

Community Participation and Educational Decentralization in Gbawe Cluster of School, Ga South Municipality

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to assess the influence of community participation on educational decentralization in Gbawe, Ga South Municipality in terms of stakeholders' contribution to educational decentralization. A concurrent mixed method design was adopted. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were the data collection instruments. A sample size of 108 comprising Municipal Chief Executive, Municipal Director of Education, SMCs and PTA Chairpersons, teachers and parents constituted the study. These were sampled through purposive and random cluster sampling techniques. Descriptive statistics were utilized for the quantitative data analysis while the thematic approach was used for the qualitative data. The findings of the study revealed that parents' level of formal education, their attitude towards PTA meetings, their perceptions about the literate population among them and the attitude of SMCs and PTAs towards school finance affected local level participation and educational administration. The study affirmed that decentralization is an effective tool for development in the Gbawe cluster of schools. Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, it is recommended that stakeholders or authorities in the realm of education should endeavour to give community members the opportunity to contribute to educational decentralization. Also, a portion of the Municipal Assembly Common Fund meant for education should be increased to meet the current educational needs of local communities.

Keywords: Community, Participation, Educational decentralization, School management committee

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1. BACKGROUND LITERATURE AND PROBLEM CONTEXT

Over the years, various reforms aimed at ensuring effective, open, responsive and participatory governance in education have been embarked upon by governments (Mankoe, 2007). Among such policies and strategies to bring governments and their services closer to the citizens is educational decentralization. By this, power is formally ceded to actors and institutions at the lower level to handle education administration (Antwi-Boasiako, 2010). Ghana specifically adopted the District Assembly (DA) system in 1987 under military rule and later enshrined it in the 1992 Constitution as its approach to decentralized decision-making authority and resources to local authority. This was in response to the need to ensure efficient and effective government services delivery and citizens' participation (Keketsyor, 2008).

Another significant view on decentralization emerged from Aryee (2008) who notes that most of the functions of the sub-district educational structures such as the unit committees are meant to promote popular participation in community development including education. It is quite likely that not only are these sub-structures the focal points for promoting local development, but also the initiators of educational programmes that would involve people to improve their communities and wellbeing. Aryee (2008) added that successful performance of some of the functions of the District Assemblies such as the preparation of short, medium and long-term educational development plans depend on the capacity of the sub-district structures.

It is further observed that Ghana's decentralization policy has gone through several reforms since independence. From 1988 to date, decentralization policy in Ghana has combined elements of political, administrative and local decentralization (Aryee, 2008). The policy necessitated a change in the national educational planning process from the centralized 'top-down' system to a decentralized 'bottom-up' system in educational decision-making (Antwi-Boasiako, 2010).

Aryee (2008) observes that since the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) began making disbursements to District Assemblies in 1994 it has become the most important source of educational financing for District Assemblies. With the creation of the DACF it was expected that the District Assemblies would have adequate and reliable sources of funding for local level educational development. However, the late disbursement of the fund is affecting smooth educational planning and management. This is yet another signal that other sources of funding, other than the DACF, are needed to complement the DACF.

According to Bandie (2007) the challenges confronting educational decentralization are not only linked to inadequate funding and the late disbursement of funds for educational projects and programmes, but rather the poor management of educational projects, programmes and resources at the local level. Bhuiyan (2010) is of the view that, poor coordination of educational programmes between Regional Directorate and District stakeholders in education also accounts for inefficiencies in educational planning and management. According to Fiankor and Akussah (2012) the decentralized planning system objective of ensuring greater participation of local people in the educational development will not be realized without effective and efficient coordination at all levels of educational planning. It should be firmly and repeatedly stated that the full participation of key stakeholders at the Regional and Districts levels and local people in educational development plans formulation will enhance effective and efficient use of educational resources. Full and effective community participation in decision-making concerning local level development is of critical importance if a country, region, district or community is to develop (Fuchs, 2008).

This proposition raises the general point that although, Ghana is making strives to deepen local level participation in educational decentralization by encouraging the formation of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs). But the question arises: are these bodies given the necessary

resources and autonomy to operate? There are indications in the literature (Zaidi, 2005; Mankoe, 2007) that in the developing world institutional support for bodies such as PTAs and SMCs are given lip services thereby limiting their participation in school administration. It is therefore not shocking that poor participation in decision-making and limited authority given to management of schools is amongst other factors that accounted for poor community participation in school management. Contextually, such poor community participation has led to poor handling of classroom projects, which was started by 'one year group' of SMC and PTA, but abandoned almost at a finishing state at Gbawe Cluster of Schools in the Ga South Municipality. Giving these practical challenges of educational decentralization in areas such as Gbawe Cluster of Schools, it is important to investigate the dynamics that are at play with regards to community participation in the context of decentralization and the influence on education delivery in the Gbawe Cluster of Schools in the Ga South Municipality of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

1.1. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to examine the practice of educational decentralization in the context of community participation in Gbawe Cluster of Schools in the Ga South Municipality. To achieve the purpose of this study, the following objectives are formulated;

- i. To assess how communities participate in educational delivery in Gbawe Cluster of Schools of the Ga South Municipality.
- ii. To investigate the perceptions of community members in educational decentralization in Gbawe Cluster of Schools
- iii. To ascertain the level of participation of stakeholders in the Gbawe community in educational decentralization.
- iv. To examine the challenge confronting community participation with regard to educational decentralization in the Gbawe Cluster of Schools.

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions formed the basis of the study:

1. What is the mode of community participation as part of the decentralization process in education delivery in Gbawe Cluster of Schools?
2. What are the perceptions of community members in educational decentralization in Gbawe Cluster of Schools?
3. What is the level of participation of various stakeholders in the Gbawe community with regard to educational decentralization?
4. What challenges confront community participation in educational delivery in the Gbawe Cluster of Schools?

1.3. Significance and Scope

This paper provides a clear sense of shift in emphasis from educational centralization to decentralization in Ghana. Consequently, the significance of this research lies in how its findings provides the local authorities, policy makers and governments with insights into the key issues affecting local governance in education. It provides a framework for assessing the level of community participation in educational decentralization. It further highlights the areas of deficiencies that require attention for successful community participation in educational decentralization and administration. The study is restricted to the Gbawe Cluster of schools in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

The scope of this research covers public and private basic schools with no comparison made, the district directorate of Education, a cross section of PTA and the school management committee.

1.4. Research Design

The study adopted the concurrent mixed-method approach in which both quantitative and qualitative paradigms were employed in collecting data during the same time frame. This provided the researchers with the avenue for combining the qualitative and the quantitative research method for data collection (Golafshani, 2003).

1.5. Population

The study population consisted of Head Teachers and teachers of Gbawe Cluster of schools, the Municipal Director of Education, the Municipal Chief Executive, Parent Teacher Associations, parents and School Management Committees.

1.6. Sampling

Table 1 presents the sample distribution of respondents as follows:

Table-1. Sample Distribution.

Participants	Number
District Chief Executive	1
District Director of Education	1
Head teachers	2
Teachers	20
PTAs	2
SMCs	2
Parents	80
Total	108

Source: Field Data, 2018.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the District Chief executive, Director of Education, heads of basic schools, the P.T.A Chair and SMC Chairman. This was because they were directly involved in school administration and were in a position as enlightened adults to identify the key factors that obstruct community participation as a form of education decentralization. In this study, the units of investigation exist in cluster. Therefore, simple random selection of a cluster or group of clusters helped simplified investigation and reduced cost.

The tool used to collect the qualitative data was interview guide. The design of the interview questions were in line with the research questions. It provided the researchers with valuable information from the context of participants' experiences. Interviews were conducted in Ghanaian Language and English language to cater for the peculiar needs of some participants. Structured questionnaire were also used in the process. A comprehensive data collection, on site clarification and engagement of peer consultations coupled with the use of expert opinion from colleague researchers ensured validity of this study (Bryman, 2011). The Cronbach alpha coefficient internal consistency score for the questionnaire was 0.7 for research questions one and two and 0.8 for research questions three and four, respectively.

2. DATA ANALYSIS

The information gathered using the interview schedule was analyzed by first transcribing the information that was audio-taped during the data collection. This involves initial coding for identical categories. Subsequently, cross-

narrative analysis of sub themes was done followed by cluster analysis of the theme using core concepts from the literature. The data was analyzed and presented in charts and frequencies for pictorial and easy understanding of the phenomena. Further statistical analysis was conducted using the t-test to ascertain the significance of the phenomenon.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. Mode of community Participation in Educational Decentralization

Regarding mode of community representatives' participation in educational decentralization, interviews with the respondents revealed the following:

Educational decentralization is a special aspect of decentralization policy that when well established can orient peoples attitude towards their own developmental aspirations (DCE).

Almost every community now has a school which creates easy access for knowledge acquisition and transforms the peoples' attitude (DCE).

Since access to education has expanded, participation in decentralization by parents and other stakeholders is expected to improve (DDE).

It can be deduced from the interview data that formal education serves as a tool which can transform persons from their original behavioral attitude which might be affecting community development. Education decentralization can therefore be described as a vehicle of transformation of a community and human life. Oduro (2009) established that, for community and human transformation, there must be free participation of individuals and communities as opposed to forced participation in community development and human attitudinal orientation. This statement brings to the fore the fact that individuals and communities can only participate effectively in community development when they are given the free will to contribute their resources and knowledge to their own development.

Again, the District Director of Education referred to Chapter Twenty of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana which establishes the principle of decentralization and local government. The respondent states:

The Constitution states that Ghana shall be divided into various administrative regions headed by representatives from the various communities (DDE)

The respondent further asserted:

It is based on this fact that the district assembly and other structures exist in the communities to support grassroots participation in decision making in education (DDE).

From the data, it is also not out of place for the interviewee to cite the Constitutional provision that established the local structures aimed at bringing sanity in local level governance.

3.2. Effective Execution and Monitoring of Educational Activities

Regarding the issue of effective execution and monitoring of educational activities at the district level, respondents were of the following views:

For effective execution and monitoring of activities at the local level, the Municipal assemblies and structures within the local government system is been headed by people who represent their communities (DCE).

Since they are coming from the same communities with the governed, it is not difficult in making assessments of the people regarding their involvement in matters concerning formal education. Allowing someone who is closed to the people gives the governed the opportunity to voice out their educational challenges (DCE).

The inference that can be made from these assertions is that the best way for a community to be governed is to elect or select their own people at the community level to serve as leaders for community affairs. The views of the respondents are not different from the views expressed by Oduro (2009) that community participation in education decentralization can only be enhanced, if central government gives the community the opportunity to voice their worries and anxieties towards education delivery. They added that, communities can only voice out their worries and anxieties towards education delivery when they are allowed to elect their own representatives to govern them.

3.3. Educational Devolution

Close examination of the data on assessment of educational devolution in communities reveals that decentralization of the school system implies allocation of resources to local communities to take care of their own educational needs. The respondents maintained that:

Government has allocated resources to them as representatives at the local districts and to the principals or heads of institutions to manage the schools (DDE-1).

As the head of the educational sector in this jurisdiction, it is incumbent on me to ensure that the Capitation Grant (Government Subvention to basic schools) that is provided for government schools are channeled towards the provision of teaching and learning materials, school based in-service training, minor repairs and the payment of sports and cultural levies (DDE).

It is worth noting from the above responses that formal education is not only about the ability to read and write, but also the aptitude to learn to know more of one’s cultural heritage. It is against this background that the government Capitation Grant covers cultural levies. The data again demonstrates the government’s willingness to support and enhance quality education through the support given to schools for the provision of teaching and learning materials and to support needy students. It can be argued perhaps legitimately, that the absence of these funds can bring most of these activities of the schools and communities to a standstill. Arguably, only substantial increases in resources will ensure that these funds are provided. But it can fairly be competed that government cannot provide single –handedly all the human and material resources required for education, the central government must share the cost with local communities.

3.4. Community Perception on Educational Decentralization

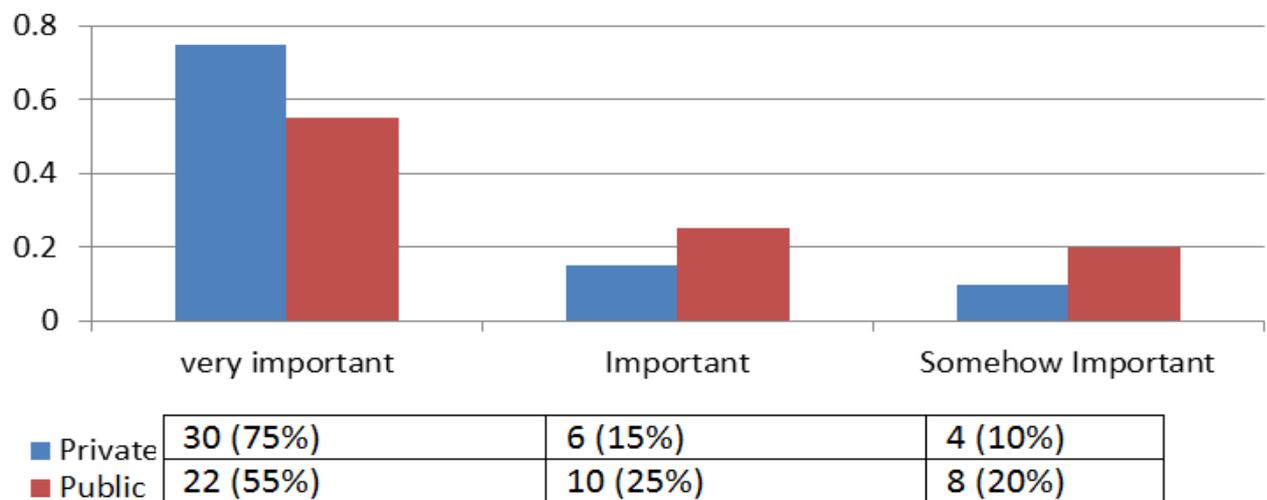


Figure-1. Perception of Community Members on Educational Delivery.

Source: Field Data, 2018.

The various responses on the perception of community members on educational decentralization are explained in Figure 1 as follows: *very important, important and somehow important*. Very important implies contribution to decentralization cannot triumph without the consent of community members, important means it is good for community members and somehow important connotes contribution to decentralized educational system is not mandatory. The data reveals that, 30 respondents who had their wards in private schools which constitute 75% and 22 respondents with their wards in public schools constituting 55% indicated that, education decentralization was very important 6 (15%) and 10 (25%) indicated it was important while 4 (10%) and 8 (20%) of respondents whose wards were in private and public schools, respectively said decentralization was somehow important. Further statistical analysis was conducted to validate the significance of community members' participation in education decentralization.

Table-2. Results of independent t-Test of community Members' perception about education decentralization by public and private schools in Gbawe cluster of schools.

Community Perception	Type of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	px
Community Members' Perception about Education Decentralization	Private	40	1,6000	40510	2,793	.007
	Public	40	1,2000	.81019		

Source: Field Data 2018.

The results of the independent t-test in Table 2 showed a statistically significant difference between private and public schools with regard to parents' perception about education decentralization in their localities particularly in the Gbawe Cluster of Schools. The results of the test show that, parents who had wards in private schools ($X=1.6$, $SD=.40$) reported statistically significant levels of education decentralization than parents in public schools ($X=1.2$, $SD=.81$). The results of the t-test for equality of means show that $t(2.793)= 57,357$ $p=.007$ (two tailed). The results imply that parents who had wards in private schools demonstrated better understanding of education decentralization than parents who had their wards in public schools. This apparently, is because there are majority of the respondents in the private schools within the Cluster affirming that education decentralization is very important and minority of the parents in the Public schools not considering their participation in education decentralization as very important.

3.5. Participation of Various Stakeholders in Educational Devolution

In response to research question two regarding perception of stakeholders' participation, in educational devolution, a respondent said:

The critical role of educational decentralization led to the formation of the school management committees. The school management committees are representatives of the parents in the schools. Education decentralization is important because it allows us to have a say on our children educational life. Though some community members especially those having children in the private school don't see it as important to always be part of meetings concerning their wards, we those with children in the public schools consider it important to be part of decisions on our children education (Parent 1).

This statement by the respondent confirms the difference in the perception of participants concerning whether the perception of community members' participation is vital for education decentralization. The results show that, respondents 10 (25%) in the public schools thought that it was important while 6 (15%) respondents in private schools did not think so. the private had only response. This implies that parents in the public educational institution perceptions were that educational decentralization is essential.

The respondent was of the view that:

School management committees play a pivotal role in school management at the local level in that they ensure accountability and quality output of performance (Parent 4).

The availability and functions of SMC does necessarily guarantee effective and efficient educational delivery. They need the support of the teaching and administrative staff (HIP-2).

The responses from the data on SMC indicate that the absence of SMC as a watchdog on local level educational management can affect the effectiveness in which schools are managed. By inference, leaving school management in the hands of only the staff and headmasters of the schools can lead to financial impropriety and undermine quality in school administration. This again indicates the level of significance of the SMC as key stakeholders in the management of educational institutions at the local level. It is equally important to note that the role of SMC in creating effective administration is viewed differently by the private school system (Mankoe, 2007). The respondents acknowledged the importance role of SMC as key players in educational management but not the panacea to effective and efficient educational delivery.

3.6. Perception Regarding Community Participation in Some Rural and Deprived Areas

Further investigation from participants to find out the importance of community participation in educational decentralization in rural areas and some deprived communities from a respondent was that:

Educational decentralization can be considered as an effective mechanism for advocating improvement and community participation in the provision of education using local administrative structures (Parent 4).

The respondent further said:

It allows community members to advocates for enrollment, boost the morale of school staff, raise money for schools projects, ensures students regular attendance, renovation and improvement of school facilities, contributing labor, materials, land and making decision about school location.

Responses regarding research question number three on the level of community stakeholder’s participation are found as below:

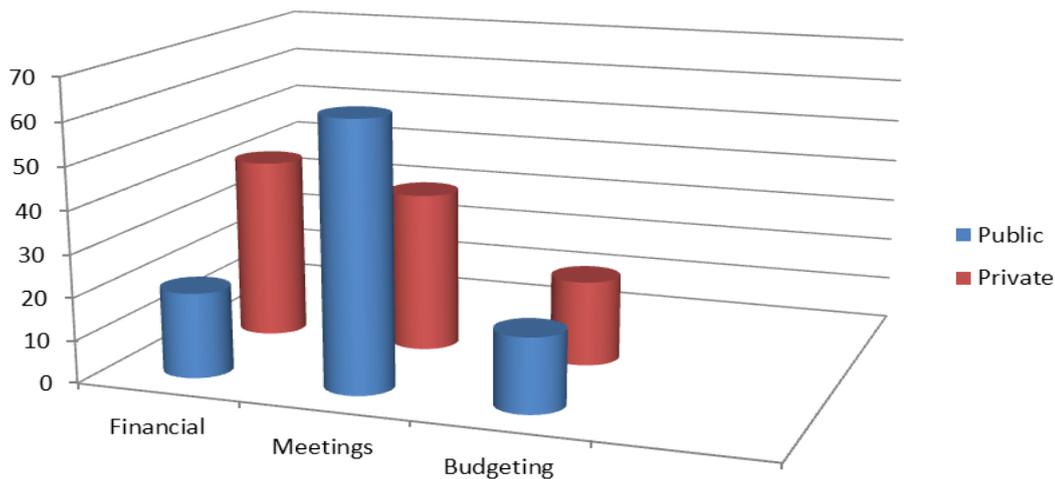


Figure-2. Parents' level of Participation in Educational Delivery.

Source: Field Data, 2018.

The data in Figure 2 reveal financial contributions, attending parents-teachers association (PTA) meetings and getting involved in managing school budgets as the key areas of participation by parents as stakeholders in the management of educational system in local communities. The data indicate that 17 (42.5%) of parents in private

schools and 8(20%) of parents in the public schools actively involved in contributing financial resources and ideas concerning financial resources to in their communities.

Apparently, the financial contribution was usually drawn from academic-user fees, PTA levies and other special financial contributions or donations towards school projects. It was therefore not surprising that some parents had perceived that their main mode of participation in school management took the form of financial contributions. Chambers (2005) revealed that some local stakeholders think that financial contribution to school management is the panacea of enhancing quality education and the most important mode of contributions by parents to educational development.

A respondent lamented over an answer to a question directed at parents during PTA meetings. The respondent asked question:

What contribution can you make to the development of the school in which your child is attending? (HTP-1).

Parent 3 raised the hand high and responded:

I will contribute financially'

Though financial support to education development at the local communities is important for the growth and development of education in deprived communities, it is not the magic wand.

A follow –up question to a parent on whether financial contribution is the only way to support schools reveals that private schools make it a topmost priority, but not the government schools. In answering the question as to why so, the respondent said:

Private schools have the penchant of developing on the amount of money they make with little emphasis on other contributions (HTP-2).

The data endorse an assertion made by a PTA chairperson that contributing ideas at meetings is very critical to the development of schools in communities because parents will have to contribute their ideas aside resources for quality education. Poor attendance of parents to school management meetings is perceived to be the inability of parents to honour their financial obligation as their contribution to school development (Chambers, 2005).

3.7. Level of Education Decentralization by Public and Private Schools

Table-3. Results of independent t-Test for level of education decentralization by public and private school in Gbawe cluster of schools.

Level of Educational Decentralization	Type of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	px
Parents Level of Participation in Educational Delivery	Private	40	1,7000	.49614	3,950	.000
	Public	40	1,3000	.40510		

Source: Field Data, 2018.

The results in Table 3 indicate that 40 parents were sampled from both public and private schools. The mean for private schools was 1.7 and the standard deviation, .496. For public schools, the mean was 1.3 and the standard deviation is .405. The results indicate that there was a statistically significant difference (P<.000) between private and public schools in respect to parental participation in educational delivery. Implicitly, parents who have wards in private schools were more likely to participate in educational delivery compared to parents who had wards in public schools. Parents’ participation in educational delivery obviously has positive and negative outcomes on their wards. The implication of this finding is that parents who actively participate in the educational activities of their wards are more likely to have the kids do well in school compared to children whose parents were not too bothered.

Table-4. Results of independent t-Test for Parent Perspective of meetings organized in a year by public and private schools in Gbawe cluster of schools.

Parents' Perspectives	Type of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	px
Parents Perspective of Meetings Organized in a Year	Private	40	1,6250	.49029	2,040	.045
	Public	40	1,4000	.49614		

Source: Field Data, 2018.

The independent t-test in Table 4 shows that parents who had wards in private schools obtained a mean of 1.62 and a standard deviation score of .490 while that of parents from public schools obtained a mean score of 1.40 and standard deviation value of .496. This finding was only slightly statistically significant ($P < .045$). What this means is that parents who had wards in private schools had absolute perspective of meetings organized in the schools within a year than parents who had their wards in public schools.

Regarding such responses, Mankoe (2007) posits that when Parents' Teachers Associations are given real power, they are most likely to be responsible in helping to manage and finance school rehabilitation and construction. Ideally, parents need more education and empowerment on the essence of PTA meetings than just thinking of only financial obligations. It also implies that SMC's have extra task of educating parents on the concept of education decentralization in their communities and Ghana. Mankoe (2007) indicates that, as part of the government's efforts to addressing the setback of less participation of community stakeholders in education delivery and dominant role of central government, structures such as SMC and PTA should be established and strengthened. Tacitly, empowering the SMC and PTA with proper mechanisms regarding community members' contribution to school management, local level education will thrive.

3.8. Challenges Confronting Community Participation

Objective four (4) was aimed at ascertaining the issues that most likely impede the smooth participation of communities in educational decentralization in Gbawe cluster of schools. The data revealed inadequate sensitization, inadequate resources and lukewarm attitude of some communities' involvement and participation in educational decentralization process.

Regarding inadequate sensitization, a respondent was of this view:

The local community stakeholders are confronted with these issues because there seems to be inadequate sensitization of community members on educational devolution (Parent-1).

This response was supported by an interview with the district chief executive that:

I am aware that for educational decentralization to find its feet properly at the community level, we still need to carry out some level of sensitization for the people to appreciate the concept. However, resources are constrained and one cannot also carry out an intervention or program without the requisite resources (DCE).

The respondents were emphatic:

The portion of the district assembly common fund allocated for education is woefully inadequate to deal with direct issues confronting schools at the local level especially to educate people on local level school management (DCE).

But, the Education Director said:

The poor communication gap between the district and local community stakeholders also affects the real essences of education decentralization in communities (DDE-1).

The responses above can be interpreted to mean that social inequality among and between the district and the local community was creating a gap. The social inequality here refers to the level of education, experience and wealth which were usually the benchmarks for measuring social equity at the local level. This affects cordiality in participatory development.

One other challenge cited by a respondent was dealing with parents perceptions of their involvement at the school management level and their roles as school committees in representing their communities. A respondent explained that,

Some parents found it difficult to really underscore the fact that education decentralization is meant to support local level educational development. The respondent said I do not know when my people will get to understand that the idea behind educational decentralization is to support us become part of decision making of our own development. Some of them are still thinking that monies are supposed to be coming from the district level for them to spend (DDE-1).

This attitude contained in the data makes it difficult for them to make any contributions especially financially to support school projects. In another interview, another respondent explained.

Education decentralization is a new concept emphasizing on the role of community in education (DCE).

3.9. Parochial Interest as a Challenge in Educational Decentralization

A respondent also held the view:

Though education decentralization has created a platform which aims at enhancing effective channels of communication between stakeholders at local communities, parochial interest arising from key stakeholders affects effective communication (HIP-3).

The production function model (Spiller and Tommasi, 2003) again reflects the attitude of some community members towards the management of educational institutions as impediments to smooth educational administration. In aggregate terms, this can create impediment for greater participation of local resources.

Further questioning of the respondent on challenges to participation by community members indicated:

Community participation in recent times does not receive the desired attention Local level politics affects the smooth implementation of decentralized educational projects (Parent 2).

The respondent explains this to mean the interest of the key political leaders in communities wanting to score political points with educational projects brought to the communities.

3.10. Implications of the Results for Educational Policy and Practice

The findings in chapter four of this work have implications for educational policy makers and practitioners such as those in the Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Education and Non-Governmental bodies that support education at the local level. It also has the implications for practitioners such as heads of educational institutions, teachers and individuals who support local level school management. There is also implication for the attention for parents and other stakeholders to support policies that would enhance their operations.

The Ghana Education Service, Ministry of Education and Non-Governmental bodies supporting formal education at the local level implicitly, need to know that educational policy must involve the local communities especially its adult population. In doing so, local communities would feel honoured and ready to contribute ideas and resources for educational programs and projects. This also helps to ensure sustainability of educational projects at the local level. It goes to explain that, any educational policy targeting the local community would not find its path if the stakeholder think that they know it all and that the ideas and contributions of the locals are not important. It is also essential to note that practitioners such as heads of schools and teachers who are directly dealing with the local community give the local community all the respect as adults in educational management. Implicitly the social status of parents and those who matter in the communities should not be used as a benchmark for soliciting and implementing their views in educational administration. Quality education in the communities

must also embrace the component of transparency and accountability regarding funds contributed for school projects.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study create the impression that educational decentralization is a concept that can easily propel growth and development of local level education. The community local structures such as the assembly and unit committee members should help educate their communities to better appreciate the concept, demonstrate their level of commitment, and deepen education decentralization in Gbawe Cluster of schools. It is only advisable that, key stakeholders at the governmental level such as the directors of education and district chief executives give more orientation to assembly and unit committee members through appropriate adult education programmes on the concept. This will help them to satisfactorily educate their community members. It was very clear in the perspective of the investigators that parochial interest arising from mainstream politicians if not well examined could impede the intent of the concept. This is because, some of the politicians at the local communities use projects initiated by individual philanthropies to garner their political points. This could even bring about conflicts between parties or among communities.

It is widely acknowledged that the local community is more concerned about the financial contributions they make in support of school projects and programs and therefore would want to really know how their monies are spent. The inability of the educational authorities to account properly for monies used or contributed by community members to support education could also raise questions and suspicion that could defeat the purpose of the concept of education decentralization.

Another point that needs stressing is the conduct of some supposed well to do parents during school meetings; there are concerns that these parents are those who are less privilege to formal education. This perception needs to be addressed by school authorities and create level grounds for parents to equally deliberate on matters affecting their wards' education or the schools they attend. Though the concept of educational decentralization was properly conceived by communities, little more adult education on the concept is needed.

In a nutshell, educational decentralization is a concept that came into being to enhance community level participation in educating local communities. It can therefore be inferred that, the concept of decentralization will have brighter future within the Gbawe Cluster of schools and similar educational institutions elsewhere given that policy makers extend the application and implementation of these findings to be sector wide.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made for further consideration by stakeholders in education such as the district director of education, the district chief executive, and the SMC.

1. Based on the result that community members did not show great interest in decision-making process, it is recommended that the government and government representatives at the community level should identify the potential issues affecting education at the Gbawe community. This could be in the form of regular and emergency PTA, SMC or community meetings, fora and public hearings. This will reduce the level of anxiety by some community members that they are not fully made part of community decision-making on education.
2. The results showed that headteachers poor financial accountability to parents affected their participation in school administration, therefore school authorities, PTA and SMC members who are at the forefront of financial obligations of the schools and on behalf of parents should make it a point to publish financial

reports regularly and publicly during PTA and SMC meetings. This will help to address issues concerning transparency and accountability.

3. It was revealed that the formation of SMCs came as a strategy to strengthen education decentralization, hence, it is recommended that the SMC as a body representing parents in the schools should be given all the necessary support such as ideas and resources from parents and school authorities to maintain the focus of their functions. There should be regular sensitization of the SMC on educational decentralization
4. The results of this study revealed that the establishment of physical infrastructures such as schools at the local level demonstrates governments' support to education decentralization. However, communities need to be made to understand by the educational directorates that merely putting up educational infrastructure without properly furnishing it for its purpose does not achieve its aim. It is not out of context to state that, community should not give their political right to a government based on just putting up school buildings, but rather making sure that the infrastructure is ready for its intended use.
5. Based on the finding that, the key areas of stakeholders' participation in educational decentralization was financial contributions to school programs and projects, involvement in school meetings and contribution to school budgeting process, proper policies need to be put in place to strengthen the areas. The Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and the Municipal Education structures should endeavor to organize training and refresher programs for parents. Workshops should also be held on prudent financial management, budgeting and the essentials of contributing to meetings. This would address lapses in accountability and supposed intimidation at meetings.
6. It was found in the data there was inadequacy of the district assembly common fund for educational activities. This calls for individuals and philanthropic organizations to support formal education at the local level. It is also recommended that, government should increase the portion or percentage of the district assembly common fund to education. This will address most of the educational lapses that relate to financial obligations.
7. According to the findings, social inequality was a bane to effective communication between district level community stakeholders. For effective communication and contributions to formal education at the local level, issues of wealth and educational standards should not be brought in to play. This is because wisdom and knowledge in school management is not the preserve of the 'so called book-long' or 'wealthy class humanity'. This can scare good and brilliant people from contributing their ideas: hence, thwarting the development of education at the community level.
8. Based on the findings that some parents did not know the number of times school meetings are supposed to be held in a term or year, it is recommended that parents step up their effort in attending PTA meetings. Again, school authorities should put in measures that could sanction parents to deter them from absenting themselves from school meetings.

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