Original Article

Community Participation in Education Provision in Bontrase Circuit, Awutu Senya District, Ghana

Prof. Hinneh Kusi, PhD[1], Sara Essuh-Atsim[2] & Dr. Kweku Esia-Donkoh, PhD[1]*

[1] University of Education, Winneba, P. O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana.
[2] Ghana Education Service, Tarkoradi, Western Region, Ghana.
[*] Author for Correspondence ORCID ID; https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4009-5961; Email: hkusi@uew.edu.gh

ABSTRACT

The study explored community participation in the provision of education at the Junior High School level in the Bontrase Circuit in Awutu Senya District in the Central Region of Ghana. Specifically, it explored the barriers to community participation in education provision in the Circuit as well as the strategies that could be employed to promote the community's participation in such efforts. The study was qualitative and employed a case study design. A sample of twenty-four (24) participants, comprising 10 headteachers, 5 teachers, 4 School Management Committee members and 5 Parent Teacher Executives was selected using the maximal variation sampling technique for a semi-structured interview. This was followed by a Focus Group Discussion with 10 participants, who participated in the initial face-to-face interviews. The data sets collected were analyzed thematically. It emerged that the barriers to community participation in the study area were student, teacher, management, and community-related. The study, theretofore, concluded, among others, that several factors, including teacher professionalism and parents' reluctance to attend meetings organized by the schools to engage teachers, served as barriers to school community participation in the administration of the schools. To promote greater community participation in the school's administration, the study recommended that the authorities of the Ghana Education Service, especially the School Improvement Support Officers and the Training Officer in the Circuit, should collaborate with schools to re-orient the key stakeholders on community participation. The education authorities should also organize sensitization and education programmes that focus on the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders for greater participation in the administration of the schools.

INTRODUCTION

Education is generally considered a key factor in the economic, political and social development of any nation. It enhances the reasoning ability of individuals, increases the number of skilled human resources within societies, maximizes national productivity and fosters good governance, which will automatically boost the overall economic growth of a country. The different levels of education in Ghana namely, basic, secondary and tertiary give attention to human capital development, and this clearly tends to influence economic development.

The holistic education of every child requires the active participation of all stakeholders, including the community, teachers, guidance coordinators and counsellors, and the child involved (Anon, 2015). Junior High School (JHS) is not only considered compulsory in Ghana, but a right for all citizenry, and it is the responsibility of parents as well as the communities to ensure that children of school-going age attend school to be equipped with the knowledge, skills, values and attitude which will shape them for life. The community has a huge and very tough responsibility, as it has to take proper care of their health, physical development, overall education, the development of their intellectual affinities, as well as the creation of better moral values, convictions and attitudes, habits to a firm and well-behaved cultural relation in the child's immediate family.

The community, as an institution, has to create conditions for better education delivery in school, which as such, is a predisposition towards a better establishment of a realistic approach for a better development of the children's personality. The community, which is made up of parents and guardians, is aware of the work on the development of children, but at the same time, it needs pedagogical information on the right to education of their children (Mojsovsja, 2006). When communities participate in the education of their children, usually, the outcome can be qualified as a positive and encouraging one.

Achieving a good result at school requires proper community participation in the provision of the child's educational needs. The community, for example, is to instil the right values in learners, involve them in community life and support families and pupils in need of assistance. Community involvement in education facilitates the identification of community-specific education issues and informs the development of strategies to remove barriers to access and quality education within a given community.

In resource-constrained countries such as Ghana, community participation is also an effective instrument for mobilizing resources to improve the state of public education. Therefore, there is a need for community school stakeholders to understand the relevance of education and collaborate with the government and other relevant agencies for the

education of the younger generation (Namphande, 2007).

Communities are made up of families, which consist of parents who look forward to receiving quality education for their wards, irrespective of their participation level. The central government is one big organization in a modern state that can obtain a chunk of the needed resources to provide education for all (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975), cited in Addae-Boahene (2007). However, providing adequate resources for quality education provision has become a challenge as most governments, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa, lack adequate funding.

Educators, policymakers and other stakeholders, around the world are making great efforts to find ways of utilising scarce resources in the education sector more effectively and efficiently. In Ghana, the central government, which is seen as the major stakeholder in education, has difficulties providing for every educational need despite all efforts made over the years. Thus, many benefits are obtained when communities take part in the educational provision of their citizens. Williams (1994), cited in Bekoe and Quartey (2013), stated that until the middle of the twentieth century, responsibility for providing educational facilities for children rested more with the community. Community participation in the provision of education is gaining more ground since it ensures a sense of belongingness, breeds trust and ownership of the educational facility. Over the last two and a half decades, efforts to improve access, governance and outcomes of educational systems have given renewed focus to educational decentralization - the transfer of some form of authority from a central body to local levels (Naidoo & Kong, 2003).

Under the participatory approach to education planning initiatives, stakeholders such as School Management Committees (SMCs), Parent Associations (PAs), District Assembly (DA), and Unit Committees are tasked to be active participants in the planning and implementation of education programmes and projects (Ministry of Education, 2003). Despite the institutional and policy changes made to achieve multi-stakeholder participation in education provision, little effort is being made by community members in the Bontrase Circuit of the Awutu Senya District of Ghana, to contribute to the development of education in the area (District Education Oversight Committee Report, 2018). Although there is a yearly call on the community to participate in the quality education provision of students in the Circuit, it appears that the call falls on deaf ears, as indicated in the PA Report of 2018. Esia-Donkoh et al. (2011) indicated that most parents and guardians pay little or no attention to their adolescents' learning at home and give no financial support to these children, making them go to school on an empty stomach. School Performance Appraisal Meeting (SPAM) (2018) report in the Bontrase Circuit on students' achievement in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) indicated that there is little community participation in their education delivery.

Epstein (2010), in his Model of Parental Involvement, argues that educational stakeholders including parents, can get involved in the academic achievement of pupils. He further believes that there are many reasons for developing and establishing a partnership between school, family and community. One major reason for such a partnership is to guide students in succeeding at school. Other reasons include improving school climate and programmes, developing parental skills and leadership, assisting communities in connecting with the school, and assisting teachers with their work. All these reasons indicate that community participation plays an active role in students' education and in keeping a strong and positive relationship with schools. Consequently, the seemingly limited community participation in the schools' activities in Bontroase Circuit often results in policy failures, in some cases, and poor academic performance, since the government cannot do it all alone. It will require the involvement of other stakeholders, such as community members, to improve education

provision in the area (Addae-Boahene, 2007). However, it appears there is no empirical study on the barriers to community participation in education provision in the Circuit and the strategies that could be employed to promote the community's participation in such efforts. The study attended to these issues by addressing the following research questions:

- What are the barriers to community participation in education provision in Bontroase Circuit?

- What are the strategies that could be employed to promote greater community participation in education provision in the Circuit?

This study is significant in diverse ways, Firstly, it will encourage stakeholders in education to participate fully in education provision in the Circuit. Moreover, the findings will serve as a source of information to parents, students, teachers, traditional rulers and other stakeholders. Parents and other groups working to promote community participation will be fully aware of the kind of support required of them to make education provision a success. Last but not least, the study will provide PAs and SMCs in various schools within the Circuit with strategies to improve the learning conditions of their schools.

Bontroase Circuit in Context

The area of focus was Bontrase Circuit, a rural setting. In terms of the structure of education in the area, there were six (6) public basic schools and a few private schools. There is no secondary or tertiary educational institution in the area. The Circuit is situated in the heart of Awutu Senya District, with most of the inhabitants being predominantly Awutus. There are also a few Ewe and Akan settlers in the area. The economic orientation of the people is mainly agriculture, which is done on a subsistence basis, and they are noted for their 'gari' processing. Most of the

inhabitants in the Circuits are Christians, with few Muslims and traditionalists.

Theoretical Models

This study was anchored on Epstein's Model of Parental Involvement (EMPI). Epstein developed the model in 2010 to explain the various ways educational stakeholders, including parents, can get involved in the academic achievement of pupils. Some parents hold the perception that it is their responsibility to bring up their children till they start schooling, but, thereafter, it is the teacher who should do the education. In view of this, as soon as their children start schooling and such parents pay their wards' school fees, they assume it is the duty of the teacher to educate the pupil and see to their academic success. Such parents believe in separate spheres of environmental influence (Epstein, 2010). In other words, the duties of parents as members of the community and the school in the education provision for learners are not intertwined.

Epstein (2010) emphasised in her parental involvement framework that, there exist intertwined spheres of environmental influence where the school, family and the entire community play interrelated roles in the success of every pupil. She identified forms of parental involvement, including parenting, communicating and learning at home.

An aspect of parental involvement in the education of their wards, according to Epstein (2010), is parenting. The EMPI outlines several things to consider during parenting. Epstein stated that for families to establish home environments to support children as pupils, parents should be endowed with parenting skills that correspond with the developmental level and academic stage of the pupil. Parents should be educated and made to see the importance of attending workshops, enrolling on parenting programmes, watching videos or reading about their children's developmental stage in order to better support their education (Epstein, 2010).

Some parents may face challenges, but when the community and the school come together, solutions can be identified. Also, the school can provide a variety of means through which all parents can attain knowledge on parenting skills for each developmental stage which will be in accordance with the provision of education. According to Epstein (2010), when parenting takes place, parents not only know how to participate in the education of their children but also understand the developmental stage and level of their children and how to parent them. With this knowledge in parenting, teachers also understand the diversity of pupils they teach, from understanding the different family backgrounds and cultures of their pupils, which guides the kind of education provided in the school. The pupils also get to appreciate and respect their parents for their support, as well as develop positive personal qualities and values from their home. They can balance their after-school hours between chores and homework, and they develop a positive outlook on their academic achievement (Epstein, 2010).

Another important component of the EMPI is effective communication. For communication to be effective, there must be the possibility of school-community and community-school communication about the educational programmes pertaining to the school. Parents can be updated on the education provided for their children through weekly or monthly reports containing pupils' work and progress in the school. Also, Epstein (2010) mentioned that opportunities should be created for the community to meet with teachers to find out more about their children at school. At the end of every academic term, community members who form the Parent Association (PA) should be invited over to the school to receive the report cards of their children to discuss with the class teacher the children's progress.

Whenever there is a PA meeting, each parent should be able to understand and contribute to the issues being discussed. In view of this, a common language is necessary for better comprehension of issues. Parents should be informed on all school rules and regulations and other policies so they can go through with their children Epstein. Challenges faced with the communication on the provision of education to community members are mostly done during PA meetings in English with no provision for language translators. This discourages some parents from subsequently attending other PA meetings. Also, Epstein (ibid) mentioned that most parents are content with school-to-home communication and show little or no concern when there is no home-to-school communication.

Learning at home is emphasised in Epstein's model as another way parents could participate in their children's education. For parents to participate in the learning of their children at home, they must have a fair knowledge of the kind of education being provided at each academic level. According to Epstein (2010), there must be a regular schedule of interactive activities that will require pupils to discuss with their parents about what is happening in their school. This will get the parents informed on the education being provided in the school. Epstein (2010) added that parents should have at hand a copy of the school's activity calendar at home to follow everything going on in their children's school. Community members should be able to create a conducive environment with a good lighting system and needed learning materials provided for pupils to feel comfortable learning at home.

The challenge associated with this type of parental participation (learning at home) is that most parents do not get involved with learning at home for their children because they have little or no idea about what goes on in the school. However, helping with learning at home is not limited to only education-related issues. It also includes listening to children when they talk about school activities, encouraging them, praising them, monitoring them and even relating school work to real-life events. As stated by Epstein, when parents get involved in learning at

home, teachers gain satisfaction from knowing parents fully support their children in their education, while parents also become aware of their children as learners. Pupils are able to complete their educational work and develop a positive attitude towards school work as well as a positive self-concept of their abilities.

Other ways of parental involvement in their wards' education, according to Epstein (2010), are 'volunteering – to recruit and organize parent help and support; decision making – to include families in school decisions, to have parent leaders and representatives in school meetings; and collaborating with the community – to identify and integrate resources as well as services from the community in order to strengthen school programmes, family practices, and student learning' (p. 74).

Community Participation in Education

Education happens in schools as well as inside families, communities, and society (Uemura, 1999a). A definitive objective of community cooperation in education is building a feeling of responsibility for projects and schools. Regardless of the different levels of obligations taken by each group, none can be the sole specialist to assume total liability for instructing students. Guardians and families cannot be the only ones gathering individuals for students' schooling if their children connect with and gain from the world outside their families. Communities and society must support parents and families in the upbringing, socializing, and educating of their children. Schools are institutions that can prepare children to contribute to the betterment of the society in which they operate by equipping them with skills important in society. Schools cannot and ought not to work as an independent entity inside society (Uemura, 1999). Williams (1994) contends that there are three models of Education and Community. The first is conventional community-based education, in which the community furnish new generations of

youngsters with the education necessary for setting local standards and developing monetary skills. In this model, education is profoundly embedded in neighbourhood social relations, and school and community are firmly connected.

Another model identified by Williams (1994) is the government-given education, in which governments have accepted accountability for giving and controlling education. The consent of education has been generally normalized inside and across nations, and governments have decreased the role of the community. Notwithstanding, an absence of assets and the executive's lack of ability has demonstrated that governments cannot give the community sufficient education conveyance, completely prepared school structures, and a full scope of evaluations, educators, and instructional materials. This triggers the rise of the communitarian model, in which the community assumes a steady part in the government's arrangement of education.

Williams (1994) identified three models of community-education linkages. In the first, Traditional Community-Based Education, education is deeply embedded in local social norms and the government has a minimal role. Education is a local process in which older generations share skills they consider important and relevant with younger community members. In the second model, Government Provided Education, communities are passive recipients, and the Government assumes communities' needs and holds key responsibility for providing, regulating and standardizing education. The third is a Collaborative Model. Here, communities support government-sponsored education (Pailwar & Mahajan, 2005). The key to successful community participation, however, is "to ensure that, having regard to distinct features, local people have a real influence over decisions which affect the quality of education their children receive" (World Bank Report, May, p.94). Ghana's education system is now closest to the second model but is striving towards the third.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative research, which is linked to the social constructivist paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research is an umbrella term encompassing many designs, including narrative research, phenomenology, ethnography, action research and case study. Specifically, a case study design, defined as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 1994, p. 13), was employed for the study. Using a case study design allowed us to get 'under the skin' of the problem for a better understanding.

The sample for the study consisted of 24 participants, involving 10 headteachers, 5 teachers, 4 School Management Committee (SMC) members and 5 Parent Association Executives in the Circuit. The categories of participants were selected because they were among the key stakeholders in education provision in the Circuit and, therefore, considered to be "information-rich". We aimed to access the multiple perspectives of the participants in education provision in the area, and, therefore, the maximal variation sampling technique was considered in selecting the sample.

> "*Maximal variation sampling strategy is a type of purposive sampling strategy in which the researcher samples cases or individuals that differ on some characteristics or trait. The procedure requirement is that you identify the characteristics and then find sites or individuals that display different dimensions of the characteristics*" (Creswell, 2005, cited in Kusi, 2012, p. 83).

The participants were selected using their length of experience and number of years served on the boards in the administration of various schools in the Circuit to access their views to build some kinds of complexities into the study. A maximal variation sampling technique was also used to select 10 of the participants who took part in the initial face-to-face interviews for a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to seek clarifications on divergent views and issues expressed by the interviewees.

A semi-structured interview guide was employed for data collection in this study. A semi-structured interview involves the use of open-ended questions as an interview guide, and this method was crucial to the study to gather more in-depth data on the phenomenon under study. The method is flexible, allowing the interviewees to express themselves freely or at length, and the interviewer to probe questions for clarity of responses. A semi-structured interview also provided us with a better way of catching the point of view of the interviewees. However, researchers who employ a semi-structured interview often encounter challenges in preventing 'aimless rambling' (Kusi, 2012). Also, a FGD of 10 participants was conducted as intimated. FGD were important for this study because it provided direct evidence about the similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experiences as opposed to reaching such conclusions from ad hoc analyses of separate statements from each interviewee (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

The basis of the questions on the instruments was the objectives of the study, which were the barriers to community participation in education and strategies for promoting community participation. After the design of the instruments, they were face-validated by some postgraduate students and lecturers in the School of Education and Life-long Learning at the University of Education, Winneba, while the content validity was established by experienced lecturers in educational leadership and management at the University.

The semi-structured interview guide was piloted with 8 participants (2 headteachers, 2 teachers, 2 PA & 2 SMC members) selected from Obrakyere Circuit, which shares borders with the context of the study, who share similar characteristics as those involved in the main study. Piloting the questions

helped to identify unclear or ambiguous statements in the research protocol, which could add value and credibility to the entire paper. Interviewees can bias the data collected if participants do not understand the questions asked.

Qualitative data sets gathered through the semi-structured interview and the FGD were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis is the method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77). Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed before we immersed ourselves in the raw data. Then, codes were identified, which were collapsed into themes. This was followed by a detailed description of the data sets, supporting them with direct quotes from the participants to add 'realism' to the analyses and discussions. To attribute comments to the participants of the study, the 10 headteachers were assigned the serial numbers HT-1 to HT-10; the 5 teachers assigned T-1 to T-5; the 4 SMC members given SMC-1 to SMC-4; and the 5 Parent Association Executives assigned PAE-1 to PAE-5.

Positionality and Maintenance of Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument throughout all the stages of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) points out that one of the key elements that determines the credibility of a qualitative inquiry is the credibility of the researcher. In this study, we positioned ourselves as complete insiders since we had had some encounters with some of the participant groups through training. By virtue of our relationship with participants as a stakeholder in education, it was very easy for us to approach the various heads of the schools and to relate with both the SMC and PA executives to gain an audience. Our positionality also facilitated entry access to the study context, helped make connections with participants, and built good rapport and trust. However, we needed to convince them about the purpose of the study, which we mentioned as solely

academic, making them readily receive us and provide the information required. We also developed a deeper understanding of the data during the analysis and interpretation owing to our positionality as insider-researchers.

Also, as qualitative researchers, we were embedded in prejudices and had our knowledge, values, biases and convictions, which could have a potential impact on the entire research process. Being mindful of these, we acknowledged the potential impact of our positionality on the research processes, especially during the interpretation and analysis of data.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Qualitative studies are often seen as lacking rigour, influenced by researchers' preconceived notions, initial understandings and biases. These could be addressed through 'trustworthiness criteria, which have four elements – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility, according to Marshall and Rossman (2011), is the way to show the goodness, quality, or soundness of a study, which are the criteria by which a study is judged valid and reliable in qualitative research. The credibility of the study was achieved through triangulation, which involved the use of a semi-structured interview and a FGD to gather data from the participants, enabling verification of the accuracy of the findings. Also, interviewing the headteachers, teachers, Parents Association, and SMC executives helped to ensure respondent triangulation. Other strategies employed to ensure the credibility of the study were prolonged engagement with the participants and reflexivity.

Transferability is the extent to which the findings from one study can be applied to another (Shenton, 2004). Typically, we conducted this research to understand the phenomenon in the Bontroase Circuit and not to generalise the findings to a wider context. However, it is possible for readers to apply the findings to their context if they find similarities between the two contexts. The findings were made

dependable through detailed coverage of the research processes, including the research problem, methodology, as well as data collection and analytical processes. These processes allow readers to assess the extent to which appropriate research practices have been followed (Shenton, 2004).

Also, we entered the research with our own initial understandings and preconceived notions about the phenomenon under study and these had to be handled to prevent subjectivity of findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that a crucial measure for confirmability is the extent to which a researcher admits his or her predispositions. To achieve confirmability, we demonstrate that the results are clearly linked to the conclusions in a way that can be followed and, as a process, replicated.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The data sets collected through the semi-structured interview with the participants and the FGD are presented, analyzed and discussed in relation to barriers to community participation in the administration of schools as well as the strategies that could be employed to promote greater participation in education provision in the Circuit.

Barriers to Community Participation in Education Provision in Circuit

The data sets suggested that some of the barriers to community participation in education in the Circuit were teacher-related, which were in two dimensions: teacher professionalism and teachers' failure to engage the community. It emerged that most of the teachers communicated in English, which was not understood by most of the community members, especially the parents, creating a relationship gap between the two stakeholders.

For example, T-5 shared a view that:

 I think, the parents feel that their educational background is quite poor. They cannot speak English and, therefore, they don't like coming

closer to the teachers to share ideas on ways of improving the school. Parents see teachers to be superior to them".

Similarly, FGD4 commented that;

…...You could just see that there is always that kind of walls-apart when it comes to teachers and parents. They [the parents] see you like you are at a different level because of the 'white-man's language the teachers speak. Some parents do not feel free to have that kind of relationship, but only a few are able to get closer.

These comments suggest that teachers communicated in English, which the community members could not understand. On the other hand, it appeared that most of the teachers could not speak the local language of the community members. The communication gap could lead to conflict between the two categories of stakeholders if not properly addressed (Kusi, 2017). Epstein's (2010) Model of Parental Involvement suggested that a common language should be used at meetings to enable parents to understand and contribute to issues being discussed. It emerged that community members tend to see teachers, especially teachers who reside in urban areas, as superiors. Some parents and community members who have a low academic background find it difficult to approach teachers because of the perceived broad and deeper knowledge they possess. This situation seems to contradict Epstein's (2010) suggestion that, to strengthen communication between schools and their respective communities, opportunities must be created for the two categories of stakeholders to find out more about how pupils are educated in schools. Kumar et al. (2012) observed that the perception that local people lack sufficient knowledge and skills to take control of projects is a major challenge affecting local people's involvement in the education planning process. This assertion is supported by Harriet et al. (2013), who reported that low knowledge levels and poor flow of information account for the low involvement and participation of stakeholders at the local level.

Another dimension of the teacher-related barrier to community participation in education in the Circuit was teachers' failure to engage the community members, as most of them commuted to work from nearby urban communities.

Yeah, some of the teachers do not reside in the community. I come from afar and therefore am not able to take part in certain ceremonies that go on in the community, and I think it is a barrier. (PAE-2)

…….. The barrier in terms of teachers and the community is the fact that some reside in the community, and others reside outside. So, for those who are in the community, you can see that the rapport is there. It is unfortunate that those who are not in the community are not able to engage with community members as much. The challenge is that those who do not reside in the community, and for that matter, may not be able to take part in important occasions in the community (HT-10).

The comments by PAE-2 and HT-10 seem to suggest that some of the teachers had little knowledge about the school's community. This implies that an 'interpretation system' of school community relations prevails in the study contexts. Kusi (2017) indicated that the 'interpretation system' prevails when the school communicates its activities to the community, but the staff know little about the community they serve.

The interview data further revealed that parents' failure to monitor and supervise their wards, regarding their homework/studies, was a barrier to community participation in education. It emerged that poor monitoring and supervision at home affected the academic performance of the students negatively.

We try our best to support these students when they come to school. However, you realize that when they go home, their parents often do not help them with the homework. In this community, this is always a problem! Some, even fail to come to school regularly (T-2).

Parents' failure to support their wards with their studies at home could affect their academic performance and achievement negatively. The Epstein Model emphasizes that learning at home is another way parents participate in their children's education. Epstein argued that this is possible if parents have a fair knowledge of the kind of education being given to their wards at school. Perhaps a lack of effective engagement between the schools and the communities and language barriers made it difficult for the parents to understand the education given to their wards and, hence, their inability to support them with their homework.

The data further revealed that the parents hardly attend meetings organized by the schools and fail to visit the schools to check the progress of their wards. The participants attributed this situation to the preoccupation of the parents with marketing activities,

…...Hmm! Yes, like I said earlier, participation? There is a case where a school of three hundred (300) and over enrollment and average, about thirty (30) or forty (40) parents come for PA meetings. So, you could see that it is only a few parents who are so particular about coming for such programmes that are able to come. The rest sometimes play a lackadaisical or laissez-faire attitude. …. they do not meet teachers to discuss issues affecting their wards (FGDM-6).

On the part of community participation or involvement, it is sometimes low. The majority of the parents do not visit the school regularly to check on their wards' academic performance. Even some parents do not know their ward's class, let alone their ward's teacher. Attendance at PA and SMC meetings on the part of parents is very low. Looking at the school enrollment, when it comes to PA and SMC meetings, where about 60-70 parents are expected, always about 15-20 parents are present. This is one of the challenges faced by the SMC (FGDM-2).

The participants attributed the attitude of the parents to their engagement in market activities.

Both community members and students normally go to the market at Kasoa Bontrase and Bawjiase. On Mondays and Thursdays, they market at Bontrase and on Tuesdays they go to Kasoa and Bawjiase markets. During these days, parents do not turn up at all for PA and SMC meetings while students also do not go to school (SMC-1).

During market days, some students engage in menial jobs to earn some money in their pockets. On most market days, when important ceremonies or meetings are scheduled by the schools, most parents and community stakeholders absent themselves, which, in the long run, affects community participation in the provision of education (FGDF-4)

These comments suggest the urgent need for the parents to change their attitudes to enable them to make a meaningful contribution to their wards' education. Watt (2001), revealed that demand is a necessary condition for successful community participation in education. Unless communities have a clear desire for change and strong incentives to support the school, the response to community-based education provision will likely be weak. Addae-Boahene (2007) also made an assertion that where local people are involved in decision-making at all stages of a project cycle, participation then becomes high, and the best results follow.

Strategies that Could be Employed to Promote Greater Community Participation in Education Provision

With regards to strategies that could be put in place to overcome the barriers that hinder community participation in the provision of education among JHS in Bontraose Circuit, most of the participants suggested that the schools should organize games and sporting activities and invite the community to actively participate in them. In addition, ceremonies such as Open Days and Speech and Prize-Giving Days should be organized in the town halls to bridge the gap between the schools and the community.

Games can be organized by the school and then invite the PA, SMC and the entire community to participate. This will foster greater school–community relationships to achieve maximum community participation in education (HT-1)

We can organize quizzes and try to bring parents on board. We also organize Speech and Prize-giving Day in the community centres where highly performing pupils are awarded. Parents and community stakeholders who show maximum participation in the school's administration are appreciated. These programmes and ceremonies have encouraged some community members to take part in the affairs of schools elsewhere (HT-4).

It emerged from the data sets that organising sporting events, inviting parents to participate in them, and rewarding deserving parents are important strategies for addressing identified barriers to community participation. The participants believed that these strategies could promote community participation in education in the study area.

Again, with regard to the strategies that could be employed to ensure greater participation in school administration, regular visits to schools by members of the community and responding to meeting calls were also suggested. One participant commented that:

Yes. The challenges are numerous, and they [community members] can help, especially with the provision of resources, infrastructure, among others. Our doors are open, and we are praying that we can get the needed resources, but all these can be achieved when we have that open-door policy and challenges explained to community members, that is when they can come on board (FGDM-1).

They [community members] should try and respond to the meeting calls of the school, so that we can jointly make decisions to improve teaching and

learning. During school functions invitations given to parents and community stakeholders should be honored to show a sign of fellowship (SMC-1).

Regular visitation to the school by parents to check their wards' performance must be encouraged. Assisting the school in the provision of teaching and learning resources, especially when it comes to textbooks, is important. Maximum participation in PA and SMC meetings on the part of the parents should be encouraged as well (FGDF-3).

The data suggested the need for parents to pay regular visits to the schools as part of their efforts to monitor the performance of their wards, and such visits have the tendency to motivate their wards to work hard academically. Regular visits to schools demonstrate parents' keen interest in their wards' academic and other related issues. Such visits offer parents the opportunity to find out more about their wards and discuss relevant issues with their teachers (Epstein, 2010, 2001, 1995).

Another strategy that emerged from the qualitative data as a way of promoting community participation in the administration of the schools was related to the assessment of the capabilities of communities and responsible agencies that provide assistance: The participants suggested that there was the need to identify certain agencies and institutions which could play important roles in the development and management of the schools and encourage them to offer support, as the following comments suggest:

...I have lived and worked in this community for some years now! Therefore, I know the agencies and relevant institutions that have the potential to be part of the administration of our schools. We need to identify them and write to them to play key roles in our schools (T-3).

...There are a lot that could be done to promote the communities to be part of our schools on a day-to-day basis. We can contact the churches, Islamic groups and the chiefs in this area to help us develop and manage our schools (HT-6).

These comments suggest that it is necessary to assess community contexts and the agencies responsible for promoting community participation efforts in order to create specific plans or components of the projects. These agencies, as highlighted in the comments, include religious and traditional ones, whose influence on the administration and development of the schools cannot be underestimated. The members of these agencies constitute the parents and guardians of the schools and have the potential to contribute immensely to the success of the schools (Kusi, 2017; Esia-Donkoh, 2014).

Last, but not least, it emerged from the data that there was a need to establish communication channels and mediums to foster greater participation in the administration of the schools. It appeared that unclear channels and mediums of communication served as limitations to the participation of parents and guardians during PA meetings.

Sometimes, because of the low literacy background of most of the parents, they do not know exactly what to do, who to contact and the language to use when they are interested in the administration of the schools. Most of them are not confident in using English Language, which is used as a medium of discussion during meetings and therefore do not attend the meeting at all. Some of the teachers also don't speak the local dialect at all! (PAE-3).

Thus, unclear channels of communication seem to limit the ability of some community members from contributing to the development of the schools. Unclear communication could lead to misunderstanding of issues, leading to conflict in most organizations (Kusi, 2017). The strong and urgent need for the establishment of clear channels of communication is imperative in promoting community participation (Epstein, 2010) in the study area.

The comment by PAE-3 also suggests that language barrier served as a limitation to the participation of the community members in the administration and

development of the schools, as most of them could not communicate with the teachers in English, especially during meetings. On the other hand, it appeared the teachers preferred communicating in the English language to the community members who did not understand. This situation depicts teacher professionalism, which could threaten healthy school-community relations in the area (Kusi, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three conclusions were drawn from the study. First, the study concluded that several factors, including teacher professionalism, and parents' reluctance to attend meetings organized by the schools to engage teachers, served as barriers to school community participation in the administration of the schools. To promote greater community participation in the schools' administration, the study recommended that the authorities of Ghana Education Service, especially the School Improvement Support Officer (SISO) and the Training Officer should collaborate with schools to re-orient the key stakeholders on community participation and organize sensitization and education programmes that focus on the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the Circuit in the administration of the schools.

The study further concluded that the low educational backgrounds of the parents, coupled with the language barrier, made it difficult for them to participate more meaningfully in the education of their wards and the administration of the schools in general. To ensure the parents contribute meaningfully to the schools' administration, the study recommended that the authorities of the Ghana Education Service in the Circuit, especially the SISO and the Training Officer, should work with the school authorities to educate parents on their roles in the administration of the schools. In such an effort, a common language must be used to facilitate an understanding of the issues discussed. Perhaps, the teachers in various schools must make relevant efforts to learn and speak the language of the community as a way of identifying themselves

with the local people. Understanding the language of the local people could foster greater and stronger engagement, promoting participation in the administration of the schools.

The study also concluded that a kind of 'interpretation system' of school-community relationship prevailed in the Circuit. The schools seemed to share information on activities with the community members, but the staff had little knowledge about the communities they serve. The study, therefore, recommends that the authorities of Ghana Education Service, especially the SISO in the Circuit, should work to promote collaboration among all the key stakeholders in education in the area for greater participation in administering the schools. The schools, through information sharing, discussing schools' activities and fulfilling the needs of the communities, and the communities offering support in diverse ways, opportunities will be created to promote more engagement and greater participation in the administration of the schools.

Limitations of the Study

To begin, critics of this case study approach argue that, generalizing the findings of such studies is difficult and unreliable because of their limited coverage (Cohen et al, 2007). According to Stake (2000), a case study lends itself to 'naturalistic generalisation', not 'scientific generalisation', as a survey does. As already noted, the purpose of this study was to explore community participation in the administration of the schools, using a small sample size of twenty-four (24). Therefore, the findings are not generalizable beyond the context of the study. However, readers could transfer the outcomes to their contexts, if they identify similarities between their context and that of this study.

Another limitation of this study was related to the sampling of the population of the study, which consisted only of PA, SMC executives, headteachers and teachers in Bontrase Circuit because of time constraints and other practicalities. I recognized that other stakeholders, like students,

had something to say about the phenomenon being investigated. The exclusion of this stakeholder was felt especially during the presentation of the findings and the data analysis because their views could have the potential to clarify some issues raised by the participants (Kusi, 2008)

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