COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN BASIC EDUCATION IN THE KWABRE DISTRICT OF THE ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA

Kwame Bediako Asare
Institute Of Education, University Of Cape Coast, Ghana

ABSTRACT

Education benefits its recipients, their families and the community. This study examined the involvement of communities in the Kwabre District of Ghana in basic education delivery. The researcher employed survey design for the study. Participants included teachers and educational administrators on the one hand and community members (parents and opinion leaders) on the other. The study revealed that communities in the district participate in basic education delivery in such areas as support toward school buildings and provision of learning resources. However, it was observed that provision of learning resources is not very much pursued. Also, schools do not get the cooperation of community members to serve as resource persons. It was recommended that educational authorities take steps to revive dormant PTAs/SMCs giving the assistance they provide to support basic schools. Communities need to be sensitized more on the need for them to provide learning materials to pupils/students.

Introduction

According to Guggisberg, “Education is the keystone of a people’s life and happiness” (McWilliam & Kwamena-Poh, 1975, p. 83). A sound education structure leads to an enlightened society and manpower development, which is able to lead a crusade for social transformation and economic progress. In Ghana, there have been programmes put in place to make education geared towards national development. Antwi (1992) indicated that “as far back as 1852, the newly created colonial administration for the British coastal settlements in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) had enacted ... an Ordinance to provide for better education of the inhabitants” (p.57). This was followed by the Education Ordinance of 1882. The Accelerated Development Plan on Education (ADPE, 1951) and the Education Act of 1961 are examples of attempts to involve communities in educational provision in Ghana. For instance, the ADPE (1951) suggested that in order to beat down cost of education, the government should involve the communities (i.e. the Local Authorities and the people) in the running and funding of education.

Agyeman (1986) stated that communities' involvement and participation in the programme implementation had been woefully inadequate. This had, in fact, been reported earlier by the Education Review Committee (1967) headed by Professor Kwapon that among other things, “the Local Authorities have largely proved inefficient in the management of schools” (p.58). The Education Act of 1961 (Act 87) also stated that the establishment and management of basic schools were to be attended to by the Local Education Authorities (L.E.As), parents and the government. Antwi (1992) indicated that the LEAs were “to build, equip and maintain all public ... schools” (p. 61). Report of the Evans-Anfom’s Commission (1986) indicated among other things that “provision in sections 1 and 2 for compulsory primary and middle school education has not been enforceable for economic reason” (p. iii) on the part of the government. Contribution from the communities in education provision was thus necessarily imminent.

In September 1987 and September 2007, new education reforms have been introduced in Ghana. The thrust of these reforms was to make the Ghanaian educational system relevant to the needs of the country. For this reason, communities were required to participate to make the programmes successful.

This idea of community participation hinges on the assumptions underlining social capital.
Bourdieu (1983) saw social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of… relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (p. 249). The World Bank (1999), highlighting the synergies of social interactions, indicated that social capital is seen as not just the sum of the institutions that underpin societies, it is rather the glue that holds the institutions together. Indeed social capital provides for “a set of norms and sanctions that allow individuals to cooperate for mutual advantage” (Field, 2003: 28). Putnam (2000) indicated that social capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems, greases the wheels that allow communities to advance, improves our lot by widening awareness and serves as conduits for the flow of helpful information that facilitates achievement of goals.

However, even though in some Ghanaian communities individual philanthropists do bear the burden of providing needed amenities for the people, the responsibility of the entire community in providing educational needs cannot be shifted to any one person. At least the community must provide communal labour as a form of support. In support of educational provisions, chiefs and their elders, in consultation with education authorities, have time and again released pieces of land for the construction of school buildings and other school projects such as farming activities. Structures to promote teaching and learning have been put up by the communities (Awuah, 2002).

In order to ensure quality basic education, government has been putting forward much effort. For example, through the Ministry of Education, government is providing textbooks, syllabuses and furniture to basic schools. The school feeding programme is on-going while school uniforms have been provided to pupils. Teachers are also being paid by government. Some NGOs and philanthropists in various communities help with supply of some educational materials and scholarships for deserving pupils.

**Statement of the Problem**

Basic schools are sited in communities. It is the communities that benefit most from basic education delivery. This is because basic education lays the foundation for further education and later employment. The children from the community who are thus educated, get good jobs to do and come back to develop their communities. The question that comes to the mind of the individual is if the community is the giant beneficiary of the educational system, what are the contributions made by the communities towards education? It is the desire to have an answer to this question that the researcher decided to examine community participation in basic education in the Kwabre District of Ghana.

The following research questions were proposed:

- Do communities in the district participate in basic education delivery? If they do, what areas of participation do they engage in?
- What support do community members provide towards school building and sanitation?
- What do community members do in providing learning resources for pupils?
- How do communities support teacher welfare and school management?

**Method**

**Research Design**

The research was a cross-sectional descriptive survey involving collection of data at one point in time (Creswell, 2003).

**Participants**

The researcher collected data for the study from six towns and 12 villages (out of 50 communities) in the Kwabre District of Ashanti. That was done on the basis that not all the settlements in the area had basic schools. In some cases, two or three communities had one basic school. Six towns Aboaso, Awhiaa, Antoa, Kodie, Mampongte and Ntonso, which happened to be circuit headquarters at the time of the study, were purposely sampled. They had more than two schools each and two schools were selected from each of them making up 12 schools. One school was selected from each of the 12 other villages that were randomly chosen. Therefore, twenty-four schools were sampled from the 18 towns and villages for the study using simple random sampling technique.

The sample for the study was 242. However, there were 221 data-producing respondents. They included 75 people from the education sector purposely sampled because they were at the frontline of educational delivery in the district and
directly deal with community members. They included ADE (Supervision-1), Community Participation Coordinator (1), circuit supervisors (5), head teachers of the sampled schools (24) and teachers selected from the schools chosen (44). There were also 146 community respondents purposely sampled for the study because they were responsible for the education and upbringing of the school children. These comprised chairpersons of the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs-19) of the sampled schools, parents/community members (65), representatives of School Management Committees (21), chiefs or their representatives (17) and Assembly Members (24).

**Instrumentation**

Basically, questionnaire and observation guide were used for data collection. The questionnaire sought information on areas and forms of community participation in basic education delivery and community preparation to support basic schools. Respondents were to tick appropriate options that applied in their case (Yes/No – without rating them) or where necessary, write their responses. In respect of illiterate respondents, the researcher read the items to them and took down their responses in the form of an interview. The observation checklist included information on physical support and assistance given to the schools or pupils by the communities. The instruments also included documentary evidence that showed visitation, donations and various facilities given to support basic schools by community members.

Both face and content validity of the instruments were obtained with expert advice (Osuala, 1991). Reliability of the items was established through test re-test. The initial items were given to a small portion of the population (N=16). The responses received helped the researcher to make changes in the items. The new set of items was given to 30 respondents. After three weeks, the instrument was given to the same 30 respondents. The two results were subjected to statistical analysis. The co-efficient obtained was r = 0.871 (significant at 0.05).

The researcher collected the data within a nine-week period. He personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents and undertook interview with the illiterate respondents. In all, 242 questionnaires were given out and 221 were returned representing 91.3%.

**Data Analysis and Results**

There were 75 data-producing Educational Administrators and Teachers out of 80. There were also 146 respondents of the community group that returned their copies of the questionnaire out of 162 expected.

**Participation of Communities in Basic Education Delivery**

A major aspect of the study was the determination of whether communities in the Kwabre District did participate in basic education delivery. Nearly all the respondents indicated that community members participate in basic education delivery in the district. The results further showed that support given to enrolment drive by the communities happened to be the highest form of participation with 90.7% of the 75 educational administrators and teachers and 91.8% of the 146 community members supporting this stance. Details are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Participation</th>
<th>Education Sector Respondents</th>
<th>Community Member Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities participate</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support towards school building</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation (i.e., urinals, toilets, dustbins)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of learning materials</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher welfare and support</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School management and administration</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment drive</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>90.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring and paying teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other areas that received high patronage included support towards school buildings and provision of learning resources. Hiring and paying teachers received the least of responses with only one (1.3%) of the 75 education sector respondents and five (3.4%) of the 146 community members indicating that such was done.

Community Support Towards School Buildings and Sanitation

It was necessary to find out the support given towards school buildings and sanitation as the state of school buildings and sanitation goes a long way to impact on teaching and learning. Analysis of the responses indicated that the major forms of community support towards school buildings and sanitation were payment of levies, which attracted 51 or 68% of the 75 educational administrators and teachers and 78.8% (115) of the 146 community respondents, and provision of communal labour which had 65.3% and 80.8% respectively by education sector and community respondents. Observations made revealed that 66.7% (16) of the 24 schools sampled for the study had classroom structures that were in good state.

Provision of Learning Resources for Basic Education Delivery

Respondents' indicated that provision of learning materials for pupils is the highest form of contribution made by communities in the Kwabre District in this regard. Fifty-seven (76%) of the 75 respondents in the education sector and 129 (88.4%) of the 146 community respondents indicated this. Other areas included cash donations which attracted 20% (15) responses from the educational administrators and teachers with 22.6% (23) of the community respondents. Supply of furniture received 22.7% responses from the education sector respondents and 35.6% of the community respondents.

Only 9.3% (seven) of the 75 education sector respondents and 13.7% (20) of the 146 community respondents indicated that a form of financial assistance was given to needy but brilliant pupils. Informal interviews conducted by the researcher revealed that such financial aid was given by Assembly members (in their private capacities) and friends of parents of such pupils. These two groups of respondents do not differ much in their perception of communities' provision of learning materials for basic education delivery in the district. However, there is a somewhat difference concerning provision of school uniforms for the pupils as was indicated by 61.3% of the 75 educational administrators/teachers and 75.3% of the 146 community respondents.

Community Contribution Towards Teacher Welfare and Support

It was necessary to find out contributions communities make towards teacher welfare and support since such provisions could motivate teachers to give of their best to promote basic education delivery in the Kwabre District. Specific forms of community participation for teacher welfare and support received varying responses. The study found out that helping teachers to get accommodation for hiring was the highest form of contribution given by communities as a means of assisting teachers. This was given by 43 (57.3%) of the 75 education sector respondents and 104 (71.2%) of the 146 community respondents. There is a slight difference though in the views expressed by the two groups since only 57% of administrators/teachers agreed that accommodation is provided to teachers while 71% of community members indicated they did that. Other areas that teachers receive some support from community members (though not very much pursued) included release of land for farming, giving of foodstuff to teachers and provision of accommodation for teachers.

School Management and Administration and Learning Improvement

It was important to find this out since effective management and administration of basic schools can go a long way to achieve improved teaching/learning process and pupils’ performance. The results showed that communities in the Kwabre District generally supported enrolling children in basic schools. Sixty-five (86.7%) of the 75 education sector respondents and 137 (93.8%) of the 146 community respondents gave this information. Attending meetings to consider issues about school also received 65.3% and 78.1% responses from education sector and community respondents respectively. Seeing to pupil’s homework and assignments did not receive much
support. This stems from the premise that only 19 (i.e. 25.3%) of education sector respondents and 77 (representing 52.7%) community respondents indicated that this was done.

It was observed that respondents' views are very high for the community group of respondents and quite high for the education sector respondents on the extent of participation of the communities in the Kwabre District in respect of management and administration towards the improvement of the schools in the district. The community member respondents raised very high on almost all the various forms of participation, especially the communities' participation in efforts towards enrolment of children to the schools (93.8%). The only area where they stated just about 50% participation was seeing to pupils' homework or assignments. The education sector respondents' responses to the same issues were different from those of the community group of respondents. Their views on the communities' efforts in enrolment of pupils is very high (86.7%) but their views on participation in the other items are either average or below average. Probably, the community member respondents know more about the communities' participation in these aspects than the educational administrators and teachers. For instance, the former group may know more than the latter group about the contribution the communities make towards assisting their pupils and wards in their homework. Thus, while the former group's view of seeing to pupils' homework was 52.7%, the latter's was only 25.3%. Really, apart from the teachers, the rest of the education sector respondents may not know the extent of parents' assistance in their children's homework. Thus difference existed in the perception held by community members and educational administrators and teachers regarding parental attention to see to pupils' home work and assignments.

Communities' Co-operation with Schools for Resource Persons

It was necessary to find out the co-operation that existed between the schools and communities since, as inhabitants, community members may possess knowledge and skills about the culture and occupations of the area. These could be tapped by the school to teach the pupils. This would enrich the school curriculum and make it more relevant to the immediate environment to help the children become fit and to function well in the society as active members.

With respect to whether schools get the co-operation of members of the communities as resource persons, 85.3% (64) of the 75 educational administrators/teachers indicated "No". Similarly, 85.6% (125) of the 146 community respondents showed that schools did not receive cooperation from such persons.

Two reasons were given for the lack of co-operation between schools and community members required to serve as resource persons. Failure to respond to invitations by school attracted 44.0% (33) of the 75 education sector respondents and 39.7% (58) of the 146 community respondents. "Not invited by school" was given by 31 (41.3%) of the education sector respondents and 70 (47.9%) community respondents. Both educational administrators/teachers and community members agreed that the co-operation schools get from community members as resource persons in the Kwabre District is not encouraging. The observation was that communities in the Kwabre District have not been co-operating with basic schools to serve as resource persons.

Community Participation in Basic School Activities

It was also important to find out what the communities did about activities of schools since their participation was an indication of the interest they show in the schools and in the education of their wards. This could also go a long way to encourage teachers and educational authorities to assist the schools. Majority (93.3% (70) of the 75 education sector respondents and 98.6% (144) of the 146 community respondents) agreed that members of the communities in the district participate in the activities of basic schools. This and other school activities community members engaged in are presented in Table 2.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities' Participation</th>
<th>Education sector Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Community Members Freq.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community members participate in school activities</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>98.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witness and support games/sports</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend open days</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witness cultural performances</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA meetings and discussions</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMC meetings and discussions</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>89.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School visits</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide children’s basic school needs</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One observation was that 90.7% (68) of the education sector respondents and 93.2% (136) of the community respondents agreed that community members supported games and sports organized by schools. It was also observed that community members witnessed cultural performances as given by 81.3% (61) of the education sector respondents and 85.6% (125) of the community respondents. School visits, attendance of PTA and SMC meetings and provision of school needs by community members were also identified by the study as the communities' participation in basic school activities, though not very much pursued. Attendance at schools open days received only a few responses of 20.0% (15) of the 75 education sector respondents and 15.1% (22) of the 146 community respondents. PTA and SMC meetings and discussions received similar responses to those given under means of community preparation and sensitization.

Discussion

There was almost total agreement in the opinions held by community members and educational administrators/teachers with respect to communities' participation in basic schools' activities in the district. Precisely 98.7% of the educational administrators and teachers, and 99.3% of community members confirmed the above-stated finding. Communities in the district are more inclined to supporting sports and games organized by schools than any other programmes or activities that the schools organize. This finding was given by 90.7% of the 75 educational administrators and teachers and 93.2% of the 146 community members. The study also found that the major forms of community support towards school buildings and sanitation in the Kwabre District were communal labour and payment of levies. This supports the GES’s call that communities should "assist in school maintenance and the repair of infrastructure", and keeping them “in a sanitary and structurally safe condition” (p. 10).

It has come to light that supply of furniture and teaching-learning materials to schools as well as cash donations and financial assistance for needy but brilliant pupils are not very much pursued by communities in the district. The GES (2001) had suggested however that community members must be mobilized to make the FCUBE a success by ensuring that resources are mobilized to assist basic schools. Community members are also urged to supply textbooks and other teaching and learning materials to schools (Manu, 1997). Parents form part of the community. Therefore, it is their responsibility to provide their children and wards with their school needs.

The most outstanding of the communities' support to help teachers in the district, was helping them to get accommodation. The priority given to accommodation was observed in one community (i.e. Bamang) where teachers' quarters have been
constructed. This harmonizes with one of the functions spelt out by the GES (2001) that the PTAs must “see to children/teachers welfare e.g., provision of accommodation” (p. 10) and to “see to it that teachers’ accommodation is provided where necessary” (p. 82).

The research showed that communities in the Kwabre District generally supported enrolling children in basic schools. Close to 87% of the 75 education sector respondents and 93.8% of the 146 community respondents gave this information. This revelation agrees with the call made by Bray (1987) that “communities should encourage enrolment of pupils in school” (p. 35) and thus “ensuring that all children of school-going age have access to school” (GES, 2001, p. 5). It was observed that community members attend meetings to consider issues about schools. This being done was crucial as Bray (1987) reiterated that such genuine efforts might lead to “successful relationships between schools and their communities to provide basis for quality basic education for the children” (p. 36) and “to bring together parents and school authorities to work jointly for the development of the school” (GES, 2001, p. 9). Seeing to pupil’s homework and assignments did not receive much support. This might be due to the low educational background of the community members.

Brown (1997) suggested that “it takes a village to raise a child” (p. 1). Community involvement in basic education will therefore have to be pursued as it can help community members to realize through personal experience that the school can be the source of knowledge, ideas and skills which can ultimately lead to improvement in the quality of life of the people in the community. This can indeed be the basis for close collaboration between the school and community for the betterment of the pupils.

From the analysis above, the study has showed that the answer to research question one, which was about whether communities in the Kwabre District supported basic education delivery is yes. Key areas of community involvement in basic education drives were support towards school buildings and sanitation, provision of learning resources for pupils and support towards teacher welfare. School management/administration and enrolment drives also receive community support. Research question two asked about the support community members provided towards school buildings and sanitation. It was revealed by this study that such support included payment of levies, provision of communal labour and materials for constructing/renovating school blocks. They also release land for school projects. Research question three was: what do community members do to provide learning resources for school children? The answer obtained was that they made cash donations, supplied furniture and teaching/learning materials to basic schools. Members also provided school uniforms for pupils. Few communities gave financial support to deserving pupils as was given by 9.3% (7) of the 75 education sector respondents and 13.7% (20) of the 146 community respondents.

Research question four was on how communities support teacher welfare and school management. It was observed that community members released land to teachers for farming, helped teachers to get accommodation and gave teachers foodstuffs. With regard to school management, the study found that members attended PTA/SMC meetings to consider issues about schools and pupils and liaised with the District Assembly and Education Directorate to come and assist the schools. However, communities in the Kwabre District have not been co-operating with basic schools to serve as resource persons. Also, communities enrolled children in the schools and talked to teachers about pupils’ performances. It was found that community members were not particular about seeing to pupils’ home work/assignments. This was observed from the low responses given by 25.3% (19) of the education sector workers and 77 (52.7%) of the 146 community respondents that this was done.

Conclusions
There was evidence to conclude that communities in the Kwabre District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana support efforts at promoting basic education delivery.

Educational administrators and teachers on the one hand and community members on the other hand differ in their opinions about the contribution communities in the Kwabre District make towards basic school management and administration.

Provision of learning resources for pupils was not very much pursued by communities in the Kwabre District.

Not much was done by community members in the district to help basic school pupils to do home work tasks or activities assigned by basic schools for pupils to do.
Community members in the Kwabre District did not avail themselves to become resource persons to basic schools. Basic school pupils were thus not benefitting from the rich experience, knowledge, expertise, skills and cultural values these custodians/indigenous people possessed since they (pupils) did not have opportunity to learn about these from them (indigenous people) in the basic schools.

Recommendations
In line with the above research findings the following recommendations are made:
In the light of the important roles played by PTAs and SMCs, as the study has revealed, it is highly recommended that the education directorate undertakes an exercise to identify and revive all dormant ones in the district. This could help ensure that such bodies assist in basic education delivery efforts in their respective communities towards the improvement of quality basic education delivery in the district. It is also recommended that education authorities and other stakeholders in education acknowledge the various contributions made by functioning PTAs and SMCs towards effective management and administration of schools aimed at enhancing quality teaching and learning. Such ones should be given all the needed support and encouragement to make them effective. Community participation should be strengthened through regular education and sensitization programmes for members of the communities as well. Though the communities are helping with basic education delivery, the relationship between them and the schools was quite lukewarm. As a bait to attract communities to participate in development activities of schools it is recommended that modalities be put in place by schools to undertake community services and health programmes such as clean-up exercises to improve the communities life. Showing respect for the culture of the community is yet another way by which schools may win the support of community members to contribute to the development agenda of basic schools. Educators can increase the clarity and content of notices and memos that go to parents and guardians (Education Broadcasting Corporation, 2004). Provision of learning resources for pupils was not very much pursued by communities in the Kwabre District. Therefore, with the current educational dispensation in Ghana, the researcher wishes to re-echo the recommendation found in the G.E.S. Report on FCUBE (2001) that “stakeholders especially parents need to be sensitized more on the limited concept of the 'Free' aspect of the FCUBE” (p.37). The importance of this was the perception held by people that the Government should bear the cost of all educational expenditure including the provision of stationery, uniforms, feeding and transportation. In reality however, the provision of these items falls within the purview of parents/communities.
REFERENCES


