

Effects of Home Environment on Parental Attitudes towards the Educational Attainment of Primary School Pupils in Winneba Township, Ghana

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Abstract

The study examined the effects home environment has on parental the child's achievement in primary schools in Winneba Township. Purposive sampling was used to select 120 respondents comprising 60 parents, 20 teachers and 40 pupils drawn from four public and one private primary schools in Winneba. The main instruments used for data collection were questionnaire and an observational guide. Major findings indicated that when parents are unable to provide basic educational needs for their children, they are likely to perform below their potentials. Again, positive parental attitude towards education, great parental support and motivation combine to enhance children's progress in education rather than the level of parent's educational attainment. Lastly, mere membership of peer sub-culture does not cause a pupil to perform below his/her potentials. Suggestions were made which will help to enhance pupils' educational attainment.

Introduction

Education is said to be the process by which the society logically and systematically transmits knowledge, values, norms, ideologies and other cherished activities from one generation to the other. It describes the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. In essence education (both formal and informal) is meant to perpetuate the culture of the society by way of molding or remolding the ideals of society or what the society stands for in order to atune with the changing needs of the society.

In a similar vein, Durkheim (1925) defines education as the influence exerted by adult generations on those that are yet ready for social life, its object is to arouse and to develop in the child, a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the spatial milieu or which he is specially destined.

Whilst outlining the universal functions of education, it is pertinent to mention that the organization of education varies from society to society and by implication the collaborative role of the family of the child also takes different forms depending on the nature of the society's social organization.

It is in this context that Nyerere (1969: 268) observed that "educational systems in different kinds of societies in the world have been, and are, different in organization and content". They are different because societies providing the education are different and because education, whether formal or informal has a purpose which is a perpetuation of the societal culture (Abosi, 1992).

With these, efforts have been strenuously made and are still being made to promote higher academic standards or educational achievement in the Winneba Township, Central Region and Ghana as a whole.

Each year, many children all over Winneba are enrolled in primary schools with the aim of receiving the best form of education. Some of these children drop out at different levels due to one reason or the other while others achieve academic success based on their performance. A number of factors contribute to ensure good or higher academic achievement of the child and they include among others the innate potentials of the child and the environment – both physical and social.

With the environment, the aiding factors are the school, home and family of the child. Associated with these are the reasons for attending school, the belief that guide the child, as well as his peers. In the quest for an improved educational and high academic achievement, equal attention must be given to all aiding factors such as the attitudes of parents towards the education of their wards, the effects of broken homes or single parents' homes, the educational attainment of parents, socio-economic status of parents, family income, peer orientation and many others.

Statement of the Problem

All over Ghana, efforts are being made to improve quality of education and to ensure that children perform well at school. However, many people have realized that the success or otherwise of children's education is a function of the collaboration between the home and the schools. The home is responsible for the socialization of the child. Thus, whether the child will be socialized positively or negatively depends to a large extent on those immediately around him/her. Parents, peers and siblings play important roles in the education of the child.

The predominant occupation of the people of Winneba Township is fishing. Even though, every year, children get enrolled in primary schools with the hope of receiving the best form of education, many of these children drop out at different levels and academic performance is poor. This issue has become a major problem especially when parents and other concerned individuals do put the blame on the door-steps of the school alone for the poor performance

of their wards. Undoubtedly, the home environment could be partly responsible for whatever performance the child exhibits at school.

The main objectives of the study were to;

- determine the effects of parental involvement in the child's education on the latter's academic performance.
- identify the effects of peer influence on the academic achievement of the child.

Consequently, the main research questions were:

- What is the relationship between parents' educational attainment and the academic achievement of their children?
- What is the relationship between parental interest and attitudes towards formal education and the academic achievement of their children?
- What is the relationship between the income of the family and its effects on the child's academic achievement?
- What is the effect of peer orientation on the child's academic achievement?

Literature Review

Educational Attainment of Parents

In a study, Hurlock (1956) reports that low parental regard for education, which may be due to lack of education, has a retarding influence on the child's progress and achievement at school. The performance of the child at school is to some extent dependent upon the educational attainment of his or her parents.

Mclanaham (1991) also found high educational attainment of parents to be associated with high educational achievement of their children and attributed this to parents' desire to transmit their aspiration to their children, and supervision as well as counselling them in their studies. Parents are likely to procure or possess books and other cultural capital such as television, radio and many others, which enhance children's education.

Parental Interest and Attitude towards Formal Education

Douglas (1970) emphasizes that middle-class parents take more interest in their children's education than the manual working-class parents; adding that the most striking difference is that most middle class fathers visit the school to discuss their children's progress whereas manual working-class ones seldom do. Douglas went further to explain that parents are said to show a high level of interest if the teachers regard them throughout the primary school period as very interested in their children's work. Furthermore, he points out that within each social class, parents who give their children most encouragement in their school work also give them the best care in infancy. But this is best shown by the middle class more than the manual working class. In the same vein, Kat Korsky, Preston and Crandail (1964) showed that parents' orientation towards their own achievement may impact on their behaviours with children. Katkorsky, et al (1964) also mentioned that the greater the value both mothers and fathers placed on intellectual achievement for their offspring the better their children's performance academically.

Income of the Family

Date and Griffith (1970) observed that financial difficulties produce premature and early leaving. They also noted that financial and material inequality continues to play significant roles in determining who is successful in the educational system. They pointed out that school career may be to a large extent dependent on parents' financial resources as in ability, attitudes or socio-economic status.

Bull (1980) in consonance with the views of Date and Griffith (1970) concurred that there are stringent costs associated with schooling received by the majority of pupils. These include cost of transport, school uniforms, meals, books and equipment for studying at home and in some cases examination fees.

Socio-economic Status of the Family

Agyeman (1991) maintains that the three variables (in order of importance) that influence children's education are the size of the family, the attitude of the family towards formal education and the socio-economic status of the family. He points out that the upper and middle social classes provide congenial learning atmosphere for their children at home through the provision of cultural materials and private tuition. He further observed that socio-economic status of one's family or parents is paramount in determining one's social mobility. Thus, the upper and middle class families are able to provide better education and therefore, their children are able to get good jobs and the cycle continues leading to the entrenchment of the social class cleavage.

Peer orientation and the child's education Brembeck (1967) opines that the child's level of educational aspiration and consequently educational achievement is positively related to his peer membership both at home and in school. If the peer group values more education, his desire for more education is reinforced and if on the other hand his peer work for less education, his desire for less education is strengthened.

Herriott (1983) maintains that the higher the level of expectation perceived from peers, the higher will be the level of educational aspiration and educational achievement of children. Thus, if pupil thinks his close friends expect him to have high educational aspiration, he will most likely have that aspiration. The reverse is true, according to the writer.

Methodology

This study was descriptive survey which examined the effects home environment has on the child's academic achievement using qualitative and quantitative paradigms.

Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised of all parents of pupils in primary schools, all teachers in primary schools and all pupils in primary schools in Winneba township. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to select a sample of parents, teachers and pupils for the study. The sample consisted of 60 parents, 20 teachers and 40 pupils of primary schools drawn from

four public and one private school in Winneba. Twelve of the parents did not have formal education while forty-eight had formal education. All the teachers were Cert "A" 4 years holders and above. Twelve of the teachers have taught between five and ten years while eight have taught between fifteen and twenty years.

Instrumentation

The research instruments used for data collection were observational guide and questionnaire. Three separate but equivalent questionnaires were formulated to collect data from the three groups comprising parents, teachers and pupils. The observational guide was used to study the total teaching and learning environments of the chosen schools. Instruments used were content validated by experienced researchers in educational studies. Their suggestions were used to fine-tune the final instruments.

Data Collection

Two hours a day, 4 days in a week were used to observe and interview participants in their schools and homes while 4 weeks were used to collect data in each school and home. The questionnaire was used to conduct personal interviews with the parents, teachers and pupils. All interviews for teachers and pupils were held during school break periods while that of parents was done after classes at home. Data was collected between January and March, 2007 and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between parents' educational attainment and the academic achievement of their children?

Out of the 60 parents sampled for the study, forty-five had formal education that is from secondary up to University education, while three had formal education that is from primary up to basic education. Twelve parents had no formal education (did not attend school at all). This implies that children of parents with high education are likely to attain high educational standards than those parents with low level of education. However, the revelation coming from the question put to parents as to the level of education they want and wish their children to reach showed that all, irrespective of their educational attainment or level of literacy, would want their children to complete tertiary education. This could be the result of most parents coming to the realization that their children would be prominent members of society if they attain high education. Upon interaction with some of the parents, the researcher gathered that they would want their children to reach the tertiary level because that seems to be the order of the day.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between parental interest and attitudes towards formal education and the academic achievement of their children?

Information gathered indicates that 45 out of 60 parents, representing 75% of the population sampled, appreciate the fact that education for children (both sexes) is a very necessary and

an important enterprise. To a follow-up question as to whether or not, encouraging children and expressing interest in their education can motivate them perform well at school, all the 60 parent respondents answered in the affirmative. However, some of the parents complained that pupils were not ready to learn in spite of all the advice and other forms of encouragement given. The respondents mentioned some form of motivation as gift, praises, among others. As to whether parents assist their wards with their home work or not, the response of the 55 (92%) was YES. Most of them conceded that their assistance were in the form of private tuition for their children. To the parents such assistance was a better supplement normal classroom tuition. On the same variable, pupils were asked whether or not their parents do visit them at school? 35 pupils out of 40 representing 87% said YES, while 5 (13%) said NO. It is important to stress here that the five respondents who said NO were truant according to their teachers.

The finding, so far, is in agreement with the literature reviewed, especially the assertion of Kat Korsky et al (1964) that parents' orientation towards their own achievement may impact on their behaviours with children.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between the income of the family and its effects on the child's academic achievement?

24 out of 60 parents representing 40% indicated their source of their income to be monthly salary, 27 (45%) as profit achieved (from business) and 9 (15%) from farm sales. Regarding parents' annual income, 45 parents representing 75% earned an average annual income of between c14m and above. This percentage of respondents are in such category of work as professional, teaching and personal business, most of them are likely to earn an average monthly income of above c1,200,000. The remaining 15 parents representing 25% are in the comparatively low-income group who may earn below c1,200,000 and are in such category of work as farming, petty trading and those manual skills. It can therefore be maintained that comparatively those in high income group will find it relatively easier to provide the educational needs of their children than those in relatively low-income group.

Research Question 4: What is the effect of peer orientation on the child's academic achievement?

Out of 60 parents sampled, 48 representing 80% disagreed with the notion that children who involve in teenage culture often perform far below their potentials at school while twelve that is 20% agreed to it. Also 45 out of 60 parent respondents representing 75% maintained that they would like to find their wards within the membership of a sub-culture formed by their peers. Among the reasons given by these respondents for their stand are:

- Peer orientation enables the child to learn from the environment.
- It helps the child to be well socialized
- Children cannot remain isolated from their peers.

The remaining fifteen respondents which represent 25%, said they would not want to have their children in such – culture because of the possibility of being negatively influenced. 30 out of 40 pupils revealed that their parents approve of their relationship with their peer friends. This wholly attests to the fact that most parents actually want their wards to interact positively with their peers.

All the children claimed that even though they relate with their peers, they do so at their leisure hours and that they do their homework and also study afterwards. This implies therefore that being a member of a sub-culture does not necessarily mean pupils will not be able to perform well at school.

Conclusion

1. It may be concluded from this study that when parents are unable to provide their ward basic educational needs, they (the wards) are likely to perform below their potential.
2. The level of parents' education does not necessarily promote academic achievement of their children. Rather positive parental attitude towards education, great parental motivation and adequate parental support combine to enhance the children's progress in education.
3. Mere membership of peer sub-culture does not cause a pupil to perform below his potential.

Recommendations

From the study, it can be deduced that a number of factors in the home environment combine to aid the academic achievement of children. In the light of the above the researcher offers the following recommendations:

- (1) Parents should show much more interest in their children's education and offer them the needed support.
- (2) Parents should endeavour to give motivation to their children, as far as the children's education is concerned.
- (3) Additionally, the school as a matter of urgency, establish a closer and cordial relationship with the family or home of the pupils, since partnership between the two would offer the latter the opportunity to monitor the progress of their children at school.
- (4) Again, parents should also maintain family sizes they can adequately provide for, considering their levels of income.
- (5) Parents should allow their children to interact freely with their peers. However, they should offer guidelines for appropriate behaviours and effective use of time and other resources, as regards their children and peer education. It is imperative for parents to monitor the activities of their children and their peers to see whether they would promote or hinder their academic or social progress.

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