

Impact of Parental Involvement on Pre-Tertiary Learners' Academic Development and Performance in Ghana.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of parental involvement on pre-tertiary learners' academic performance and development in some selected pre-tertiary schools in the Ada East District of Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The study adopted the sequential explanatory mixed method approach. That is, quantitative data were initially gathered through a 3-point Likert Scale response set structured questionnaire followed by a qualitative interview data. The study made use of fifty (50) respondents who were randomly and judgmentally sampled. Both questionnaire and interview guide were developed to collect data on two formulated research questions after which they were descriptively and thematically analysed respectively. The study revealed that learners' academic development and performance move along with parents' financial commitment and other socioeconomic related characteristics, parents' level of training, education and other sociocultural related characteristics as well as parents' relationship and communication with teachers, school community and the community outside. It was concluded therefore that both socioeconomic and sociocultural statuses of parents affect academic development and performance of learners in pre-tertiary schools to a large extent. Conclusion was also drawn on how parents' relationship and communication with the school community, teachers and the community outside contribute to pre-tertiary school learners' development and performance. The study strongly

recommended full parental, community and stakeholders' commitment in all academic related activities of learners.

Keywords: Parental involvement, academic performance, academic development, pre-tertiary school, learners

1. Introduction

Ideally, the sole aim of every parent, teacher, student, institution, stakeholder and country is to see or witness a relatively permanent positive change in academic performance. According to Mauka (2015), the focus of teachers, parents and the school is to improve students' performance in every way particularly in the areas of academics. It is the heartbeat of every teaching and learning process. More so, it is the very desire of every student who finds himself or herself in the school system who is willing and ready to achieve academically. Academic performance is the exact measure or the precise outcome for which instructors look out for after successful completion of classroom instruction.

Academic performance, which obviously is an abstract phenomenon, rallies round on several elements to suffice with learners. This is to say that quite a number of factors play significant roles in influencing the trends of students' academic performance. The presence of some components for example may improve its state whereas the inclusion or exclusion of certain other key constituents may either distort or decline its state. School influence has for instance been identified as one major factor that has been informing academic performance of students (McNeal, 2014). Some schools have programmed teaching and learning to align strictly with existing structures to ensure that learners achieve intended learning outcomes. These structures include basic infrastructure, comprehensive school curricula and curriculum materials such as the school timetable, syllabuses, textbooks, supplementary readers and instructional resources. Ridge (2012) as cited in Gray (2015) assessed the impact of these structures on students' learning by showing how concrete and appealing they present experiences to students hence influencing their academic performance for the better.

Furthermore, studies have pointed out that teacher factor is a crucial element as far as academic performance of students is concerned (Rashid & Zaman, 2018). Scholars believe that learners tend to construct a lot of knowledge through constant interactions with experienced adults (Vygotsky, 1971). This suggests that there is a high possibility for students to mimic series of behaviors from their teachers as they constantly interact with them. They eventually get accustomed to these behaviours of their teachers thereby applying them in every aspect of their lives including academics. Studies have proven that teachers' attitude and perception walk hand in hand with students' learning outcome (Gray, 2015).

Parental influence is yet another phenomenon known among 21st century educationists to have been constantly creating remarkable impacts on academic lives of students (Rafiq, Fatima, Sohail, Saleem & Khan, 2013). Commitment from parents for instance plays sensitive roles in the learning behaviours of children. Students' academic performance, to say, depends largely on the readiness of parents to assist in the upbringing of all the learning faculties of children (Burner, 2006). Children do not need or require the support of the school or teachers entirely to succeed academically but rather participation from parents is

also very vital in this quest. Since children's first language learning and acquisition begins at home (Piaget, 1983), and it is the parents' efforts which make this happen, it is arguably certain that, for students to sail through academically, parents ought to avail themselves in every way.

Successful learning does not happen out of the blue but rather series of factors come in to play to ensure the achievement of such milestone. These factors include learner or student readiness which encompasses psychological, emotional and mental balance of the learner. It is the parent who makes sure that there is serene, stable environment and learning materials ready for children. Parents and guardians are obliged to create the appropriate platform for the academic improvement of their wards. It is their duty to ensure that certain basic needs like clothing, shelter, love, motivation (Maslow, 1941) which move along with learning behaviours of children (students) and academic needs will be met. According to Maslow (1941) certain actions such as meeting or satisfying basic needs such as provision of shelter, food, clothing and other related primary motivationally-anchored treatments from parents and experienced adults inform series of desired learning outcomes of students (Anderson, 2012 cited in Oyedare, Ogunjinmi & Durojaiye, 2016). Similarly, Epstein (1995) defines clearly the crucial roles parents play in the successful academic achievement of their children through her six propositions.

Unfortunately, across the continent of Africa, a little below 84% believe that nurturing academic lives of students is the sole responsibility of teachers and the school alike (Regasa & Taha, 2015). Research has further indicated that more than 60% of parents living in rural communities in sub-Saharan zones do not see the need to fully get involved in the education of their wards let alone paying a considerable attention to academic activities of these children (Regasa & Taha, 2015). Sadly, where there is limited interest in education, the lot is cast to favour some group of persons particularly males at the expense of their counterparts. Similarly, in Ghana, the situation is not far different. Parents' role in students' performance has always been a bone of contention. Scores of parents are pointing fingers at teachers, schools and the government to do the job and make sure that students attain the required academic excellence failing to acknowledge their contributory quota in this campaign.

There have been series of arguments trending major platforms and other media on whether parents have crucial roles to play as far as academic development and achievement of students are concerned. Among these arguments are studies conducted by Agyapong (2012) cited in Apeanti and Danso (2014) who maintains that parental involvement in children's learning behavior results in a quite desirable one. He maintains that students' ability to learn or reach certain academic ladder largely depends on parental commitment. Scholars at one point believe that when parents provide their wards (students) with all the basic needs such as shelter, clothing, food, love, motivation and other related forms of physical, psychological and emotional scaffolds (Vygotsky, 1971), the rate of learning and achievement becomes certain (Kenderich et al, 2013 as cited in Maslow, 1941).

Other research works on the other hand have proven that there is a wide gulf between parental influence and academic achievements of students (Handel, 2007 cited in Sander & Sheldon, 2009). Handel (2007) cited in Sander and Sheldon (2009) opines that successful academic achievement and development does not necessarily rely on either the internal or external manipulation of parents or any form of adult experience but rather learners' level of cognitive, psychological and emotional development go along to informing all intended learning outcomes. In contrast, Bond (2011) argues and concludes in his study that

parents play very little role in the learning behaviors of their children. Bond (2011) believes that children construct knowledge for themselves better with or without the guidance of any experienced adult. Peer learning and other forms of environmental components such as today's trends of technology and certain cognitive abilities of learners are key to successful learning (Bond, 2011).

The multi-million dollar question now is: Do parents really matter in the academic lives of students? Do students need parents and experienced adults to perform well academically? Does the presence of parents actually influence the academic development of students? These and many others have become the very questions trending in the minds of many. Answers to these are still unknown. This debate has remained mixed for some time now, and it is therefore seen to be a big issue which needs to be researched.

Apparently, studies remain scanty in the area of parental roles in students' academic achievements in Ghanaian schools. Aside this, these limited research works also have focused on the role of parents in students' academic development at the tertiary levels (Apeanti & Danso, 2014). Since these studies have placed greater emphasis on tertiary institutions, issues relating to pre-tertiary schools are naturally left unaddressed. As a result, it became necessary that the researchers conducted this study on the role of parents in the academic achievement of pre-tertiary school learners in Ghana. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the role of parents in the academic achievement of pre-tertiary school learners in the Ada East District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana from the context of socio-economy, socio-culture and communication. The current study attempted to answer two questions through a survey and follow-up in-depth interview: How do parents' socioeconomic and sociocultural statuses influence academic achievement of pre-tertiary school learners in the Ada East District? What role does communication among parents, teachers, school and the community play in the academic achievement of pre-tertiary school learners in the Ada East District?

2. Literature review

2.1 Epstein' theory of parental involvement and student academic achievement

Epstein's theory of parental involvement is by far among the most vital tools developed by the field thus far for defining parental involvement practices and equating them with certain categories of outcomes. This widely accepted framework mentor educators to design comprehensive family school partnerships (Rafiq, Fatima, Sohail, Saleem & Khan, 2013). Epstein (1995) proposes six types of parental involvement, and they are as follow:

- a) Parenting (helping families with childrearing and parenting skills): Joyce Epstein believes that schools have roles to play in ensuring that families irrespective of the backgrounds build a learning supportive home environment for their children. When children are provided with home environment that supports learning, they get the opportunity to abreast themselves with relevant information on nutrition, children's health, adolescent issues, techniques in parenting and discipline among others.
- b) Communicating (developing effective home-school communication): According to Mauka (2015), communication as a parental involvement practice "refers to how best to design and conduct an effective two-way communication that is school to home and home to school, about school

programmes and their children's progress." Schools ought to seek and adopt different ways of communicating with parents about the progress of their wards in school.

- c) Volunteering (creating ways that families can become involved in activities at the school): As families volunteer to participate in school events and other related school activities, they familiarize themselves with their children's schools and teachers. When parents voluntarily open to school events, their talents and qualities are tapped to enrich school programmes and to facilitate individualized learning.
- d) Learning at home (supporting learning activities in the home that reinforce school curricula): Learning at home pertains to providing ideas and information to parents about how they can best assist their children with homework and curricular related decisions and activities.
- e) Decision-making (including families as decision-makers through school-sites councils, committees): Involving parents in governance, decision-making, and advocacy roles is yet another strategy for fortifying links between schools and parents. As parental participation in decision-making, when it is comprehensive program involving parents in learning support activities as well, is associated with improved student outcomes.
- f) Collaborating with the community (matching community services with family needs and serving the community): Collaborating with the community pertains to identifying and integrating communities' services and resources to support and strengthen schools, students, and their families. (Mauka, 2015; Epstein, 1995).

2.2 Abraham Maslow's theory of needs and student academic achievement

Maslow (1943) hypothesized that within every human being there exists a hierarchy of five needs. These needs are:

1. Physiological: This includes hunger, thirst, shelter, sex and other bodily needs.
2. Safety: This includes security and protection from physical and emotional harm.
3. Social: This includes affection, belongingness, acceptance and friendship.
4. Esteem: This includes internal esteem factors such as self-respect, autonomy and achievement and external esteem factors such as status, recognition and attention.
5. Self- actualization: This is represented by the drive to become what one is capable of becoming; includes growth, achieving one's potential, self- fulfillment etc.

Need levels 1 and 2 are typically called lower order needs and levels 3, 4 and 5 are called higher order needs. The differentiation between the two levels was made on the premise that the higher order needs are satisfied internally to the person, whereas lower order needs are predominantly satisfied externally. The Needs theory stipulates that human behavior or conditioning is determined by a certain definite set of needs. It is preferentially arranged in 'prepotency', which means that, as a person fulfills a lower need, the next higher need becomes important in directing the person's behavior (Venugopalan, 2007).

Applicably, parents have major roles to play to ensure that their wards are well fed both at home and in school. Children are unable to pay much attention to instruction when they are hungry. When this happens the desirable learning outcomes get jeopardized. This implies that, if parents truly wish to bring out the best in their wards academically, there is a greater need for them to make sure that they supply them

adequately with the necessary food supplies. Similarly, parents should provide children with certain basic needs such as school uniforms, shoes, sandals, and other related clothing and protective shelter as well. Kendrick (2011) opines that students perform better when they are assured of their physical, psychological and emotional safety or security. Parents must give their all to ensure that the safety and security of their wards are catered for. They must do well and do away with all possible and impending threats such as physical, emotional and mental abuse that may deter children from developing academically. Again, when a child feels loved and belonged, it goes a long way to informing his/her performance in everything. Parents must show their wards all the positive affections they can give.

2.3 Parents' socioeconomic status and students' academic achievement

The financial strength of families to every degree determines the academic achievement of students. Bond (1994) asserts that children from high socioeconomic backgrounds tend to accomplish more in school than their counterparts from relatively lower ones. He argues that such children have the opportunity to be provided with all the basic needs needed for school and academic activities.

Similarly, upper class and middle class families enroll their wards in the best schools and provide them extra and private tuition in order to develop them academically (Singh, 1992 as cited in Bond, 1994). Studies have shown that the financial muscles of families to a very large extent determines the aspirations, behavior, learning attitudes as well as the academic ethics of children (Mauka, 2015). Mauka (2015), in her studies discovered that children from relatively same higher socioeconomic backgrounds always feel challenged to compete with their peers in school and have the urge to accomplish more in school than children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

2.4 Parents' sociocultural level and students' academic achievement

It is believed that families who are educated always have bigger aspirations for their children. They either challenge them to do more to surpass them or do not fall below the status of the family (Mauka, 2015). Parents who were raised from well-educated homes also tend to bring up their children in a similar fashion. Bond (1994) maintains that the level of training a parent has acquired influences the kind of upbringing he/she (a parent) will give to the child.

Families with well-educated background place priceless value on education. According to Ngorosho (2003), children who are often or always monitored in school and home alike are likely to come out from families who prioritize education. In view of Ngorosho (2003), such parents are neither paranoid nor overprotective but rather are very ambitious as far educational development in the family is concerned. Educated parents do well to provide their children with all the relevant education related materials and aids for academic activities. They ensure that their children do not lack at least any appropriate learning materials. Such families also enroll their children in best schools and constantly monitor their level of their academic progress.

2.5 Communication and academic achievement

Recent studies have also shown that communication at home builds intimacy between children and families (Decshen, 2014). Today, communication has taken so many turns and forms. It is either digital or physical

interaction. Oyedare, Ogunjinmi and Durojaiye (2016) explain that parents and teachers are most influential from early period of schooling in child life. Parents normally start to possess education and teachers extend it. He emphasize the importance of home cooperated with school and establish good financial relationship with teachers. This means that, children intellectual potential for successes in school education depends on initial efforts of parents in cultivating this potential so as to prepare conducive learning environment.

Harbison and Hanushek (1992) argued that, studies of educational performance particularly in developed countries invariably indicate that, learning occurring in the home is much more important than that which occurs at school. The quality of education at home is typically reflected in the educational level of parents, their income level and other indicator of social economic status of the family. Parent or family input to education which include the level of both mother and father education exert a positive or negative and generally significant influence on student achievement.

3. Methodology

A survey to assess the impact of parental involvement in learners' academic achievement was designed. The purpose of the survey was to find out the influence of sociocultural and socioeconomic statuses of parents vis-à-vis learners' performance. Again, the survey developed also targeted exploring the role of communication among stakeholders like the school, community, teachers and parents in relation to learners' academic performance. To gain additional information, we also conducted in-depth interviews with some selected parents and school staff members in the Ada East District in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

The study purely took a sequential explanatory mixed method approach. This involved using a survey method with a relatively large sample so that the researcher can generalize results to the population following with a qualitative interview for exploratory purposes. Furthermore, for the purposes of describing the phenomena as they naturally exist, the researchers subjected the study to a descriptive design. The two main sampling procedures – probability and non-probability were employed in the selection of participants. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select fifty (50) students whilst judgmental (purposive) sampling technique was involved in choosing nine (9) staff members and six (6) parents respectively. In all, one hundred and sixty-five (65) respondents were sampled for the study.

Instruments used for data collection were mainly through structured questionnaire and semi-structure interview guide. The questionnaire was administered to only learners and all staff members. The researchers, with the help of research assistants, read out the question items to participants and explained them accordingly. Participants were to indicate their responses using a three-point Likert Scale (Yes, No, Somehow). Similarly, the interview guide was used for parents and some selected staff members. Responses given in the interview were recorded in audio format, video format and audio-visual format. Detailed notes were also taken in the course of the interview session. Repeated playbacks of recorded responses were done afterwards to ensure voice clarity and to pave way for transcription as well. Codes were generated and assigned to data gathered from the interview.

The research made use of descriptive analytical tools to analyse all quantitatively gathered data; however, qualitative data like interview responses were subjected to thematic analyses. In ensuring trustworthiness

of the instruments, experts, supervisors, teachers, colleagues and students (participants) were consulted for suggestions, before they were carried out as proposed by Anderson and Morgan (2008). Again, questions were piloted on some selected pre-tertiary learners, teachers and parents to determine content appropriateness and semantic clarity. Wording and format of several questions were modified as a result of the teacher feedback.

4. Results

Findings from the study were presented in accordance with the data type. Tables were used to discuss quantitative results from survey whereas qualitative results from in-depth interviews were also interpreted thematically. The table below shows the role communication among parents, teachers, school and the community play in academic achievement of pre-tertiary schoolers in the Ada East District:

Table 1: Analysis of staff members' responses (Role of communication among parents, staff and community) n = 9

| Items | Responses | No. of Staff | Percentage (%) |
|---|-----------|--------------|----------------|
| Parent-teacher face-to-face conversation about children's learning will improve parent's attitudes towards teachers. | Yes | 5 | 55.55 |
| | No | 3 | 33.33 |
| | Somehow | 1 | 11.11 |
| Sending home school progress reports on children's academic achievement will help to improve children's performance | Yes | 7 | 77.77 |
| | No | 1 | 11.11 |
| | Somehow | 1 | 11.11 |
| Parents' contacts with teachers rise awareness on the importance of their children's education | Yes | 6 | 66.66 |
| | No | 1 | 11.11 |
| | Somehow | 2 | 22.22 |
| School parent-day helps parents and teachers for collaboration to improve academic achievement | Yes | 8 | 88.88 |
| | No | 1 | 11.11 |
| | Somehow | 0 | 0 |
| Teachers who visit children's homes can teach the children better | Yes | 7 | 77.77 |
| | No | 1 | 11.11 |
| | Somehow | 1 | 11.11 |

Source: Field survey (2019)

The responses participants gave in relation to parent-teacher face-to-face conversation revealed that five (5) respondents representing 55.6% said that there is a likelihood of an attitudinal improvement on the part

of parents towards teachers who teach their children in school. Three (3) participants forming 33.3% on the other hand believed that parent-teacher face-to-face interaction will yield no results with respect to parents' attitudes towards teachers. Meanwhile, only one (1) respondent representing 11.1% stated that parents' attitudes towards teachers could or may improve through face-to-face conversation. Considering the responses given by the majority of respondents, there is an obvious indication that parents are more likely to improve their attitudes towards teachers through face-to-face conversation. This will in turn impact academic performance and development of learners greatly since they (learners) will come to acknowledge and understand the serene rapport between teachers and parents.

From the table, it was seen that seven (7) respondents representing 77.8% claimed that there is high possibility of improvement in children's academic performance when the school sends home progress reports on their academic achievement. One (1) respondent representing 11.1% said children's academic performance will still remain same regardless the decision by school and teachers to send progress reports on children's academic achievement home. However, another One (1) respondent forming 11.1% responded that sending home progress reports on children's academic achievement could or may improve their performance in school. The responses gathered from the majority of respondents show that when the school and teachers send home progress reports on children's academic achievement, it will impact positively on their (learners') academic performance and development since they will develop the awareness that their performance are not only being monitored in the school but from home as well.

The table also shows parents' contacts with teachers. The responses participants gave regarding this showed that six (6) respondents representing 66.7% out of the total nine (9) sampled claimed that some parents contact teachers and the school only to find out how their wards are faring and progressing academically, and that shows the value they (parents) place on their wards' education. Meanwhile, one (1) respondent constituting 11.1% said parents' contacts with teachers do not necessarily create or increase awareness on the importance of their children's education. They believed that parents' contacts with parents might have a secondary purpose which may deviate from education. On the other hand, two (2) respondents forming 22.2% responded that parents' contacts with teachers could rise awareness on the importance of their children's education. These responses gathered from the majority of respondents suggest that parents' contacts with teachers increase an awareness on the importance of their children's education. This mean that schools and teachers who tend to recognize the value parents place on their wards' education also tend to put in more effort to address all academic needs thereby improving the academic performance of such children.

The table shows how school-home activities like school-parent day help parents and teachers alike. The responses given by participants in reference to the item in question revealed that eight (8) respondents representing 88.9% out of the total nine (9) sampled believed school-home related activities like school-parent day help parents and teachers alike a lot for collaboration to improve academic achievement. Meanwhile, only one (1) respondent forming 11.1% said school-home related activities like school-parent day do not entirely help parents and teachers to collaborate to improve academic achievement. However, no participant (0) representing 0% neither agreed nor disagreed. These findings obtained from the majority of respondents indicate that school-home related activities like school-parent day and other related celebrations help parents and teachers alike a lot for collaboration to improve academic achievement. This

is because such occasions serve or offer the right platforms or avenues where all manner of academic issues relating to learners and the school in general can be addressed.

The table again indicates responses given concerning teachers' visit to children's home. It was realised that seven (7) respondents representing 77.8% believed that teachers who visit the homes of children understand them and as a result can teach them better. One (1) respondent forming 11.1% however disclosed that there is no relationship between teachers' visits to children's (students) homes and how they teach them. Another one (1) respondent making 11.1% claimed that when teachers visit the homes of children, such occasions somehow help them to understand their needs better and handle them as such in the classroom. The responses gathered from the majority of respondents show that teachers who visit the homes of children understand the needs, interest, personality likewise environmental and home factors such as sociocultural and socioeconomic of these children and as a result teach them well. This implies that when the school and teachers make such visits habitual, it will go a long way to inform academic performance and development of learners in the school. Based on the findings gathered, it can be concluded that the level of communication and relationship that exists amongst parents, teachers, school, and the community undoubtedly have a lot of influence on academic performance and development of pre-tertiary schoolers at Ada East District in the Greater Accra Region, in that the richer and stronger the communication and the relationship, the better the academic performance and vice versa. These findings fall in line with Sanders and Sheldon (2009) who maintain that schools become successful when a strong and positive relationship among students, parents, teachers and the community has been established.

Table 2: Analysis of learners' responses (Socioeconomic and sociocultural impact)

| Items | Responses | Respondents | Percentage (%) |
|---|------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>Status of parent</u> | | | |
| Single parent | Yes | 23 | 46 |
| | No | 27 | 45 |
| | Somehow | 0 | 0 |
| Parents' capacity to provide educational needs | Yes | 15 | 30 |
| | No | 22 | 44 |
| | Somehow | 13 | 26 |
| <u>Educational status of parent</u> | | | |
| Primary school leaver | | 9 | 18 |
| Middle school leaver | | 10 | 20 |
| J.S.S./J.H.S. graduate | | 6 | 12 |
| S.S.S./S.H.S. graduate | | 2 | 4 |
| Tertiary graduate | | 4 | 8 |
| No School | | 19 | 38 |
| Parents' enquiry about homework | Yes | 15 | 30 |
| | No | 25 | 50 |

| | | | |
|---|---------|----|----|
| | Somehow | 10 | 20 |
| Parents' assistance with other school-related activities | Yes | 13 | 26 |
| | No | 31 | 62 |
| | Somehow | 6 | 12 |

Source: Field survey (2019) n = 50

The table shows that twenty-three (23) respondents out of the total fifty (50) sampled forming 46% live with single parents whereas the remaining twenty-seven (27) respondents forming 54% reside with both parents. The responses obtained indicate that majority of learners do have at least more than one family member around them.

Again, socioeconomic and sociocultural impact were assessed through parents' capacity to provide educational needs and parents' educational status respectively. On this, responses gathered from respondents regarding parents' capacity to provide for all educational needs show that fifteen (15) respondents representing 30% out of the total fifty (50) sampled responded that their parents able to provide all their educational needs. However, twenty-two (22) respondents making 44% disclosed that their parents are unable to provide them with all educational their needs. Meanwhile, the remaining section of respondents constituting thirteen (13) representing 26% said their parents are not always able to give them what it takes as far as their educational needs are concerned. The responses given suggest that majority of learners do not get access to all educational needs due to reasons like financial constraints on the part of parents. This explains why some leaners always lag behind in academically-related activities in and out of the school environment. This affirms the position of Mauka (2015) who argue that children from relatively higher socioeconomic backgrounds always feel challenged to compete with their peers in school and have the urge to accomplish more in school than children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Furthermore, parents' educational status and academic attainment show that nine (9) respondents representing 18% have parents who have completed primary school; ten (10) participants forming 20% have parents who have attained middle school level; six (6) respondents making 12% are with parents who have completed Junior Secondary School (JSS/JHS) only; two (2) respondents representing 4% have parents who are Senior Secondary School (SSS/SHS); four (4) respondents representing 8% have parents who have attained tertiary level of education whereas nineteen (19) respondents forming 38% have attained no educational level. The responses given imply that majority of learners are living with parents who have attained no or low level of education. This phenomenon arguably accounts for learners' and parents' constant decline in interest in all activities relating to academics hence learners' low academic achievement levels. This aligns with Bond (1994) who maintains that the level of training a parent has acquired influences the kind of upbringing he/she (a parent) will give to the child.

The gathered responses from respondents in relation to homework revealed that fifteen (15) respondents representing 30% out of the total fifty (50) sampled said that their parents do regularly ask them about homework. Twenty-five (25) participants on the other hand making 50% answered that their parents do not inquire about homework at all whilst the remaining section of respondents who constituted ten (10) representing 20% disclosed that their parents do not regularly ask about homework. These responses

gathered clearly suggest that majority of learners do have or live with parents who are negligent of enquiring about wards’ homework due to ignorance, lack of time, illiteracy among others. These actions and inactions of parents to some extent determine the fate of learners’ academic performance, development and achievement.

Lastly, responses obtained in relation to assistance offered by parents to learners in school-related activities again revealed that thirteen (13) respondents representing 26% out of the total fifty (50) sampled responded that their parents do assist them with their home assignments and other related school activities. Meanwhile, thirty-one (31) respondents forming 62% claimed that their parents do not help them with their homework at all neither do they assist them in any kind of school related activities. The remaining section of respondents on the other hand who comprised six (6) representing 12% said that their parents do help them with their homework and school related activities but such assistance do not come very often. These responses given indicate that majority of students have not been getting the attention or help from parents as far as home works and other school related assignments are concerned due to time factor, level of education, ignorance among others. These findings confirm the assertions of Ngorosho (2003) who posit that children who are often or always monitored in school and home alike are likely to come out from families who prioritize education.

4.1 In-depth interview results

Three global themes were identified from the interaction with parents and staff members: (a) Learners need financial commitment of parents (b) Learners depend on parents’ level of training (education) (c) Parent-teacher-school communication is vital for learners’ improvement.

Table 3 Parents’ and Staff Members’ In-depth Interview Themes

| Parents’ Themes | Staff Members’ Theme | Global Themes |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| Support academics with Your financial resources | Support academics with financial resources | Parents’ financial impact |
| Assist academic lives with Your expertise | Assist academics with experience and expertise | Parents’ training impact |
| Monitor performance via Communication | Monitor performance via Communication | Communication impact |

Note: Parents’ and staff members’ themes integrated

4.1.1 Learners need financial commitment of parents

The parents’ theme “Support academics with your financial resources” was same or if to say, closely aligned with the staff members’ theme of “Support academics with financial resources.” In the interview, both sections of respondents claimed that parents’ and guardians’ financial commitment is key as far as learners’ development and achievement in academics and school-related activities are concerned. This is what one parents had to say:

P3: *“Our children need money for school. I believe the more we spend on them in school, I think the better they are likely to perform in everything they do. I can only speak for myself on this issue. When my son later realised how much I was spending on him.....giving him everything he needed for school and other stuffs, he started buckling up, and I was really happy to see that.”*

Similarly, some of the staff members also gave account of how some parents’ monetary resources commitment have informed students’ performance. This is what a teacher had to say:

SM 5: *“I have encountered countless instances where students’ performance levels have largely depended on how deep parents’ pockets are. You sometimes witness how remarkably a student suddenly begins to perform...You try to find out why, and later you get to realize that their parents have begun to spend on them...they are buying all sort of books for them, paying almost every fees, getting part-time (home) teachers for them and all kind of things.”*

These responses indicate that parents’ financial commitment ought not to be overlooked as a variable if we intend to appropriately address or tackle pre-tertiary learners’ academic performance and achievement in and out of the school setting. This conforms to Mauka (2015) who posits that financial muscles of families to a very large extent determines the aspirations, behavior, learning attitudes as well as the academic ethics of children (Mauka, 2015).

4.1.2 Learners depend on parents’ level of training (education)

The parents’ theme “Assist academic lives with your expertise” was comparable to staff members’ theme “Assist academic lives with experience and expertise.” On this, both section of respondents disclosed the potential influence of parents’ knowledge base, level of training and education likewise experience and expertise on learners’ performance in academic related activities. Some parents stated that:

P1: *“I can say I have always been helpful to my children. After all, I am able to help them do their homework and other home assignments given by their teachers. My children have been grateful for the support and often look up to me anytime they come with school related tasks.”*

P4: *“I have the urge to help my children with academics but I have no idea how to go about it. Unfortunately for me, I didn’t have the chance to go to school so...eerr...hmm...as you can see there is no way I can be of help to them when it comes to homework. I know I’d have been of great help to them and their studies alike if I had received some formal training.”*

In an attempt to attest to the claim that parents’ level of training, education, experience and expertise walk hand in hand with learners’ academic performance, this is what some teachers also had to say:

SM 7: *“I think it is very obvious that high achieving learners in almost every classroom are those whose parents have attained certain level of education. I can say on authority that students who perform well in my school are mostly children of teachers, lecturers, doctors, civil and public servants. You don’t need to ask why because they get all the assistance they need to perform better academically. Some parents even go the extent of teaching their children at home, which I know you can testify to that. Right?”*

SM 2: *“Of course, you see, one can easily tell the educational level of parents and*

guardians of some students in the school. Those who are excelling are largely the ones whose parents have gone through some formal training. It may also interest you to know that some parents teach their children ahead whilst others even introduce them to other curricula. Some even preregister their kids to sit for SAT, IELTS, TOFEL, WASSCE among others.”

The responses obtained suggest that parents’ knowledge base, level of training and education as well as experience and expertise are highly influential in learners’ academic development, achievement and performance at the pre-tertiary level. This confirms the position of Harbison and Hanushek (1992) who argue that parent or family input to education which include the level of both mother and father education exert a positive or negative and generally significant influence on student achievement.

4.1.3 Parent-teacher-school communication is vital for learners’ improvement.

The parents’ theme “Monitor performance via communication” was same with staff members’ theme of “Monitor performance via communication.” The purpose was to explore the role communication among stakeholders like the school, parents and teachers play in learners’ performance. Regarding this, respondents revealed that the kind of communication and relationship there exist among teachers, parents, the school and the community at large positively inform performance of learners in and out of school. Some parents claimed that:

P2: “My children started to buckle up the very moment they noticed that I had been attending P.T.A. meetings and asking them about some of their teachers. Hahaha...It’s funny, you know...hmmm...These kids think you don’t have time to communicate with their teachers to find out what’s been going on.”

P5: “Teachers and school authorities now no longer take us and our children for granted because they have seen that we now tend to ask a lot of questions concerning our wards’ studies.”

A section of staff members also revealed that:

SM 6: *“Teachers, the school community and learners alike are all sober now because things are not like before. Parents now enquire a lot about the performance of their children in class. Some parents have our contacts; they call you anytime for so many clarifications like errh...approved fees, assignment, authenticity of terminal reports, notes, complaints, and so on. These kids now know that they are being monitored in school from home through parent-teacher contacts.”*

SM 1: *“I know some students who started to showed seriousness in academics simply because they started seeing their parents frequently with the headmaster. Some parents even go to the extent of coming to the classroom to discuss with us in front of the children the state of performance in academic related activities.”*

The responses gathered show that parent-teacher-school communication is crucial in the academic lives of learners at the pre-tertiary level. This aligns with the assertion of Durojaiye (2016) who explains that parents and teachers are most influential from early period of schooling in child life.

5. Discussion and conclusion

Generally, parental involvement or role is a big issue particularly in the academic lives of learners. However, this phenomenon has constantly been under jeopardy due to the emergence of certain factors like poverty, illiteracy, irresponsibility, presence of social vices among others. From the study, the socioeconomic and sociocultural impact of parents were assessed through their capacity to provide educational materials as well as their educational level. Regarding this, it was realised that parents who show financial commitment in academic related activities tend to positively influence performance and development of their wards through this action and vice versa. Again, it was seen that parents who have attained higher education and possess certain amount of knowledge, expertise, experience and training often assist their wards with school/academic related activities hence informing positively their academic development and performance. Therefore, it has been concluded that sociocultural and socioeconomic statuses of parents affect academic achievement of learners across all pre-tertiary levels in the Ada East District of Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The study revealed that the higher or richer the sociocultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of parents, the higher the academic performance and development of learners of these parents and vice versa. This is because such parents have the ability to provide for their wards almost every essential educational resources and also give them the needed academic assistance via their level of training, experience, knowledge base, expertise and education.

Lastly, the study also revealed the impact of communication on learners' performance. It was noticed that the level of communication and relationship existing among the parents, teachers, school and the community outside help to shape learners' development, performance and achievement in academics. It was seen that communication undoubtedly walked and worked hand in hand with academic development and achievement of learners. It was unveiled that the more effective communication tends to be among parents, teachers and the school the greater the chance for learners to improve academically. The study therefore concludes that the intensity of communication and relationship among parents, teachers, school and the community have promising effects on the academic performance and development of pre-tertiary learners in the Ada East District of Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

6. Research Limitation

The researchers could not meet all pre-tertiary learners in the selected schools and in the district at large due to long distance and limited time. Because of this, the researchers had to use a sample of respondents to represent all learners in pre-tertiary schools in the district and the country at large. Due to this, generalizability of this study becomes very difficult when one considers the mass population of learners in pre-tertiary schools in the district and the country as a whole. Finally yet importantly, during the data collection process, some learners and parents alike felt shy to disclose their socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds. Others were also reluctant to respond to some interview questions. Similarly, some section of selected teachers were not compromising in the study. These attitudes made the researchers questioned one another as to the authenticity of the data gathered from these respondents.

7. Recommendations

At home, parents and guardians must show interest in all academic activities of their children. They can do this by assisting their wards with home works, projects and other related school-based tasks. Parents ought to have time for their children and offer them enough study time at home as well if only they wish to ensure a more reliable and an improved academic life for their children. This does not only help students to become academically self-reliant but it also motivates them to thrive for more academic success.

Parents should also make it a point that it is their dire responsibility to make provision for all educational needs as satisfactorily as possible. Academic learning gets more and more difficult for young learners when studies facilities are not readily available. Parents ought to provide their wards with more educative supplementary materials in addition to those already in the school. Most importantly, families should offer their school going children the best psychological advantage as possible. Any form of activity especially marital disputes, family feuds, domestic violence and child labour among others that is likely to dim the interest of children from studying should not be encouraged to revolve around them.

The community also has a role to play by ensuring that they act as reliable agents that support, supplement and complement the efforts of parents. Obviously, parents with low income and limited education cannot do this all alone unless they get helping hands. It is for this reason that communities through the efforts of NGOs and other stakeholders should be entreated to come in and support such disadvantaged parents to help build the academic lives of their children. They can do this by building community libraries to serve all manner of children, organizing extra classes for poor but needy students, giving financial assistance and other forms of scholarship for students from low socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds.

The Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service should also come up with policies that will compel schools to include parents and communities actively in almost all affairs of the school. Again, the Ministry of Education through the Ghana Education Service, stakeholders of education like NGOs can support parents to realize the dream of achieving academic excellence for their children. They can help by providing free textbooks, supplementary materials, school uniforms, free extra tuition, scholarships, etc. to all manner of children especially those from poor backgrounds.

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