CONDITIONS OF SCHOOLS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT. A STUDY OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS (SHS) IN AWUTU-SENYA AND EFFUTU EDUCATIONAL DISTRICTS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

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Abstract

The study investigated the extent of influence of the conditions of the school students attend and how it influences their academic achievements. A multi-site case study was adopted in carrying out the study. The population of the study consisted of school officials such as headmasters, senior housemasters, and bursars. Students and parents were also involved in the study. A sample size of 339 was used. The researcher used purposive, convenient and proportional representation (quota) sampling techniques in selecting the respondents. The instruments used included semi-structured questionnaire, semi-structured interview schedules, structured observation and secondary analysis. Descriptive statistics were used in presenting the data. The study found that teacher quality was important in students’ academic success. There was a significant number of untrained teachers who were teaching at the SHS level. The schools were faced with inadequate furniture, teaching and learning materials, library materials and space. School officials indicated in the interview sessions that the status of the libraries shows that they were not up to standard. Students agreed that teacher quality, teachers’ experience, school general atmosphere and well stocked library facilities promote students’ academic achievements in school. The school officials revealed that, to a large extent the type of school students attend, has an influence on the students’ academic performance. The overall school performance largely depends on the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational leadership in the school. The study recommends that government channels more resources into the education sector, especially at the SHS level to address the challenges of disadvantaged secondary schools in terms of infrastructure, furniture, computers, and library books among others.

Keywords: Academic achievement, academic performance, teacher quality, students’ success, school performance, school infrastructure, school facilities.

1 BACKGROUND/CONTEXT AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research findings reveal that different factors account for scholastic failures of students and these include low socio-economic background, students’ cognitive abilities, school related factors, home environment, support given by parents and other family members (Khan & Malik, 1999[1]; Fan, 2001[2]; Gonzalez-Pienda, Nunez, Gonzalez-Pumariega, Alvarez, Roces, & Garcia, 2002[3], Dar & Kellet, 2007[4]). Asikhia (2010)[5] also noted that parents’ socio-economic-status could explain more objectively using such indices as occupation, income and level of education.

Home background factors play a critical role in children’s performance in school and the type of school they attend in future. A student from educated home is likely to be sent to a good school where the students are taught by seasoned teachers (Akinsanya, Alayi, Salomi, 2011[6], Egunsola, 2014[7], Dzever, 2015[8], & Yelkpieri, 2016[9]). Schulz (2005)[10] observed that students from high-socio-economic background are more likely to attend better schools in countries where there are differentiated educational systems. Ainley (2003)[11] also argues that the type of school a student attends is an important factor to consider in educational achievement. Researchers have found that, school culture, teaching and assessment practices, teacher-student class interactions, students’ confidence and motivation, school curriculum organisation and resources and teacher quality; in terms of teaching experience (Ainley, 2003[11]; Forsyth & Furlong, 2003[12]; Fredua-Kwarteng, 2004[13]) account for the difference in schools’ scores. Antwi (1992, p. 216)[14] observed that differences in education “quality have appeared as the number of secondary schools has increased”. In view of that, schools are ranked on the basis of the “degree of success which students show in examinations and in the prestige which the school can bestow on its products”. The desire to enrol in a prestigious school becomes so competitive that it normally favours students who come from homes of socio-economically advantageous (Antwi, 1992[14] & Agyeman, 1993[15]). Yusif and Ali (2013, p.107)[16]
also observe that students in the less endowed schools are usually from poor homes, and as a result are “unable to raise the minimum funds” to finance their education.

Every parent in Ghana will want his or her ward to be admitted into one of the well endowed senior high schools in the country (Kumadoh, 2013[17] & Agyeman, 2015[18]). These schools are referred to as “Grade A Schools” which include Achimota School, Accra Academy, Adisadel College, Mfantsipim, Wesley Girls, St Augustine among others. The crave for advantaged or prestigious schools in Ghana has become so intense that parents spend much time in ensuring that their children get their first choice schools to attend. These are schools that are well endowed in terms of infrastructure, facilities, teaching and learning materials and quality teaching staff. Prof. Agyemen Badu Akosa expressed this when he indicated that the fact that categorisation exists in public school system and is by default acceptable to all Ghanaians and the government has been one of the greatest challenges to him (Agyeman, 2015, p.2.)[18]. In his view “we have all accepted and perpetuated such great inequality... are public schools and therefore the inequity should be unacceptable” in our education system because it promotes class society among citizens. It is in respect of that the Government of Ghana in May 2002 submitted “request to the African Development Bank (ADB) for support to rehabilitate one secondary school per district” (Republic of Ghana, 2003, p.11)[19]. This effort was not sustained leading to more of the schools becoming disadvantaged. The Ministry of Finance (2017, p.1)[20] observed that “most of the external funding for the past 15 years” has been allocated to the basic and technical sector of education. As noted by the ministry, “SHS is considered as an underserved level and bottleneck in the education system with significant challenges in terms of equity, access and quality”.

A study conducted in Ogun State Secondary Schools indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between the allocation of resources and the academic performance of students (Adedeji & Owoeye, 2002)[21]. The test results revealed that teacher quality and other resources such as classrooms, laboratories, computer laboratories, ICT, reference books among other things significantly contribute to students’ academic performance.

On the other hand, the less endowed schools are usually schools that are less resourced in terms of infrastructure, facilities, teaching and learning materials and qualified staff (Yusif & Ali, 2013)[16]. In Ghana, majority of our senior high schools could be categorised as less endowed schools because teaching and learning are conducted in very deprived structures and sometimes with unqualified teachers because teachers who are qualified refuse postings to such schools. A study carried out by Yelkpieri (2009b)[22] found that most of the SHSs in the Brong-Ahafo Region lacked infrastructure, ICT facilities, dormitory blocks for students’ and staff bungalows, teaching and learning materials among others.

In the study area, the SHSs are mostly deprived schools except Winneba Senior High School (WSHS) and a couple of private SHSs which could be classified as advantaged schools in the context of the study area. A close look at the schools’ structures and facilities show that they are not the best but are better than others in the study area. Classroom space is a problem because some of them are a little bit crowded and the libraries are small in size and can take few students at a time. Aside, these inadequacies WSHS has modern ICT facility, school clinic with a school nurse, power supply, potable water and a serene atmosphere for academic work. Above all, about 96% of the teaching staffs are qualified and experienced teachers. However, the situation in the other SHSs is not the same because in one of the schools about two thirds of the staffs are untrained teachers. However, this school had good infrastructure and facilities for teaching and learning. It is therefore, not surprising to note that some of these schools are not performing up to expectations in the West African Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). Available records show that academic performances in these schools are not the best. For example, in 2003, students of WSHS recorded low performance in Elective Mathematics (50%), Core Mathematics (51.9%), History (29.5%), French Language (53.1%), Economics (46.3%) and Geography (46.3%) (Effutu Municipal Directorate of Education, 2010, p.17)[23]. The case of the disadvantaged SHSs was not any different from their counterparts. Students’ performance in 2007 recorded one of the lowest performances in core subjects like English Language (58.3%), Mathematics (58.8%), Integrated Science (54.8%) and Social Studies (89.6%). However, recent study conducted revealed that there has been some improvement in the performance of the schools in the study area (Yelkpieri, 2016)[9]. For example, in 2012 core subjects like Mathematics (95.5%), Integrated Science (99.7%), English Language (100%), and Social Studies (100%) had high scores in WSHS. Nevertheless, the performances in the disadvantaged schools still give cause to worry. The situation where schools are categorised into well endowed and less endowed
is worrisome to any well meaning educator and so this has prompted the researcher to investigate into how the conditions of schools influence schools’ academic achievement.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of the type or conditions of schools on the academic achievement of students in the Awutu-Senya and Effutu Educational Districts. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify factors that promote academic achievement, and
2. Identify challenges that affect academic achievement in SHSs in the study area.

The study was guided by the research question:

To what extent do the types (conditions) of schools students attend influence their educational achievement in schools?

1.2 Significance of Study

This study is significant because it will provide first hand information for policy-makers on the need to resource all SHSs in the country. It will also highlight the challenges of disadvantaged SHSs and the need for stakeholders in the study area to contribute their quota to enhance teaching and learning in SHSs in the area. The findings of this study will add to the existing knowledge in the subject area.

2 DESIGN

A multi-site case study design was used in this study. Researches that make use of more cases are referred to as multiple case studies while some studies concentrate on a single case of a phenomenon (Yin, 2003[24]; Denscombe, 2003[25]; Punch, 2005[26]; & Bryman, 2008[27]). The present study made use of a multi-site case study to enable the researcher collect data from two categories of schools (advantaged and disadvantaged schools) in order to compare their school achievements. This method enabled the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data for the study.

2.1 Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population consisted of school officials, students and parents in the study area. The target population was final year students in the four selected Senior High Schools (SHS). The total enrolment of the students was 2,032. The sample for the quantitative data was 311 students. The sample for the study was 339. The breakdown is as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Respondents</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Officials</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>339</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school officials consisted of headmasters and bursars who were purposively selected because of their experience, knowledge and dealings with students and parents. Purposive sampling was used to select “participants in a strategic way”, because of their experience and knowledge “relevant to the research questions” that are posed (Bryman, 2008, p.415)[27]. Proportional representation was adopted to select students from the four selected SHS. This approach ensured equal representation of all the schools selected.

Ten conjugal households were selected for household interviews. Couples who were willing to participate in the study were selected. The 10 households were adequate for this study because the other respondents equally had good knowledge about the influence of parents' qualifications on students' educational achievements. People of all social classes were selected in order to make the study more representative. The sampling procedure comprised the selection of households within the
communities. This was done based on two identified settlement categories observed by the researcher. Creswell (2005, p. 204)[28] stressed that “a purposive sampling strategy in which the researcher samples individuals that differ on some characteristics or trait...” in order to satisfy all sections of the target population. These were advantaged and disadvantaged communities. Convenient sampling was used to select 10 parents from advantaged communities in the study area which included settlements like new townships, university communities and communities where most public servants like lecturers, nurses, medical doctors and teachers among others live. In a similar way, 10 parents were conveniently selected from disadvantaged communities such as fishing, farming and slum communities. People selected in this category included fishermen, fish-mongers, subsistent farmers, and cleaners among others.

2.2 Instruments

Semi-structured questionnaires were developed by the researcher to collect data from students. This was more economical in terms of time and cost of transport if the researcher had used semi-structured interview schedules. The questionnaire had both close and open ended items. The close ended items took the form of a five-point Likert Scale with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The open ended items provided opportunities for the respondents to provide first hand information. The main issues that were covered in the questionnaires were parents’ educational qualifications and its influence on students’ education achievements.

The semi-structured interview schedules were developed to collect data from school officials and parents. This method enabled the researcher to probe for further information where necessary. The interview questions were also based on the same themes as the questionnaire. In the study, the interview data (verbatim quotations) were identified by pseudo names. This helps readers to see the level of participation of the interviewees. The researcher used secondary analysis of data to support or explain the issues in the study (Best and Kahn, 1995[28] and Bryman, 2008[27]). West African Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) results were collected from 2007-2012 to support the analysis of the issues in the study.

Structured observation technique was used to collect data on the state of the schools’ infrastructure and facilities and how these affected students’ academic achievements in school. This type of observation required direct observation to gather the required data. According to Best and Kahn (1995, p.222)[29] “direct observation may also make an important contribution to descriptive research”. A structured observation is very systematic and enables the researcher to generate numerical data from the observation (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2008)[30].

With the aid of the observation schedule, the researcher was able to identify and assess the state of the schools’ facilities and their functions in the schools. The researcher observed and rated all the listed facilities on his checklist and made remarks where necessary. The remarks helped the researcher to make good description of the state of affairs pertaining to the facilities in the schools studied.

2.3 Face Validity and Pre-testing of the Instruments

The face validity of the content of the study was established by first giving the questionnaire out to colleague Research Fellows at the Centre for Educational Policy Studies for their comments on the items. These comments helped to improve the quality of the items. The exercise enabled the researcher to establish the reliability of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were pre-tested at Apam SHS. Apam SHS was chosen because it lies in the same geographical location as the study area.

The test-retest reliability was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire. According to Tuckman (1994, p.180)[31] “one way to measure reliability is to give the same people the same test on more than one occasion and then compare each person’s performance on the different tests”. On two occasions the tests were given out to the respondents and both tests were subjected to Cronbach’s coefficient alpha to determine the internal consistency of the items and these yielded high reliability coefficients of .86 in each case. Tuckman (1994, p.180)[31] stresses that “reasonably high coefficients” are indication of high quality. On the part of the semi-structured interview schedules when the questions were piloted, it was realised that all the interviewees provided similar responses. This signified that the questions were good.
3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Types of School Students Attend and how it Influences their Educational Achievements

The assumption that the type of school students attend has an influence on their academic achievements has its basis in the fact that if a school is well endowed in terms of quality teachers and facilities, then it is expected to excel in its academic achievements. This is examined from the perspectives of school officials, students and parents in Table 2.

When the students’ views on the same assumption were examined it was realised that there were differences in opinions between the advantaged and disadvantaged students.

Table 2. Students’ Views on how Students’ Educational Achievement is influenced by the types of the School they Attend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Views</th>
<th>Advantaged SHS</th>
<th>Disadvantaged SHS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WM  Std  I</td>
<td>WM  Std  I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ quality influences children’s educational achievements in school.</td>
<td>4.23 .95 A</td>
<td>4.13 1.23 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ teaching experience enhances effective teaching and students’ achievements in school.</td>
<td>4.31 .82 A</td>
<td>4.09 1.13 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools’ general atmosphere influences students’ academic achievements.</td>
<td>4.15 .90 A</td>
<td>4.05 1.16 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of well stocked library facility influences students’ success in school</td>
<td>3.94 1.04 N</td>
<td>4.01 1.09 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School’s general academic performance influences students’ achievements in school.</td>
<td>3.93 1.03 N</td>
<td>4.09 1.07 A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of ICT facility and computers enhance students’ level of success.</td>
<td>3.97 .92 N</td>
<td>3.87 1.13 N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of an effective PTA influences students’ achievements level.</td>
<td>3.52 1.17 N</td>
<td>3.75 1.94 N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of an effective old student’s association contributes to students’ achievements level</td>
<td>3.70 1.01 N</td>
<td>3.59 1.89 N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean of means 3.97 .98 N 3.95 1.99 N

The data in Table 2 show that advantaged SHSs agreed with the disadvantaged SHSs on the first three factors. These factors include; teachers’ quality influences children's educational achievements in school, teachers' teaching experiences enhance effective teaching and students’ achievements in school, and schools’ general atmosphere influences students’ academic achievements.

The difference between the advantaged SHSs and their counterparts was on the fourth and fifth factors, where the advantaged SHSs neither agreed nor disagreed but the disadvantaged students agreed. Meanwhile, further investigation through interview of school officials reveals that they agreed on the views that the general school atmosphere is an important factor in students’ academic success as shown in Table 2. When school officials’ were contacted for their views the following were the verbatim quotations gathered:

The school atmosphere is good for academic work. The channel of communication is open from the students’ level to the top. Students have the chance to air their views on any pertinent issue in the school. So the atmosphere is very conducive for learning. Donkor

Very excellent, the teachers are very cordial with the students and are always ready to help them. The school environment is conducive for learning. We have trees around and this provides very serene atmosphere, if any student wants to learn at any time s/he can do so. Baiden

Another said:
Very much indeed, you see the problem that we have here is that initially we never thought the school will expand as we have now, we would have built the school on our new site. Presently, we are just by the highway in the midst of so much noise which disturbs learning activities. 

Musah

The data show that the general school atmosphere plays an important role in students’ academic performance in school. Yelkpieri (2007)[32] found that students were satisfied with the general school atmosphere. The serenity of the school atmosphere created as a result of trees’ shades and sitting places made available under the trees provide congenial atmosphere for learning for students at any given time. In a similar way, students must be given the opportunity to express their opinions on any issue that bothers on the school’s administration. It was not the case for students in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. A study carried out by Yelkpieri (2007)[32] pointed out that students complained about none involvement in decision-making. The data further show that apart from this, students neither agreed nor disagreed on the remaining three factors presented on the tables, which indicate that; availability of internet connectivity and computers enhance students’ level of success, support of an effective PTA influences students’ achievements level, and support of an effective old students association contributes to students’ achievement levels. This suggests that the students were of the view that to some extent resource availability promotes students’ level of success in school. Internet connectivity enables students to access information freely on the internet at their own convenience which enhances educational success. Schools need the support of their PTAs and old students associations to assist them in providing these facilities in their schools. Antwi, (1992)[14] and Agyeman, (1993)[15] observe that the desire to enrol in a prestigious school becomes so competitive that it usually favours applicants who come from the homes of the socio-economically advantageous. Generally, the study indicates that both categories of students neither agreed nor disagreed on the assumption that the type of school one attends influences his or her academic achievements. This is supported by the two mean of means (3.97 and 3.95) computed for advantaged and disadvantaged SHSs as shown in Table 2. These means suggest that the students agreed to some extent on the assumption. Meanwhile, Antwi (1992)[14] and Agyeman (1993)[15] observed that in Ghana, admission into the top ten secondary schools was dominated by children from the homes of the elite and economically well to do families.

As a follow-up, the researcher solicited the views of parents whether the types of schools their children attend have any influence their academic achievements. This question generated different opinions from parents and some of them are:

Yes, the types of schools students attend have an influence because sometimes the school environment in terms of facilities may not be available to aid teaching and learning. The types of teachers also play a vital role in the academic performance of students. **Atta**

To a large extent, because if you look at some of the secondary schools some are well endowed. For example, if a student is doing courses in the sciences, then he needs a school that is well equipped and has good laboratories compared to other schools where they might not have the required materials to embark on practical activities in their lessons. **Mensah**

Whatever school the child attends if he works hard he will do well, it does not matter the school s/he attends. But children in general always want prestigious schools. **Dadzie**

The interview data gathered show that, to a large extent the type of school one attends has an influence on the person’s academic achievements. The type of school determines the types of facilities available for teachers and students’ use. A school that has all the necessary facilities such as science laboratory, internet connectivity, and well stocked library facility to work with has a better chance of performing better than the school that is less endowed. For effective teaching and learning to take place, students must be engaged in hands-on activities where necessary. However, the situation in the study area was entirely different and so Ofosu-Kusi (2007, p.191)[33] expressed his disgust when he indicated that it was “unfair that children in such disadvantaged environment will be expected to develop comparable conceptual sophistication in science and other subjects so that they will all be graded through the same basic education examination”.

The type of school also determines the type of supervision that goes on in the school. Usually effective educational leaders always ensure that they promote team work so as to bring about achievement of institutional objectives. This type of organisational culture makes a lot of difference that yields good results at the end of the day.
3.2 The State of Infrastructure and facilities and its influence on Students’ academic Achievement in Schools

The state of the school infrastructure and facilities play important roles in students' academic achievements and so the school administration and management should ensure that the right infrastructure are put in place to enhance quality education delivery. A study carried out in the study area found that “many schools lacked instructional materials and facilities, or where they were available” (Ofosu-Kusi, 2007, p.190)[33], they were woefully inadequate.

It is a well noted fact that schools that are endowed in terms of high quality human and material resources are better placed to achieve higher academically than less endowed schools. The researcher observed the status of some school facilities in the advantaged SHSs and how these influence teaching and learning.

It was observed that Insaaniyya Senior High School (ISHS) had very good classroom space that enables free movement of students and teachers. Similarly, Winneba Senior High School had good classroom space for free movements of teachers and students. However, the difference between these two schools is that in the case of ISHS the arrangement of furniture was such that they were well spaced to allow teachers and students to move around without difficulty. Meanwhile, in the case of WSHS, the arrangement of the furniture was quite close. Yelkpieri (2009b)[22] in a similar study observed that some classrooms were crowded. Some had about 50 to 70 students in one classroom. This type of classroom situation does not promote effective teaching and learning because teachers are unable to move freely to attend to individual students.

It was observed that both schools had regular supply of water. The supply of potable water ensures good health of both staff and students. In a similar study, Yelkpieri (2009b)[22] found that some heads of schools noted that water used to be a big problem and as a result students were asked to break classes to fetch water from a nearby stream for meals to be prepared.

It was also observed that the libraries were well stocked with books and other reference materials. However, the libraries were not spacious to accommodate more students. At WSHS, the researcher was shown a new library complex which was under construction. WSHS had a very good sick bay which was managed by a qualified nurse. The facility provides first aid to students whenever they were sick. However, ISHS did not have this facility.

However, the researcher observed that library facilities were not anything to write home about in the disadvantaged SHSs. The two schools had poor libraries which had limited number of books which were old and some were not relevant for their programmes in the schools. This study agrees with Yelkpieri (2009b)[22] who observed that some of the libraries were stocked with old books which were not relevant to the students’ needs. A situation like this has serious implications on teaching and learning efforts of teachers and students. Yelkpieri (2009a)[34] found that library books and reference books enhance teaching and learning.

It was also noted that the disadvantaged SHSs did not have dormitory blocks to accommodate students, so students relied on private hostels for accommodation. These private hostels were not decent enough to guarantee the health safety of the occupants. It was further noted that Winneba School of Business (WSB) did not have science laboratory in the school. The question that arises is, how was science taught in this school? It was further observed that both schools had regular power supply which facilitates teaching and learning activities in school. Yelkpieri (2009a)[34] notes that 31% of his respondents indicated that there was regular supply of electricity, while 68% said it was available but inadequate in supply and yet 1% were of the opinion that it was not available. The regular supply guaranteed power for the computer laboratories, power-point presentations and other school activities that require the use of power.

The examination results of the selected schools for at least over the past five years were examined in order to ascertain the extent to which the assumption that the type of school one attends influences one’s academic achievements. In this respect, secondary data in the form of WAEC results on the core subjects from 2007 to 2012 were collected to enable the researcher compare the achievements of advantaged and disadvantaged SHSs. The secondary data analysis provided concrete evidence to support the assumption held in the study. Figure 1 examines the results in English Language from 2007 to 2012 between the two categories of schools.
Data presented in Figure 2 show that the advantaged SHSs performed better than the disadvantaged SHS in English Language. WSHS scored hundred percent from 2009 to 2012. The data also showed that ISHS also performed better than their disadvantaged counterparts SHSs (WSB and SSHS) as they beat them three years in which they took part in the examinations. Ornstein and Levine (2006, p.323)[35], in a similar study observed that “social class is associated with many educational outcomes in addition to achievement in reading, maths, and other subjects”.

The data further show that the advantaged SHSs (WSHS and ISHS) have a better record of achievements than their disadvantaged counterparts (WSB and SSHS). Apart from 2009, where ISHS had low score of 42.0% as against 45.0% and 24.0% respectively by WSB and SSHS, ISHS did well in the subsequent two years. The “National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other agencies that collect achievement information from nationally representative samples of students have revealed that that “mathematics and reading proficiency scores of groups of students vary directly with social class” (Ornstein and Levine, 2006, p. 321)[35]. The data shows that “students with well-educated parents score much higher than students whose parents have less education”.

Apart from the year 2012, when SSHS had 84.3% pass, all other results was average when compared to that of their counterparts. This may be as a result of the school being less endowed and lacks facilities such as internet connectivity, computer laboratory, libraries, textbooks and quality teachers.

The results of the Integrated Science followed almost the same trend with a little improvement in performance in the case of SSHS compared to WSB. The details of the information are presented in Figure 3.
WSHS continued to show high level of achievements in Integrated Science. This implies that the students are taking full advantage of their improved school facilities and experienced teachers to achieve good results in all the subject areas. ISHS which equally has good facilities comparable to WSHS did not perform as WSHS. In 2011, ISHS scored 41.0% which is lower than what its counterparts in the disadvantaged SHSs scored. This poor performance might be due to the fact that most of the students of ISHS come from farming and fishing communities. The school is a private school and therefore depends on students who do not get placement in the Computerised Schools Selection and Placement System (CSSPS). Another reason may be that the quality of their teachers, since two thirds of the teachers is not trained. A World Bank (2004, p.42)[36] report revealed that “poorer children” in disadvantaged schools are not “reaping educational benefits”.

**Fig. 2:** Comparison of Mathematics results between advantaged and disadvantaged SHS

**Fig. 3:** Comparison of Integrated Science Results between Advantaged and Disadvantaged SHS

*Source: Extracted from West Africa Examination Council’s Broad Sheets*
It is noted that SSHS have a better result in Integrated Science than WSB. The reason for the poor performance by WSB might be due to its deprived nature and their over reliance on part-time teachers. How could teachers teach a practical subject like science without the required equipment, materials and text books (Ofosu-Kusi, 2007)[33] and expect to achieve good result. The manifestation of the deprived nature of the school is the result of the students’ in the WAEC as shown in Figure 3. Generally, the evidence available shows that the advantaged SHS have higher achievements compared to their disadvantaged counterparts.

The analysis of the Social Studies results show that on the average good results in all the four schools. A close examination of the data reveal that all the schools performed well with high percentage scores except in 2008 when the two disadvantaged SHSs, WSB and SSHS had 68.0% and 58.0% respectively as shown in Figure 4.

The researcher wanted to know about the views of the school officials on the general academic performance of their schools. In their response, various answers were given and some of them are quoted as follows:

*I will say excellent, because every year we record very good passes and this year was no exception. This year we had 97% pass.* Donkor

*Any way the school’s academic performance is not excellent, because of the type of students we admit here. The aggregate they bring for admission are usually on the high side.* The
grades that they bring here are horrible. However, at the end of the course we are able to bring them to a level. Our passes are not bad. **Baiden**

I always say private schools are better than public schools because all students who are average and above average are posted to public schools by the computerised school selection and placement system. We, the private schools benefit from the remnants, i.e. those with aggregate 25 – 35 and we have the arduous task to turn these students around into consumable products for the universities. **Appiah**

The data show that all the schools do not have equal opportunities in terms of facilities and quality of teachers and the caliber of students who are admitted into the schools. Students are usually posted to schools of their choices; and so the best students are posted to the well endowed schools. The remaining students who do not get their first choice schools are then posted to schools of their second or third choices or posted to schools which have not obtained their quota of students. Sometimes desperate students go and look for their own schools which are usually less endowed schools. These schools put in their best to ensure that students go back better equipped than they came to the schools.

When parents were asked to express their opinions on the general performance of the schools their children attend, they came up with different responses and some of them are quoted as follows:

- **On a whole, I think the schools my children attend are quite good, they can be considered as some of the best schools in Ghana.** **Mensah**
- **The school my child attends performs well. However, it also depends on the child’s commitment and attitudes towards learning.** **Serwaa**
- **The level of performance is average and I believe if they work hard it will improve.** **Well, I cannot tell whether the school performs well academically or not but I have heard the school performs well academically. The students do well in their final external examination.** **Dery**

The data reveal that some of the schools parents send their children are good schools which have recorded good results over the years. Students who attend such schools need just a little effort to make it to any tertiary institution in the country. Some parents know that the schools their children attend are average schools and therefore students who attend such schools need to make extra effort to pass well in the external examination. Parents of such students usually arrange for extra classes for their wards to ensure they are well prepared for the external examinations. According to the data, some uneducated parents do not even know the performance of the school they send their children. Some parents believe that the type of school a student attends does not guarantee success automatically because the onus lies on the student’s effort in school.

### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Respondents agreed to some extent that students’ educational achievement is influenced by the type of school they attend. The type of school students attend contributes in different ways towards their success or failure. Schools that are well endowed in terms of materials and human resources are likely to provide quality education. Schools that are also deprived may do their best but may not be able to provide the quality service that is expected of them. A situation such as this will not augur well for national development and therefore requires some interventions from government, PTAs, old students, and other stakeholders of education to provide the needed infrastructure and facilities to ensure quality education.

The study found that teachers’ quality influences children’s educational achievements in schools. Teachers are the pivot of quality education and, therefore, the quality of teachers appointed must be of concern to all stakeholders of education. For this reason that Ofosu-Kusi (2007:188)[] indicated that there is “a compelling reason for a higher calibre of teachers” to be employed at all levels.

A well trained and experienced teacher is an asset to education and must be retained to ensure quality education. Attractive incentive packages such as scholarships for at least two children of every teacher, free medical care and housing allowances that will entice more quality teachers into the teaching profession should be provided by government.
5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The study revealed that facilities in the advantaged SHSs were better than those in the disadvantaged SHSs and that is the result of the low achievement levels in the disadvantaged schools. The study therefore recommends that government should provide more resources for the educational sector to address the challenges and inadequacies of disadvantaged schools in terms of infrastructure, furniture, computers, library books and text books among other needs.

2. The study also found that a particular school had two thirds of its staff untrained. It is recommended that headmasters and/or proprietors should employ trained professionals to teach in their schools. They should as well organise workshops for them from time to time to keep them abreast with current methods of teaching.

REFERENCES


