

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Teachers' Professional Development: Role of Faith-Based Schools in Effutu Municipality of Ghana

**Richard Steve Akossah**

Teacher, Ghana Education Service, Kibi Municipality, Ghana

**Dominic Kwaku Danso Mensah**

Director Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development,  
University of Education Winneba, Ghana

**Hinneh Kusi**

Senior lecturer, Department of Educational Administration and Management,  
University of Education Winneba, Ghana

### **Abstract:**

*This study investigated capacity building and its influence on student academic performance among religious schools in the Effutu Municipality of Ghana. Using the qualitative inquiry as an approach, the study adopted the triangulatory design using focus group discussions and semi-structured interview guide. We employed purposive and snow ball-sampling techniques to select Thirty-five (35) participants for the study. Data was analyzed qualitatively where tapes were played severally from the transcript of each participant. Coding regimes for qualitative study were observed leading to generation of themes guiding this study. In some cases, verbatim quotations were used to support emergent themes. Validity and ethical considerations were adhered to in the data collection processes. The study found that even though capacity building was inadequate, the support received to boost capacity could have led to qualitative improvement in students' academic performance. Indeed, support for the schools take the form of logistics, finance (mostly capitation grant), and administrative services; though erratic and inadequate form. The study also found that the level of collaboration of the churches with government and participation in school management has dwindled. The study recommended that government should facilitate the creation of an environment that encourages the active participation of the churches in the management of the mission schools in the study area.*

**Keywords:** Capacity building, professional development, Faith-based schools

### **1. Introduction**

The issue of capacity building and its influence on pupils' academic performance continues to be a great concern to most developing countries of which Ghana is no exception. In fact, the perception among Ghanaians even though is that government continues to spend a huge sum of our Gross National Product(GDP) resource on pupils' education such as capitation grant, free textbooks, exercise books, free uniforms, and others, academic performances of some faith-based and public schools in the country continue to be nothing to write home about.

Education is a social service that has been systematically designed to nurture and produce the human resource for a sound and meaningful development. Thus, it is irresistible for all nations to attach much prominence to education and to give it a major, if not a central place, in policymaking and implementation. Indeed, since education is inextricably linked with development, it is imperative that every nation concerns itself with the quality of education its citizens receive.

The basic education sector of the Ghanaian education system has faced a number of critical challenges over the years. These include inadequate staffing especially in the rural areas, poor human resource quality, inadequate educational resources, and lack of infrastructure, among others. Ghana has attempted to solve these challenges through policies such as decentralization of education, and the encouragement of private sector participation in education. A key feature of these policy interventions is the partnership between the central government and religious non-profit organizations to provide quality and accessible education to the citizenry. The report of the President's Committee on Review of Education Reform in Ghana (2002) enumerates some of the weaknesses in the Junior High School system as poor academic preparation of teachers in the various subject areas, inadequate facilities, absence of performance standards to guide teaching and learning, and the inability of about 60% of its products to gain admission into the second cycle schools due to poor performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE).

Importantly, education has been made a pivotal issue in Ghana's goal to accelerate the growth of its economy towards the achievement of middle-income status (Thompson &Caseley- Hayford, 2008). In this regard, basic education has been identified as the major building block. Research in psychology and educational theories and practice reveal that the success of human learning depends on the quality of exposure to education (Winter, 2010). Any reduction al policy should thus give prominence to the basic level has been an assumption rather than the reality. Recent attempts have been

made to improve access to quality basic education in Ghana. Notable among these include the introduction of the capitation grant, school feeding programme, free compulsory universal basic education (fCUBE), free school uniforms and free exercise books. On infrastructural development, about four thousand units of new primary and junior high schools blocks were built over a period of four years (from 2005) and thousands of other ones have been rehabilitated (Thompson & Caseley-Hayford, 2008). Since the teaching force is an enabling factor in the provision of quality education, government has been concerned with improving the quality of human resource in the education sector by upgrading all teacher training colleges to diploma awarding institutions, retraining certificate A and B teachers through sandwich and distance learning programmes as well as giving professional training to untrained basic school teachers in the country (MOE, 2013). Similarly, the Ghana Education Service has set up the human resource management division to help in determining the basis for developing programmes geared towards the needs and aspirations of educational institutions.

The recruitment, selection, training, development, and appraisal of employees, the establishment of pay plans and labour relations have all been put in place to create a conducive atmosphere for both the employee and the employer in the education sector.

The partnership between the central government and the religious organizations to run schools (now known as unit schools or the faith-based schools) was aimed at harnessing resources and marshalling the strengths of each of these units, and limiting their inefficiencies so as to provide accessible and quality educational deliverables (Nsiah-Peprah, 2004). This collaboration ideally, must produce high quality academic results that far outweigh the performances of the schools administered by the central government alone and or those solely by private individuals. For instance, visible differences exist as the BECE result for the Effutu Municipality in the Central Region for instance showed that the performance of faith-based schools was poor compared to the private schools; with the two best performing faith-based schools over the period of 2013 to 2015 scoring an average of 47.7% to 66.7% as opposed to the worse performing two private schools in the municipality scoring an average of 50.3% to 61.1% over the same period, with the remaining faith based schools in the municipality scoring between 0% and 35% (BECE result analysis, 2013-2015, Effutu Municipality).

The teacher is the main factor in the education production function. In other words, the provision of quality education to pupils is directly linked to the quality of the teachers in the system. High quality academic performance of pupils would be illusive if the system does not develop and retain high quality and motivated professional teachers. According to Boateng (2003), the success or failure of curriculum delivery depends on the teacher. The teacher is the pivot of the education system as he/she makes or breaks the education programs, delivers the objectives of education reforms and is the engine of everything that is planned and implemented in the schools. This study explores the capacity building needs and opportunities of teachers in two Faith-based schools in Central circuit in the Effutu Municipality. This study therefore becomes important in establishing the capacity building needs of teachers in order to train them to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century classroom challenges.

### *1.1. Effutu Municipality in Context*

The context of the study was two faith-based schools located in the Winneba Central Circuit in the Effutu Municipality in the Central region of Ghana. The indigenous of the municipality are Effutus, who are predominantly fishing folks and speak Effutu language. There is a university located in the municipality, leading to migration of people, both professionals and non-professionals to the setting.

### *1.2. Faith-Based Schools*

Faith-based schools teach general curriculum with some emphasis on religious values and ethics of relevant religious organizations. In most cases, priority in terms of admission is given to members of the faith. Ghana has several faith-based schools, ranging from primary to higher education level. The schools are often state-funded with support from relevant religious organizations. Faith-based schools play very important role in the development of education many countries, including Ghana.

### *1.3. Meaning of Capacity Building*

The term 'capacity building' defies a single universally-accepted definition. However, experts and some organizations have attempted to define the term. Morgan (1993) indicates that capacity building refers to individual, groups and organizations ability to identify and meet challenges over time. To Berg (1993), capacity building refers to the practice of strengthening sustainable indigenous capacity to manage economic change and growth. Capacity is conceived from three perspectives by Gubbels & Koss (2000) as one, capacity as a means to strengthen organization's ability to carry out specific activities. Secondly, capacity as an end for strengthening an organization's ability to survive and become self-sustaining and fulfill its purpose and thirdly, capacity as a process of enabling an organization to continually adapt to its purpose in response to change and learning; to connect its evolving purpose and vision, on the one hand, and its structure and development activities on the other. In institutional sense, capacity building refers to as the process of optimising the skills of individuals and institutional support of one or more organizations. In this particular study the term capacity building refers to the supply of skills to teachers and transferring new methods to educational institutions to enhance teaching and learning. Diaz (1990) refers to this process as technical capacity building.

## 2. Methodology

This study was located within the interpretive qualitative framework. Specifically, a case study design was employed. The design allows researchers to explore people's experiences, and how they interpret those experiences in socio-cultural context. Also, a case study allows researchers to use multiple methods to collect data from participants, ensuring triangulation of findings.

The study population comprised teachers and head teachers of Faith-based schools in the Effutu Municipality. The target population was all the teachers and head teachers within the Faith-based schools in Winneba Central Circuit, one (1) GES officer from the Effutu Municipal Directorate of Education, two (2) Head teachers of the two (2) Faith-based Schools in the Winneba Central Circuit, and eight (8) subject-leaders of the schools. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the teachers, head teachers and the GES officer. These participants were selected because they were considered to be 'information-rich' (Creswell, 2009).

Data for the study was collected through face-to-face interviews with the head teachers and the GES official and a focused-group discussion with the teachers to assess their views on the capacity building needs of the teachers as well as ways of sustaining those needs. Before the data collection, the face and content validity of the instruments were established. We gave the instruments to our colleague lecturers at the Faculty of Educational Studies at the University of Education, Winneba, for face validation and experts in educational administration and management assisted in granting content validity of the instruments.

The audio recordings from interviews and focused group meetings were transcribed, cleaned for analysis. Documentary evidence was used to support the narrative themes that emerged from interviews and focused group discussions. Patton (2002, 2008) explained the importance of making sense of data by reducing the data into manageable, intelligent pieces of information that communicated the essence of the data. Patton (1990) again remarked that, the analysis of the empirical data aims to make sense of the massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal. This therefore made us to follow such pattern in our data analyses.

A number of strategies were adopted to validate the findings of the study. The first strategy was respondent triangulation, which involved collecting data on the phenomenon under investigation from the teachers, head teachers and the GES officials in the context of the study. The responses of these categories of participants were compared during the analysis.

Secondly, methods triangulation was employed to validate the findings. This strategy involved using the face-to-face interviews and focused group discussion to assess the opinions of the participants on the issue under investigation. Finally, the findings of the study were sent back to the participants for them to check whether the emerging issues reflected their views. This strategy is referred to as respondent validation.

## 3. Data Analysis and Discussions

### 3.1. Pedagogical Needs of the Faith-Based Schools

Two sub-themes relating the capacity building needs of the teachers emerged from the data and these were pedagogy, and pupil well-being and inclusion.

#### 3.1.1. Needs Relating Pedagogy

The interviewees identified three-dimensional needs relating to pedagogy. The data suggested that the teachers of the faith-based schools have to be equipped with knowledge and skills to manage classroom more effectively. The interviewees believed that poor management of classrooms, especially pupils' behaviours partly contribute to pupil poor performance, as the following comments suggest:

Our teachers have to be well-prepared to manage classroom well. The behaviour of the pupils is inappropriate and I believe this is also affecting them academically.

FGD Teacher-8 supported this view commenting that:

One of the areas we have to be supported in is related to how we manage pupils' behaviours in class. It is a difficult area which affects the quality of teaching and learning in our schools.

Another pedagogical issue that emerged from the data was linked to student assessment. The interviewees believed that things are changing in the field of education and teachers, if they would be able to improve pupils performance should be equipped with modern assessment techniques.

Our education system, like others, is not static, it is dynamic. If our teachers and head teachers would be able to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, they should be able to find new ways of assessing teaching and processes [GES Officer]. The need for better ways of assessing teaching and learning processes to enhance pupils' performance was also highlighted by FGD Teacher-5:

In teaching and learning, there should be effective ways of assessing pupils to know whether learning has taken place. However, this is lacking in some schools. Further, the last dimension of pedagogy which emerged from the data was related to pupil support. The interviewees believed that the support offered to the pupils appeared to be inadequate because of the difficult circumstances.

The pupils we teachers are coming from difficult circumstances and need more adequate support to deal with their behaviours. We should be trained to ensure this!

How we teachers support the child we teach is very relevant. Some are from challenging situations. We should be able to support them to manage their negative behaviours and study more effectively. Thus, these comments suggest that the pupils are from challenging background, which seem to affect their behaviours and academic work. Therefore the teachers have to be equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills and competences offer relevant support to the pupils. These comments also suggest the need for the teacher to strengthen the guidance and counselling services provided in the schools.

### 3.1.2. Pupils Well-Being and Inclusion

Issues relating to how the teachers could be equipped to promote pupil's well-being and inclusion in the schools' activities also emerged from the data. First, the participants believed that the teachers have to be equipped to teach life skills so that they would be able to participate in everyday life.

The pupils we teach are not very confident. Therefore, teachers have to support them to be participate effectively in what happens at school, at home and in their communities.

One thing that is lacking among our pupils is life skills and I believe we teachers should be able to teach them. Thus the data suggested that the pupils have to be taught or equipped with abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour to enable them handle the demands and challenges of life and the teachers have to be equipped to ensure that. Another teacher capacity building needs which emerged from the data was promoting inclusive education in the schools. The interviewees suggested that since the pupils are from difficult circumstances and have many academic challenges, there is the need for the schools to embrace and promote inclusiveness in the activities of the schools.

We all know that the children we teach are very difficult ones. Some do not eat when coming to school and when they come [to school], they can't learn well. We the teachers should understand them and ensure things work for them.

Inclusion is the order of the day and no teacher would be able to teach effectively without understanding this concept. It is one of the areas the teachers need training in.

Thus the comments suggest that to be able to teach and support the pupils more effectively, the teachers have to promote inclusive education. Twohig (2000) noted that to achieve success for all pupils and students through effective inclusive educational practices, the attributes of leaders and teachers cannot be side-lined.

Further, the interviewees highlighted the need for the teachers to be equipped with the relevant knowledge, skills and competences to create safe school environment for the pupils as this affects their academic performance.

I am a teacher and I have observed that the pupils do not trust us when discussing issues affecting them. It also feels frustrated and uncomfortable.

This comment suggests that negative climate prevails in the schools which could affect teaching and learning. Thus the issues that emerged from the data relating to the teacher capacity building relating to pupils well-being and inclusion were life skills, promotion of inclusive education, and provision of safe school environment.

### *3.2. Strategies for Building Sustainable Capacity in the Selected Schools to Enhance Academic Performance*

This study explored ways of sustaining teacher capacity building in the schools. In view of this, the research sought the opinions of the respondents through interview and focused group meetings as to what strategies to adopt to foster improvement in their work output and in the academic performance of pupils in the schools. The participants identified various ways, including subject workshops, classroom observation, study-groups at cluster levels, and introduction of deliberate mentoring policies in the schools.

The participants suggested that leaders of various subjects taught in the schools should be offered the opportunity to attend regular workshop to update their knowledge and skills to promote effective teaching and learning in the schools as the following comments suggest:

I believe the subject leaders in our schools should have a forum like a workshop on regular basis so they can update their knowledge about developments in their subject areas [GES Officer]

I think we the subject teachers should have the opportunity to meet our colleagues in order to share ideas on new ways teaching. That will be very helpful! [FGD Teacher-7]

Thus the participants raised the need for the subject teachers in the faith-based schools to have the opportunity to attend workshops on regular basis to update their knowledge and skills in subject areas. Literature suggest that subject study-groups can provide members the opportunity to learn by engaging in regular, structured and collaborative interactions for their personal growth and development (Kusi & Mensah, 2014; Kusi, 2017).

The data also suggested that classroom observation could be used as a tool for sustaining teacher capacity building needs. The participants believed that teachers should be encouraged to sit in other colleagues classrooms to observe teaching and learning processes as a way of improving their own skills and competences. For example a head teacher commented:

I think head teachers should encourage less experience teachers in particular to sit in the class of experienced teachers so that they can learn new things which could be applied in their own classrooms [Headteacher-2]

Literature also support learning through classroom observation, arguing that whatever role people and whatever stage they are in their profession, they will learning a great deal about their job from watching others doing it (Kusi, 2017). Another strategy that came out of the data as a way of sustaining the capacity needs of the teachers was networking with colleagues in the Twenty-first century. The participants believed that this will go a long way to promote personal and professional growth and development for effective teaching and learning. They suggested that networking can be done both in person and electronically as the following comments suggest:

I strongly believe that we can also laise with other teachers not necessarily from our schools but from other schools so that we exchange ideas on teaching and learning [Teacher - 4]  
The idea of networking was corroborated by the GES Officer's view:

Nowadays, I think it is proper for teachers to share their knowledge with other teachers from other schools and beyond through the internet.....

Literature also suggested that teachers of the educational organizations can establish links with other professionals to explore and discuss topics of interest, pursue common goals, share information and address concerns (Madden & Mitchell, 1993).

The participants also suggested that the churches should be actively involved in sustaining the capacity needs of the teachers through organization of in-service training programmes for them. The data revealed that teachers of the schools need regular in-service training which government might not able to adequately and regularly provide and. Discussants in this study therefore suggested that the church assists the schools as an official of the GES requested:

It would be very much welcomed if the church would assist the office by giving training to teachers in their schools. If they do not have the expertise to do so, they can call on us to do it with their sponsorship. They are allowed to do quite a lot of things in their schools and our doors are always opened to them (GES Officer 1, 27-09-16).

As published by the United Methodist Church (2012), local churches and all communities of faith must become better informed about the needs of the public schools in their communities and in the country as a whole. This publication supports the demand of GES Officer that the churches should assist the schools by organizing training programmes for the teachers.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

One of the conclusions drawn from the study was that the capacity building needs of the teachers of the faith-based schools were related to pedagogy and promotion of pupil's well-being and inclusiveness. It appears that these needs were influenced by the challenging background of the pupils in the schools. therefore, it is recommended that any capacity building programmes for the teachers should make provision to equip them to handle pupils with challenging circumstances to ensure their educational success.

The study also concluded that the strategies for sustaining the capacity building needs of the teachers are related to classroom observation, study groups at cluster levels and introduction of deliberate mentoring policies for the teachers. In addition to these strategies, it could be recommended that the education officers and head teachers should consider

#### 5. References

- i. Boateng, T. A. (2003). Factors affecting academic performance of students in some selected Junior Secondary Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis. Unpublished students dissertation.
- ii. Chukwu, C. L. (2009). Capacity building of teachers – challenges and opportunities: Implication for educational sustainable Development. A paper presented at the University of Ibadan. Faculty of Education. International Conference on Education Sustainable Development (ICESD). Retrieved: January 2, 2017 from [www.ahero.uwc.ac.za/index.php?module=cshe&action=downloadfile&fileid](http://www.ahero.uwc.ac.za/index.php?module=cshe&action=downloadfile&fileid)
- iii. Egbo, B. (2005). Transformative learning in a changing world: Guidelines and strategies for practice. Sixth International Conference on Transformative Learning. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.
- iv. Egbo, B. (2011). Teacher capacity building and effective teaching and learning: A seamless connection. Winsor, Ontario: Human Resource Management Academic Research Society and International Association for Teaching and Learning.
- v. Gubbels, P. & Koss, C. (2000). From the root up: Strengthening organizational capacity through guided self-assessment, Oklahoma: World Neighbours.
- vi. Kusi, H. (2017). Leading and Managing People in Education, Winneba: WGCBC Publication.
- vii. Kusi, H. & Mensah, K.D. (2014). Managing Junior High Schools in The Sunyani East And West Municipalities (Ghana): The continuous Professional Development Needs of Heaad teachers And Strategies For their Provision. Journal of Education and Curriculum Development Research, Vol.2 (1) pp.26-40.
- viii. Ministry of Education, (1996). Basic Education Sector Improvement Programme – Policy Document; Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education by the year 2005. Accra, Ghana: Ministry of Education.
- ix. Nsiah-Peprah, Y. (2004). Assessment of the role of private schools in the development of education in Ghana.A study of the Kumasi Metropolis. Journal of Science and Technology, vol. 24(2).
- x. Porter, K, Smith, P., &Fagg, R. (2007). Leadership and management for HR professionals. Elsevier Ltd.
- xi. Stephen, P., &Triraganon, R. (2009). Strengthening voices for better choices: A capacity needs assessment process. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN
- xii. Thompson, N. M., &Caseley- Hayford, L. (2008).The financing and outcomes of education in Ghana. DFID, University of Cambridge.
- xiii. Winter, P. (2010).Engaging families in the early childhood development story. A national project on behalf of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs. Education Services Australia Limited
- xiv. Yin, R. K. (2011). Qualitative research from start to finish. The Guilford Press, New York.