can connect

School-community partnerships can interconnect together with many resources and strategies to enhance communities that support all youth and their families, (Olson 2018). They could improve schools, strengthen neighbourhoods and lead to a noticeable reduction in young people's problems. Building such partnerships requires visioning, strategic planning, creative leadership and new multifaceted roles for professionals who work in schools and communities (Sheninger, 2019). Garrett et al (2017) also gave varieties of activities in which schools can become involved to help improve school community relations through encourage community use of school facilities, the school giving gold cards in the presence of the community and many more. The school according to Scully et al (2019) must become better modes in cooperating in community as well as teaching and learning. In Africa today, we say that education is a preparation for life (Sleeter 2017). We prepare for life in the villages and in the towns, on the farms and in workshops, factories and offices, in schools and in churches, in local and national governments. One of the cardinal aims of primary education according to Noddings (2017), is the ability of the pupils to think through moral questions and make decisions about moral choices. Teaching is a group enterprise according to (Tan and Li, 2019) which includes teacher-pupils, teacher-teacher, teacher-head, teacher-parent and teacher-community. Those externalisms, they put it, are the main influence of teaching process. To Tan and Li (2019), community education could be quite essential to the achievement of a coordination of all educative agencies and influence within a community. Such education does not come about by chance but must be planned and nurtured. People in the community serve as school management committee (SMC) members and mutually keeping with a spirit not only of help to self but of help to others. Communities are public education's greater resources. They are urged to galvanized policy makers, employers and other tax payers to support local school initiatives (Cochran-Smith et al 2018). Over the past decade, citizens across the entire spectrum of political persuasions have criticized and inform public education. Teachers and the community including opinion leaders need to shift greater control. The community education concept strives to be all-inclusive. In a broader sense, it enables the community to strengthen the schools and the schools to strengthen the communities (Cochran-Smith et al 2018).

Schools in the community are the pivot around which the whole community revolved. In the public-school model in the town, School Management Committees (SMC's) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA's) come together to provide support and some form of development. Public schools promote a comprehensive child development (Taylor, Oberle,

Durlak and Weissberg, 2017). In spite of many difficulties, they strife to elevate learning, and to encourage town and family engagement with initiatives that extend beyond traditional curriculum. Schools in the community also seek to develop academic, social, emotional, and physical competencies of the pupils thereby strengthening families and the towns or communities (Prentice, 2017). Wilkinson and Cave (2018) states that, an internal communication plan is critical and the image a school portrays through the communication of teaching and non-teaching staff is important. He explained that, the head-teacher and teachers rank first as sources of information and their impressions with the public are the most powerful.

Communities that attempt to involve citizens in education often face obstacles (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Many people who want to be involved do not know where to begin. Others feel too overwhelmed or unprepared. Some feel disconnected because they don't have children in the schools. Still others are put off by the rancorous debate that often surrounds school issues. Student development and learning is critical for the future. The growing demands and importance of the skills necessary for our students to effectively function as future leaders of our society guides us to extend support from the community and parents. According to Shatkin and Gershburg (2007), the "purpose of school-community relations has important factors that can benefit one another". As a teacher leader, the role of the community and parents for student development and learning will be utilized by encouraging them to become active participants in the lives of the students. As a teacher leader, the support of the community and parents will cause students to experience a well-balanced education. One of the best ways to connect and create an authentic bond is to go to the people who matter most, and meet them on their own turf. Putnam (2016) postulates that a series of community walks are a great way to start. Get your teachers, some local businesses on board and go and knock-on people's doors, visit local businesses and senior homes and talk with them. Try the same approach with groups of students. This time let the students communicate what they hope and wish for their school and encourage them to ask for mentoring and support. Any community organization or coalition can sponsor study circles on education, (Burkhart-Kriesel et al., 2019). Parent-teacher organizations, school boards, school councils' teachers' unions, student groups, chambers of commerce, neighbourhood associations, government agencies, religious organizations, urban leagues, volunteer centres, Head Start programs, community colleges, universities all can provide opportunities for community members to talk about education.

A visual representation of your community and the various skills people have to offer is a super way to understand what community resources are available. If you build one, also point out the materials people can supply at cost or for free, the time they can invest in projects, and how they can connect to curriculum, and classroom activities. Include the networks they can utilize to raise awareness of the needs of local

children and families, and always to promote and foster resource-sharing and collaboration.

2.3 Benefits of School Community partnership

School community relationship is a mutual understanding through which the school and the community link with each other for the achievement of goals of the community and school too. School is a social organization functions properly on the effective interrelationship within it and with its associate communities. An issue in a school affects the community likewise to what happens in the community affects school. This implies that the community builds its schools likewise to the schools (Sidhu, 2007). Therefore, school relation with the community is mutually interdependence. School community relationship helps to improve the quality of education for all children. It helps parents and other citizens recognize their responsibility for the quality of education. The student use skills acquired at school to entertain and serve members of the community. The partnership may involve use of school or neighbours facilities and equipment, sharing other resources, collaborative fund raising and grant applications, volunteer assistance, mentoring and training from professionals and others with special expertise, information sharing and dissemination, networking, recognition and public relations, shared responsibility for planning, implementation and evaluation of programs and services, expanding opportunities for internships, jobs, recreation and building a sense of community (Frankl,2016). Encourage community use of school facilities: Often the school building sits empty after the end of the normal school day. Encouraging non-profit community groups to use the facilities is not only good use of resources but also provides opportunities for the schools to get involved in community projects. School resources are very important in promoting school community relationship.

Egbezor (2005) noted that the classrooms are used for adult literacy activities nationwide, for public health activities like immunizations, public enlightenment exercises, in emergency epidemic situations and school building are converted into make shift hospitals. School buildings are also put into use during voting exercises. This will help establish good relationship with the community. School library can equip a room with books that parents can come to read and borrow. The books to be provided should be of interest to the parents such as books on child psychology, married life, current affairs and health care. Community organizations can be allowed to use school hall for social events, meetings, games and festivals.

Community resources that partner schools in Ghanaian schools include:

- Ministry of Women and Children (Departments of Children & Family Services, Social. Welfare, Office of Education, Police & Fire Departments, Library Boards, etc.)
- Districts Agencies.
- Women Organizations.

- Service Clubs & Philanthropic Organizations (Lion's Club, Rotary Club, veteran's groups, Charitable Fund, Community Foundation, Southeast Community Foundation, District Services Fund, etc.)
- Youth Agencies & Groups (Boys & Girls Clubs, scouts, Cedars Youth Services, Child Advocacy Centre, etc.)
- Sports/Health/Fitness/Outdoor Groups (YMCA of Churches, athletic leagues, local gyms, conservation associations, etc.)
- Community-Based Organizations (Neighbourhood and homeowners' associations, Neighbourhood Watch/Patrol, block clubs, housing project associations, economic development groups, community development corporations, civic associations)
- Faith Community Institutions (The Christian Council, Catholic. Secretarial, Adventist Relieve Agency (ADRA).
- Ethnic Associations, example (Atwima Nwabiagya Residents Associations in Home and Abroad).
- Artists and Cultural Institutions (Museums, art galleries, zoo, theatre groups, TV & radio stations, literary clubs, art groups, writers' organizations, collector's groups)
- Businesses/Corporations/Unions (Neighbourhood business associations, Chamber of Commerce, Goodwill Industries, local shops, restaurants, banks, school employee unions)
- Media (Local FM Stations, Local newspapers, TV & radio, local access cable)
- Family Members, Local Residents, Senior Citizens Groups.
- Online Resources Relevant to School-Community Relations.

2.4 Obstacle to School Community Relations

Eyferth (2020) noted that a visit to our junior high schools would reveal how members of some communities fold their arms waiting for government to maintain the tradition of construction and maintenance of physical structure, the supply of stationeries and meeting the current expenditure needed for first cycle education. Community collaboration is not an option. It is the driving force for developing the supports that enable children and youth to learn and succeed and help families and communities thrive. Collaboration is a difficult task, with many barriers to overcome. However, the resulting communication among community agencies and schools, unity of vision within the community, integration and enhancement of agency services, and community support of common goals are well worth the effort (Provinzano et al., 2018).

School–community collaboration is essential to providing the comprehensive academic and social services needed for youth at risk of dropping out of school to succeed academically

(Provinzano et al., 2018). The sad irony of this shift in the community/school relationship is that, as the relationship disintegrates, research shows the ever-increasing necessity of a positive relationship for schools to succeed (Provinzano et al., 2018). Strong relationships based upon trust and cooperation amongst teachers, principals, parents, and community residents. Not knowing how to contribute: Some parents believe they have talents but do not know whether they are needed or how to contribute them to the school (Provinzano et al., 2018). Not understanding the school system: Many parents are unfamiliar with the system

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design of the study

Descriptive survey design was the research design for the study. Descriptive survey involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of interest. It therefore determines and reports events as they occur naturally (Gay, 1992). This design allows researchers to describe situations as they are and to generalize from a sample to a population.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of two-hundred and twenty-three respondents were studied using a multi-stage sampling technique. All the twenty-four head-teachers were purposively sampled. Eighty-four male teachers, sixty-four female teachers and seventy-three community members were also selected purposively. Simple random sampling was used in selecting three teachers from each stream of school while purposive sampling techniques was again used to select schools from urban, rural and unit schools. We used stratified random sampling for selecting twenty out of seventy-eight schools as well as its community members. Stratified random sampling was used to select 16 schools out of 78 schools in the district. In addition, we used stratified sampling technique for selecting four Junior High Schools from each of the educational zones. They are Nkawie, Abuakwa, Akropong, and Mfensi, all in Atwima Nwabiagya district.

3.3 Research Instrument

The instrument used for this research was questionnaire. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2017), a questionnaire is a form of inquiry document which contains a systematically completed and well-organized series of questions intended to elicit for the information which will provide insight into the nature of the under study. The questionnaire was used to collect data from head teachers, teachers and the community members and consisted of parts A., B, C, and D. In all forty-eight items made up the questionnaire. The questions were mainly of close-ended items with a Likert scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

The instrument was pilot-tested in five schools in the Atwima Kwawoma District. These schools were selected because they share lots of od demographic characteristics with the study area. The pilot-testing was done to test the validity and reliability of the instrument, which was to be used for the data collection. The pilot-testing involves testing the questionnaire on a small number of people who have the same characteristics as the population before using it for the actual study. This provides an opportunity to assess the appropriateness and practicality of the data collection instruments. It also enables the researchers to check if the items are easily understood and there are no problems to do with length, sequencing of questions and sensitive items among others. Thus, the pilot-testing helps to improve questions, formats and the scales (Hashemifardnia, Namaziandost and Shafiee, 2018).

The validity of the instrument was tested by content The researchers tried to ascertain the content validity of the instrument by submitting it to the experts in test construction for their perusal and comments. The reliability of the instrument was computed using the Cronbach Coefficient alpha. The alpha value was 0.84. According to Robinson, Shaver and Wrightsman (1996), a minimum internal consistency coefficient of 0.70 is good. Since the alpha value of the instrument was above 0.70, the instrument was considered as reliable with the sample.

3.5 Data Collection

The researchers personally visited all the selected junior high schools during the period of data collection. The researchers, with the help of research assistants, established rapport with the school administrators and other members of school community on their arrival. After making formal introduction, there researchers and research assistants made the respondents understood that the questionnaire was only meant for research purposes and information obtained was to be treated in strict confidence. The researchers, with the aid of the research assistants guided the respondents on how to fill in the questionnaire. For the sake of respondents who needed some explanations on the instrument, research assistants were asked to guide them on how to fill in the instrument. This method is deemed the best because it facilitated on the spot collection of the completed instrument. Personal visitation to the selected schools by the researchers made it possible to get more accurate information. A total of 245 copies of the questionnaire were produced and distributed. The researchers were able to retrieve all the 245 copies.

3.6 Data Analysis procedure

The data collected from the respondents were carefully checked. Individual items of each of the copies of the questionnaire were checked as regards the responses given. Data were analysed through the use of the SPSS. Quantitative techniques such as frequencies, percentages, Pearson correlation and multiple regression procedure were used to analyse the data. The results of the analysis were presented in tables. These techniques include frequency count, simple percentages and tables.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Multiple regression analysis of the strategies that connect the schools and the community in promoting quality education.

The analysis of the multiple regression of the dependent variable on the predictor variables gives the coefficients of the predictor variables, the standard error, the level of significance, the correlation (R), the R^2 and the adjusted R^2. In the analysis, when quality education was regressed on the predictor variables, thus, regular school visits, involvement in co-curricular, sense of ownership, cordial social-community relationship, involvement of communal labour and regular PTA meetings, all but one of the predictors (sense of ownership) was found not to be significant predictor of quality education. This disclosure leans towards the fact that most of the predictor variables have a positive influence when it comes to quality of education in Junior High Schools in Ghana. This disclosure also supports the views of Taylor et al (2017) that schools in community are the pivot around which the whole community revolved. In the public-school model, School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) come together to provide some support which promote a comprehensive child development. More so, Cochran-Smith et al, (2018) notes that people in the community serve as SMC members and mutually keeping with a spirit not only of help to self but of help to others and that communities are public education's greater resources. They are urged to galvanized policy makers and employers to support local school initiatives. The results of the regression of the dependent variable on the predictor variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Multiple regression analysis of the strategies that connect the school and the community in promoting quality education

Predictors	Quality Education
Regular school visit	.592 (.014)*
Involvement in co-curricular	.332 (.049)*
Sense of ownership	.021 (.046)
Cordial social-community relationship	.445 (.025)*
Involvement of communal labour	.562 (.011)*
Regular PTA	.426 (.016)*
Constant	-1.347
R	.874
R^2	.689
AR^2	.670

$p < 0.05$.

4.2 Correlation analysis of the relationship between school and community partnership and quality education.

This research question sought to establish the relationship between school and community partnership and quality education. In doing so, Pearson zero-order correlation was run. The coefficient between school and community partnership and quality education was therefore generated to show the direction and strength of the relationship. The result of the Zero-order correlation coefficients obtained on the school and community partnership and quality education were $r = 0.835^{**}$ with significance or p-value = 0.001 which is less than alpha = 0.01. This implies that there is statistically strong and direct relationship between school and community partnership and quality education. This results above affirms the notion by Frankl (2016), that school community relationship helps to improve the quality of education for all children and that parents recognize their responsibility for the quality education of their children. To him, the student uses the skills acquired at school to entertain and serve members of the community. The partnership may involve the use of school facilities and equipment, sharing other resources and building a sense of community partnership. Sidhu (2007) is also of the view that a school as social organization functions properly on the effective interrelationship within it and with its associate communities. Any issue that affects the school affects the community likewise to what happens in the community affects the school. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation analysis of the relationship between school and community partnership and quality education

	Quality Education	
School community partnership	Pearson Correlation	.835
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
	N	245

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.3 Major Findings

School community relationship is very significant in the development of basic education at Atwima Nwabiagya district:

1. It helps in the discipline of students, welfare of teachers, the planning of curriculum and information sharing and dissemination.
2. It also helps in the provision of school facilities, finance, policies, security, and implementation of decisions, monitoring students' progress and lobbying benefits for school.

4.4 Conclusions

In this research, it could be reasonably concluded that school community partnership plays very significant role in the development of junior high education at Atwima Nwabiagya district and that schools results will greatly improve provision of infrastructure and facilities. Schools are to be developed in a positive direction, if school community relationship is taken very seriously.

4.5 Recommendations

The study recommends that;

Firstly, the Ministry of Education should encourage high level of cooperation between schools and communities by incorporating the need for this cooperation in the national policy on education through launching at both national and local government levels to sensitize citizens on the need for their cooperation in the education of their children.

Secondly, the heads of schools should also be sensitised on school community partnership ideals through in-service trainings and workshops. This will help them determine the major areas to be related to their communities.

Lastly, heads of schools should encourage visitation, use of complaints/suggestions box, use of sign writings, creation of hotlines and use of available communication media at their disposal to encourage information flow to enhance school development.

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