

Full Length Research Paper

Assessing the impact of the quality improvement in primary schools programme on teachers and school communities in the northern sector of Ghana

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Abstract

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Aristotle a renowned educationist once said that "those who want to teach must cease not learning." This quotation is quite relevant for the implementation of the Quality Improvement in the Primary Schools (QUIPS) programme. This stems from the fact that a lot of barriers were identified from the education reforms in 1987 stretching from poor education systems, inadequate trained teachers, lack of infrastructure and equipment, outdated and worn out textbooks poverty and hunger in the sub-Sahara Africa which Ghana is included. The study seeks to assess the impact of the QUIPS programme in terms of teacher performance and pupils' progress, types of interventions of the QUIPS programme, school environment and lessons learnt from the QUIPS programme for policy formulation. This cannot be achieved without a comprehensive layout of how the data would be gathered. The study focused on the fifth group of selected schools dubbed 'Cohort V schools' found in five districts of the three northern regions. The districts include; Lawra, Builsa, Savelugu/Nanton, West Mamprusi and Bole. Five schools were selected from each district summing up to twenty-five schools for the implementation of the programme. The study population was all teaching staff and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Executives in the twenty-five school communities. Questionnaire, structured interviews and general observations were used during School-Based in-service Training programmes in the various school communities and reviewed activity reports from the communities. Microsoft Access, Excel Word packages 2007 version were used to enter the data and made analysis. One major finding was that pupils cannot be expected to make appreciable gains within a two-year intervention period in the absence of accelerated programmes in literacy and numeracy. Pupils throughout Ghana were performing far below development expectations in English reading and mathematics. Two years of CRS/QUIPS interventions was simply not enough time to remedy this deficiency. Though there has been an increase in community advocacy for and contribution for quality basic education, the coverage was limited. The study therefore recommends that communities should be involved in school health; feeding, water and sanitation and introduce income-generating activities as an entry point for adult literacy. When they are well established, they would then be able to take good care of their wards.

Keywords: quality education, school communities, programme, reforms, barriers, CRS/QUIPS

INTRODUCTION

From 1990 to 1997 the United States Agency for International Development, Ghana (USAID/Ghana)

worked with the Ministry of Education (MOE) through its Primary Education Programme (PREP) to support the

nation in its efforts to rebuild an education system that had deteriorated substantially in the 1980s. The agenda of PREP, which was designed to reinvigorate primary education programmes across the country, was essentially to improve the supply and quality of education inputs, including textbooks, teacher training, and national assessment.

In 1997 USAID/Ghana began a multilevel programme of assistance to help improve schooling *effectiveness*. Like PREP, USAID's Basic Education Strategy from 1997 to 2004 was to support the Government of Ghana's continuing reform, known as Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE).

The essence of the 1997–2004 Basic Education Strategy was to demonstrate the conditions required for effective and sustainable primary education and to replicate the successful elements in a national Model Schools Programme that came to be known as Quality Improvement in Primary Schools (QUIPS). The QUIPS model dealt simultaneously with policy reform and with school and community development, emphasizing the following objectives: (1) improving the quality of teaching and learning; (2) building capacity for decentralized school management; (3) increasing community involvement in schools; and (4) improving the physical learning environment.

Project assistance (PA) in the amount of US\$51.8 million provided extensive technical assistance and training for teaching staff and community members in 367 school communities (three in each of 110 districts) with a two-year cycle of intervention for each school-community. The 367 schools were grouped into six cohorts that entered the QUIPS programme each year for a 24-month period of service. Management technical assistance and training were provided to district education officials in all 110 districts, to officials from the Planning, Budgeting, and Monitoring and Evaluation (PBME) Department of the MOE and to GES headquarters officials. Non-project assistance (NPA) in the amount of US \$6 million was given to promote education policy reform and systems for quality education, including improved personnel management, national pupil assessment, and policy to reinforce decentralization of education management.

In southern Ghana, two projects – Community School Alliance (CSA) and Improving Learning through Partnership (ILP) implemented QUIPS. The CSA project was responsible for all community based interventions and the ILP project took charge of all school-based interventions. The district-based component is a joint responsibility of both CSA and ILP.

The Mitchell Group (TMG) of the United States of America entered into a contractual agreement with USAID/Ghana in March 1998 to meet the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation objectives of the QUIPS programme through the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) project. The Harvard Institute of

International Development (HIID) joined the PME in May 1999 to accomplish this mission.

CRS/Ghana joined the QUIPS team in November 1999, after a contractual agreement with USAID, to implement QUIPS in the three northern regions of Ghana – Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions. However CRS/Ghana allowed its QUIPS programme to adopt and/or adapt training manuals as well as monitoring and evaluation tools and methods from QUIPS partners (ie CSA, ILP and PME). In view of this, CRS/Ghana worked fervently with all QUIPS partners through meetings, workshops, working visits and other forms of interventions with the view of having a uniform implementation and monitoring programme.

CRS discovered that school attendance should open pathways of learning and discovery, but too often it does not and that millions of children go through school and come out without basic literacy and numeracy skills. Education is ultimately judged by what people learn. Many pupils around the world are banking their futures on poorly trained, weakly motivated teachers without enough books and other basics to facilitate their learning. This is a grave disservice not only to the pupils themselves but also to the parents who sacrifice to support them and the countries whose futures depend on them. While we strive to boost school attendance, we must ensure that our schools are engines of opportunity and not just idle warehouses.

Education systems are complex and are influenced by numerous actors. But no education system is better than its teachers. Globally, we need an additional 2 million teachers to achieve universal primary education by 2015. The shortage of teachers, combined with absenteeism and the lack of qualifications, is a major barrier to learning. We need a strong cohort of both female and male teachers who are paid well and respected in their communities. This is not always the case. Teachers should also have opportunities for continued professional development and growth.

Outdated and worn-out textbooks are often shared by six or more pupils in many parts of the developing world in which Northern Ghana was not excluded. Workbooks, exercise sheets, readers and other core materials to help pupils learn their lessons are in short supply. Teachers also need materials to help prepare their lessons, share with their pupils, and guide their lessons. The persistent digital divide and uneven access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) have severe implications for education. ICTs can transform not only instruction but also the learning process. They empower both teachers and learners.

A significant proportion of young children never benefit from early childhood education programmes, compromising their cognitive development and their preparedness for school. Those who do not learn to read or write in their first few grades carry a handicap as they try to progress to higher levels, where literacy and

numeracy become tools for learning rather than ends in themselves. They struggle in school for many years and some simply quit. Around the world, primary schools give more attention to later grades, in large part to prepare pupils for high-stakes examinations. It would be more effective to deploy the most qualified teachers in the first four years of school when students establish the foundation for success in later years.

Challenging living circumstances affect a child's learning in many ways. When families lack electricity at home, particularly in rural areas, children have fewer hours available to study and learn. When their homes lack books and other reading material, they practice less and forget more during school breaks. And when parents themselves lack literacy and numeracy skills, they are less able to reinforce what children are learning in school. Other factors, such as a stressful or violent home environment, can also highly impede a child's learning.

With more than 1.2 billion young people in the world today, our youth have the potential to alter our course in history. Yet, in many countries including Ghana, education systems have not caught up to the 21st century knowledge-based economy. Teaching by rote curtails creative or divergent thinking. It is rigid and is not tailored to individual needs or talents. This form of learning is widespread. There is a mismatch between the competencies needed in today's world and those acquired through the current education system. Too often technical and vocational education is specific and narrow thus limiting job opportunities as skills become quickly obsolete in a dynamic and rapidly changing world.

The language of instruction strongly influences the ability of children to comprehend and learn. Yet an estimated 200 million children are being taught in a language other than their mother tongue. Many of them drop out or repeat grades—an experience that can damage self-esteem and raise the cost that parents must shoulder. Studies suggest that children fare better if they can acquire basic skills in their home language before trying to master a second one.

The impact of hunger on education systems is gravely underreported. Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa finds that being stunted at age 6 was equivalent to losing four grades of schooling. Far too many children are reaching school damaged by malnutrition. Around 171 million children in developing countries are stunted by hunger by the time they reach age 5. When children are hungry during lessons, they have trouble concentrating. Providing school meals and social protection programmes focusing on the needs of children can insure that no child is hungry at school and this was the primary concern of CRS/Ghana.

We cannot readily improve pupils' progress without measuring it. Education systems need to closely monitor how well pupils are learning in order to offer the correct support before it is too late. Additionally, testing is too often inappropriately used to influence major financing

decisions such as closing schools or firing teachers or eliminating pupils who cannot progress to the next level rather than as a means to identify ways to help pupils improve their learning. We must have better ways to take stock of whether children are learning and use the information to direct support and resources for effective solutions.

Considering the barriers to quality learning the CRS/QUIPS programme put in place several intervention activities and programmes to mitigate the issues raised. The study therefore seeks to assess the impact of the programme in terms of types of interventions instituted, teacher performance and professional development and community participation given the fact that a number of professional development programmes were implemented in the various school/communities.

Statement of the problem

There were numerous community, district, regional and global proclamations and approaches to provide quality basic education for almost all African countries in which Ghana and more especially northern Ghana was not an exception.

Basic education is considered as the minimum period of schooling needed for every child to acquire basic literacy, numeracy and problem skills. This agenda is very critical to every nation's heart of educational system. It provides opportunity for children to build the foundation for lifelong learning and knowledge-based economic and social development. It is therefore not surprising that most countries spend large percentage of their resources in providing quality basic education.

To benefit from the growing number of opportunities for earning a livelihood in an increasingly modern society, Ghana's citizens must be able to read with understanding, write, and do simple mathematical calculations. The goals of equitable economic growth, poverty reduction, and sound democratic governance for Ghana, in other words, depend on *equitable access to quality basic education*.

Although there have been modest increases in primary school enrolments in the past decade, from 72.8% in 1998 to 79.9% in 2002, these rates of growth are inadequate for achieving the 2015 Education for All goal stated in the MOE Education Strategic Plan (ESP), 2003-2015. Furthermore, the national figure fails to reflect the disparity of access in different areas and between girls and boys.

Enrolments for the three northern regions of Ghana are estimated at 65%, compared to a national average of 79.9%. Girls' enrolment in these regions are only 58% compared to the national 75%, and only 40% of girls in the north complete the full primary school cycle through Grade 6, compared to 68% of girls nationwide.

A variety of known factors impede access to basic

education in Ghana; all are directly related to poverty and socio-cultural factors. Distances to schools in some communities are too far for a young child to travel. Teacher shortages and absenteeism are high in hard-to-reach areas, deterring parents from sending their children to school. Due to the depressed economy, many families are not able to meet the costs of education (e.g., uniforms, materials, and school levies). They also keep children, especially girls, at home to help with domestic chores or to work elsewhere to contribute to household income. Socio-cultural factors, including early marriage and the fostering of girls to distant relatives further deter girls' enrolment, especially in the north.

It was in this vein that the Government of Ghana had to solicit some funding from donor Agencies such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and to provide continuous professional development support for teachers. The intervention therefore came at the appropriate time when USAID requested for proposals from Non-Governmental Organizations who had the capacity with the required calibre of professionals to implement the QUIPS programme considering the fact that some learning barriers were very eminent in the educational system at that time.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS), one of the oldest International NGOs operating on a large scale in the three northern regions at that time presented her proposal and won the contract to implement the QUIPS programme in her operational area hence the need to evaluate the programme.

Research objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives

1. Assess the impact of the interventions on teacher performance and pupils progress;
2. Identify the types of interventions of the QUIPS programme provided teachers and community members;
3. Identify the positive impact of the interventions on the school environment and;
4. Examine the lessons learnt from the QUIPS programme for policy formulation.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

School effectiveness and improving the quality of education worldwide have attracted international attention. For the past decade, the World Bank, USAID, DfID, and other multilateral and bilateral agencies have invested large sums of money in improving education in developing countries. The World Declaration on Education for All (1990) emphasized the provision of basic education to all children, youth, and adults.

However, merely providing education is not enough. A high quality of education is essential if all learners are to be equipped with the knowledge tools they need to cope with and compete in an increasingly complex and competitive world.

The World Declaration on Education for All (1990) says that "whether or not expanded educational opportunities will translate into meaningful development—for an individual or for society—depends ultimately on whether people actually learn as a result of those opportunities." In the global economy, it is not sufficient that children simply attend school as a right. It is essential that they *learn* that they acquire the basic tools of literacy and numeracy as well as skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and the work habits of diligence, creativity, and personal responsibility. The study reviewed the literature in light of the following issues: (1) What is "school effectiveness" and "quality education"? (2) Why are school effectiveness and quality education important to international agencies? In other words, what does international research say about the need for school effectiveness and quality education? (3) What does research in developing countries reveal about quality education? and (4) What is the status of education in Ghana and what challenges do Ghanaian schools face in their attempts to improve quality?

What Is "School Effectiveness" and "Quality Education"?

Although there is a growing consensus among international and local researchers that school effectiveness and quality education are important, there is still disagreement about what the terms mean. The literature warns of a danger in confusing the terms "efficiency" and "effectiveness" and their descriptors "internal" and "external." According to Lockheed and Hanushek, (1988), "Efficiency refers to a ratio between input and output. The output of education refers to that portion of pupil growth that can be attributed to specific educational experiences." Inputs are conceived in broad terms to include the complex interactions of pupils and teachers, as well as textbooks, teachers' salaries, and so forth.

Lockheed and Hanushek restrict the term "efficiency" to monetary inputs and use "effectiveness" for non-monetary inputs. They identify outputs expressed in non-monetary terms (e.g., learning) as internal and those expressed in monetary terms (e.g., earnings) as external. Despite confusion in the use of these two terms, it can be argued that school "effectiveness" refers to all aspects of a school that are non-monetary, including learning, pupil-teacher interactions, and textbooks.

Why are school effectiveness and quality education important?

Several researchers (Creemers, Peters and Reynolds 1989; Raudenbush and Wellms 1991; Lockheed and Verspoor 1991) argue that to increase the pace of economic and social development in developing countries, schools must teach most school-age children the essential skills targeted by the primary curriculum: literacy, numeracy, communication, and problem-solving skills.

Lockheed and Verspoor 1991) gave evidence that variations in the characteristics of schools are associated with variations in pupil outcomes. The findings of Haddad and others (1990) showed a consistent trend that variation in such school inputs as teacher experience, teacher motivation, the presence of textbooks, homework, and time spent in school during the year contribute to variances in pupil achievement, even when differences in family background are accounted for. In other words, if schools can improve these aspects of education quality, learning too will increase and the academic performance of pupils will improve.

According to the EFA Global Report (2004), "It seems likely that the achievement of universal participation in education will be fundamentally dependent upon the quality of education available in the schools." It adds that how well pupils are taught and how much they learn can have a crucial impact on how long they stay in school.

The instrumental role of the school, the literature makes clear, is to help individuals achieve their own economic, social, and cultural objectives. Schools also may help society to be better protected, better served by its leaders, and more equitable—but only if the education is of a high quality.

Another goal of schooling is to help children develop creatively and emotionally and to acquire the skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes necessary for responsible, active, and productive citizenship. Schools will be effective and beneficial to children and others only if they are able to achieve these goals.

The World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 recognized that expanding access alone would be insufficient for education to contribute to the development of the individual and society. The conference recognized the need to improve on the poor quality of education globally and recommended that education be made both universally available and more relevant. More recently, the Millennium Declaration and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) set specific goals to ensure that all nations achieve free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

Today, international agencies have realized that development will not be sustainable without investment in education. Numerous countries in Africa have benefited from USAID support for reforms in educational systems.

In Uganda, for example, USAID helped the government to turn the teaching profession around: The Ministry of Education got rid of thousands of ghost and incompetent teachers. With the support of USAID, teachers' salaries were raised from \$8 to \$72 per month.

The Ugandan Ministry liberalized the textbook market and adopted new procedures for procuring and distributing books to schools, breaking the monopoly of two publishers, Longman and Macmillan. In 1996, four local and 13 international publishers won contracts to supply instructional materials. Textbooks in Uganda are now less expensive than in neighbouring countries.

What does international research say about "Educational Quality"?

Clearly, from the literature, quality education is multidimensional, depending on the researcher, organization, declaration, philosophical tradition, and approach. Bacchus (1991) identifies three major thrusts in efforts to improve the quality of education: (1) raising the academic performance of pupils in subjects offered in schools using currently available resources; (2) providing children with the education that is most likely to help them improve the quality of their lives when they become adults (also referred to as attempting to raise the effectiveness of schools); and (3) increasing the rate of school enrolment by providing more places and reducing inequalities between the sexes and the different regions in a country.

The 1990 Jomtien Declaration identified quality as a prerequisite for achieving the fundamental goal of equity. The conference recommended that the cognitive development of children should be emphasized as an indicator of quality education.

The Millennium Conference at Dakar agreed that quality was "at the heart of education and a fundamental determinant of enrolment, retention, and achievement." The Dakar Framework for Action (2000) expanded the definition of quality to cover such dimensions as the characteristics of learners (how healthy and motivated they are), processes competent teachers use (active pedagogies), content (curricula), and systems (equitable resource allocation). Although the Framework established this approach for achieving good quality, it did not ascribe any weighting to dimensions of the approach.

UNESCO identified social change, the notion of life-long learning, relevance, and emphasis on science and technology as factors to improve the quality of education. It stated that "improving the quality of education would require systems in which the principles of scientific development and modernization could be learned in ways that respected the learner's socio-cultural contexts."

The International Commission on Education saw quality education as resting on four pillars:

- Learning to know, which acknowledges that learners build their own knowledge daily, combining indigenous and external elements;
- Learning to do, which focuses on the practical applications of what is learned;
- Learning to live together, which addresses skills critical to a life free from discrimination, where all have equal opportunity to develop themselves, their families, and their communities and;
- Learning to be, which emphasizes the skills individuals need to develop to their full potential.

UNICEF also promotes good-quality education as a human right. Within its rights-based approach, learning is perceived to be operated on at two levels – the level of the learner and the level of the learning system. UNICEF emphasizes five desirable dimensions of quality education: “learners, environments, content, processes, and outcomes that are founded on the rights of the whole child and all children to survival, protection, development, and participation.”

There is an international consensus that quality education should uphold a child-centred approach to learning that allows children to reach their fullest cognitive, emotional, and creative potential. To promote this type of education, curriculum content, textbooks, teaching processes, and environment should all promote children’s rights.

Beyond quality education, international education agencies agree on the following three principles to guide and inform educational content and processes: (1) the need for relevance; (2) the need for greater equity of access and outcome; and (3) the proper observance of individual rights.

It is believed that, given the right learning environment, all children can develop basic cognitive skills. “The failure of pupils to develop these skills at school is due in part to a deficiency in education quality or to poverty, rural residence, and gender inequalities and to poor instruction.”

In summary, quality education is truly multidimensional. In the EFA Report (2005), the following are discussed as core dimensions that promote quality education:

- Learner characteristics (how people learn is influenced by their capacities and experience);
- Context: the link between education and the values and practices in society. Context is likely to constrain opportunities to increase resources for education;
- Enabling inputs: the success of teaching and learning is influenced by the resources made available to support the process. Schools without teachers, textbooks, or learning materials will not be able to do an effective job;
- Teaching and learning dimensions: instructional time, teaching methods, class size, assessment, and feedback. It is here that curricula have an impact and;
- Outcomes: these should be assessed in the context of agreed-upon objectives.

Educational quality in Ghana

Studies conducted in Ghana show that the quality of basic education there is low. Despite funding by international donors and different interventions to improve the quality of basic public education, Kraft (2003) confirms that serious problems remain in the educational system of Ghana, especially the teaching of English language and math.

The results of the Criterion-Referenced Testing (CRT) introduced into the Ghanaian education sector with the assistance of USAID showed that Grade 6 pupils’ achievement has been poor. In the 1994 sample, for example, only 3% of Grade 6 pupils scored satisfactory marks in English, and a dismal 1.5% in mathematics.

Several studies confirm that the failure of Ghanaian pupils to learn English can be attributed to the methods teachers use in the classrooms. Instruction took the traditional form of teaching a foreign language. Kraft (2003) confirmed that didactic modes of teaching characterized by rote learning are still prevalent. As Dzameshie (1997) put it, the teaching of English in Ghanaian classrooms has been more analytical and grammar-based than meaning-oriented. Benzanson and Hawkes (1972) described the teaching methods of Ghana as traditional, whole-class, and teacher-dominated. The early stages of reading often consisted of alphabetic and look-and-say work, with words or sentences mechanically repeated aloud. Actual reading is still delayed until Grade 2, when teachers copy short texts on the blackboard for children to read aloud in unison.

Reading of actual texts starts only in Grade 3; the common belief is that children need to master structures of language and reading readiness before moving on to read text. Instruction in the lower grades is focused on teaching the blending of letters and sounds to form words. Teachers move from teaching two-letter words to three-letter words and beyond. As Etsey (2004) put it, this is the typical bottom-up, skill-based instruction encouraged by the behaviourist tradition.

In field visits to Ghanaian classrooms Etsey observed little instruction about how to comprehend passages. The method of teaching comprehension was to test comprehension; the process of learning comprehension was neglected. The missing element was the failure to teach strategies pupils can use in constructing meaning from written passages: Questions from teacher and textbook were factual. The children did little thinking; they just located the answers in the textbook and copied them into exercise books. The Ghanaian approach to teaching reading and writing did not help the children become independent readers and writers.

Equity issues

Equity is a prerequisite of quality education. According to

Kraft (1995) there is a dramatic difference between the educational opportunities available to children in rural settings and those who attend school in towns, regional centres, or the national capital. Also, there is overwhelming geographical disparity between the southern, central, and northern zones of Ghana in every aspect of schooling: infrastructure, toilets, textbooks, management, parental wealth, the training of teachers, instructional materials, etc. In 2003 Kraft found most of these issues still unresolved.

The growth in private schools and their impact on social mobility has been studied by the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, Ivan Addae-Mensah (1974, 2002). He shows that over a 25-year period, entry into tertiary education in Ghana has been primarily through 25 public secondary schools. Access to one of these elite secondary schools has been the driving force behind investment in private primary education by a large number of middle-class families.

A recent study of private schools in Ghana (EARC 2002) shows parents enrol their children in private schools because they believe these schools offer a better quality education, so an increasing number of children are entering the public secondary school system after completing private primary education, usually in a town or district capital. GES figures for 2004 indicate that of 16,000 primary schools in the country, 3,600 are approved private primary schools (22%). The number of private primary schools in a district capital north of Kumasi increased from 4 in 1993 to 64 in 2004.

Teaching and learning issues

The international community agrees that teaching and learning is the key arena for human development and change. Kraft's reviews of teaching, learning, and the curriculum (1994, 2003) reveal that in developing countries like Ghana, home and community contexts are not the variables that exert the most influence on teaching and learning, as they are in the first world. Fuller (1992) hypothesized that in third world countries, the school is a more powerful influence on the success of children.

In Ghana, although parents are supportive of their children attending school, there is a wide range of other factors, particularly in the rural areas, that explain why Ghana is plagued with large numbers of primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) dropouts. Among them are high levels of poverty, parent illiteracy (prevalent in rural areas), and lack of access to television, radio, and reading materials. Moreover, some children, especially girls, miss school due to illness, working on the farm or in the home, or selling items on city streets.

School factors

Kraft (1994) reports that a range of school factors correlate with higher achievement. Some factors that affect teaching and learning in Ghana are:

- Large class and school sizes.
- How involved head teachers are in decision-making, teacher supervision, monitoring of the class schedule and curricula, and ensuring that textbooks, syllabuses, and handbooks are available to teachers.
- School-wide policies on discipline, attendance, tardiness, and absenteeism and their enforcement by heads of schools.
- School cultural factors, such as orderly atmosphere, high expectations, leadership by head teacher—all characteristic of high-achieving schools.
- Access to schooling: through the World Bank and other international agencies, Ghana has made a concerted effort to make primary schools more accessible.
- Design and delivery of curriculum and instruction.

The government has mandated that English be the language of instruction from Grade 4 on, but reading achievement in the school's official language suffers when children speak another language at home (Kraft 1994). In Ghana, few children speak English or hear it used at home. This makes it difficult for the children to understand what they are taught at school. Moreover, not only is the amount of time limited that Ghanaian children are exposed to learning English at school, but teachers themselves are not often comfortable in the language, so trained teachers end up using a local language for much of the formal curriculum.

Other factors that affect the quality of teaching and learning in Ghana are:

- Irregular and late distribution of textbooks.
- Inadequate teacher training in pedagogy (Kraft 1994). Instructional practices in Ghana are overwhelmingly teacher-centred, and dominated by rote learning and copying off the board. Pupils find this boring and repetitive. While some Ghanaian teachers use a questioning/recitation strategy, their questions tend to be simplistic, and are answered only by the best pupils—most children are not actively involved in lessons. It has been globally demonstrated that this does not promote quality education and achievement in school.
- Lack of teachers, especially in rural areas, where teachers are reluctant to accept posting.
- Minimal teacher commitment because, teachers are underpaid; they are often absent or arrive late and leave early, especially in rural settings. (Kraft 1994)
- Poor classroom management.
- Traditional pupil-teacher interactions: Positive responses to questions from other pupils and teachers are correlated with achievement (Kraft 1994). In the Ghanaian classroom, Kraft reported, not only were 100% of questions teacher-initiated but they were simple yes-

or-no questions to which pupils repeated correct answers in unison. He also found no evidence that cooperative learning and small group instruction were ever used. (This is an instructional strategy QUIPS tried to introduce.)

- Quantity of instruction: In Ghanaian schools there are endless interruptions of instruction by such activities as sporting and cultural festivals and teacher absenteeism and tardiness.
- Pupil characteristics: In Ghana, there has been limited research into how learning characteristics affect achievement. The only aspect mentioned by Kraft (1994) is gender studies-how boys did marginally better than girls. Kraft recommended that teachers be trained in the use of meta-cognitive strategies and how to use alternative tools to regularly evaluate pupils' mastery of knowledge and then adjust teaching approaches to areas of need.
- Irregular distribution of textbooks and school resources: Scarcity is exacerbated by poor central record-keeping, leading to over- and under-supply of educational materials in schools.
- Inadequate textbooks, a problem exacerbated by teacher and learner characteristics and the lack of supplementary instructional materials.
- Unavailability of supplementary reading materials, a key to achieving literacy.
- Absence of workbooks and exercise-books to give children more practice in mathematics and other problems.
- Shortage of teachers' handbooks, which are in any case repetitive and restrict the teacher to a limited variety of teaching strategies.
- Functional illiteracy: A large majority of Ghanaian school children cannot function well in either English or their mother tongue.
- Shortage of libraries: The few libraries in Ghanaian schools are, moreover, not fully utilized by either pupils or teachers.

Most of the problem areas Kraft identified in 1994 are still evident. The five most critical, demanding immediate attention, are the policy on language of instruction, the prevalence of reading difficulty among children, lack of an appropriate pedagogy to teach English as a second language, lack of textbooks, and teacher time on task.

Issues prevalent in Ghanaian schools

Language policy issues

Kraft has criticized the latest Ghanaian English-only language policy, explaining how this policy does not work in the current Ghanaian educational environment:

"The latest Ghanaian language policy reads as if the nation had sought to unilaterally disarm itself and to commit intellectual, cultural and educational suicide....

Ghanaians, not unlike most Africans, are among the world's great linguists, often with the ability to communicate in three or more oral languages.

To effectively deprive them of the ability to become literate in one of those languages, as a gateway to the mastery of neighbouring languages or of English, can only be described as educational malpractice."

If the practice of ignoring the support the mother tongue gives in learning is not dealt with, Ghanaian children will continue to have a crisis in literacy. When children are first literate in their mother tongue, they can easily transfer basic literacy skills into the second language (Cummins, 1991, 1994; Kraft, 2003).

The reading issue

Unless the culture of reading is re-introduced into Ghana, libraries are established, and enough supplementary reading materials are provided for the schools, Ghanaian children will continue to have difficulty reading. A culture of reading can come into being only when materials, even pupil-written, become more widely available (Kraft 2003).

The issue of pedagogy for teaching English

In his detailed comparison of the literacy learning and pedagogical situation in the U.S and Ghana, Kraft (2003) showed the inherent problems of literacy instruction in Ghana. Ghanaian teachers need pre- and in-service training in methods for teaching English.

The textbook issue

New textbooks need to be written to match the content of the syllabus.

Teacher time-on-task issue

Schools need to make good use of all the instructional time available. That appears not to be the case currently.

Conclusions

This brief review of national and international educational research on effective schooling, quality of education, and factors that affect learning describe the context within which the QUIPS program was rooted. Our conclusions are as follows:

- There are high social and individual returns on investment in primary education.
- School inputs consistently contribute to school achievement.

Table 1. Region, Districts and Schools of Study

| Region | Districts | Schools | |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Northern | Savelugu/Nanton | 1. Diare E/A Primary; | |
| | | 2. Tibali E/A Primary; | |
| | | 3. Tampion E/A Primary; | |
| | | 4. Zieng E/A Primary and; | |
| | | 5. Kanshegu E/A Primary | |
| | West Mamprusi | 1. Al-Bakaria E/A Primary; | |
| | | | 2. Zaami L/A Primary; |
| | | | 3. Mimima L/A Primary; |
| | | | 4. Guakudow L/A Primary and; |
| | | | 5. Nuria E/A Primary |
| | | Bole | 1. Bamboi L/A Primary; |
| | | | 2. Maluwe E/A Primary; |
| | | | 3. Bale Methodist Primary; |
| | | | 4. Blema L/A Primary and; |
| | | | 5. St John's Primary |
| Upper East | Builsa | 1. Anankum L/A Primary; | |
| | | 2. Alam L/A Primary; | |
| | | 3. Tiedema R/C Primary; | |
| | | 4. Farinsa L/A Primary and; | |
| | | 5. Fumbisi E/A Primary | |
| Upper West | Lawra | 1. Kogle R/C Primary; | |
| | | 2. Tokuu R/C Primary; | |
| | | 3. Gombile L/A Primary; | |
| | | 4. Eremon-Dazuri R/C Primary and; | |
| | | 5. Berwong R/C Primary | |

- The five core dimensions influencing quality education and teaching and learning are the characteristics of the learner, the social context, inputs, the teaching and learning process, and educational outcomes. Quality school programs must be built around these dimensions.
- There has been little impact from the international resources Ghana has received to enhance the performance of its primary school system. Ghanaian children still fail to master reading and writing in the English language.
- There are severe disparities in the educational opportunities available to children in rural areas compared to those in district centres and towns; rural areas lack teachers, textbooks, readers, and instructional materials.
- Problem areas identified by Kraft in 1994 are still evident: including policy on the language of instruction, reading difficulties, pedagogy for teaching English as a second language, textbook issues, and teacher time on task.
- Parents are sending their children increasingly to private primary schools, then enrolling them in public secondary schools. Private schools are perceived as

offering a better quality education.

SCOPE OF STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

The QUIPS programme was aligned with this framework; it sought to reach its goal of increased effectiveness of the primary education system through (1) training teachers and school managers; (2) informing district, regional, and central administration about good practices and encouraging national policy to support such initiatives; and (3) mobilizing and building the capacity of communities to participate productively in school development and governance.

By considering the interdependence of these three nested systems for school learning, the evaluation team was better able to understand the interrelationships among QUIPS activities in the context of the goals of the program and pupil learning. We avoided looking at issues as isolated events perceived as road-blocks to learning. Instead, we attempted to understand the conditions that may lead to such constraints and considered recommendations for improving the situation in the context of classroom, school system, and community.

The study was conducted in the northern sector of

Ghana. The sector is made up of three administrative regions comprising of the Northern Region (the largest political and administrative region), the Upper East Region and the Upper West Region (the youngest region in Ghana).

The study focused on the fifth group of selected schools dubbed "Cohort V" schools found in five districts of the three northern regions. The districts include; Lawra, Builsa, Savelugu/Nanton, West Mamprusi and Bole. (Table 1)

There were twenty five school communities comprising of nine Islamic Education Schools, seven Mission Schools and nine Local Government Schools. The study considered both quantitative and qualitative research methods to make use of the inherent advantages of both types of research approaches. This design strategy was chosen in order to get deeper understanding of the benefits of the QUIPS programme made in the various school communities.

The study population was all teaching staff and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) Executive members in the twenty-five school communities. These school communities were purposively selected because they were the schools that were implementing the QUIPS programme and were just about completing their two years life-cycle. It was therefore clear that some achievements would have been made on both teachers and pupils.

The researcher felt it would be more prudent and efficient contacting all teachers who were on the programme since access to them was not a problem. This implied that a census was conducted since all the population units were contacted.

The researcher used questionnaire, structured interviews and general observations during School-Based In-service Training programmes in the various school communities.

The researcher also reviewed reports from the various school communities presented to the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of Catholic Relief Services by circuit supervisors on follow-ups issues and through the mass media developed by the Information Education and Communication Unit of CRS. The questionnaire was specifically designed for the teachers in the various schools and the structured interviews for PTA Executives, circuit supervisors and other GES Administrators.

Twenty questions were considered including issues on: position/rank, status in community and trained teacher or untrained teacher. The Microsoft Access, Excel Word packages 2007 version were used in the data entry and analysis. After retrieving the questionnaire, frequencies and descriptive statistics were used in analyzing the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The CRS/QUIPS programme adopted some intervention

strategies to implement the programme. In view of this each of the intervention strategies was assessed. Below were the items assessed.

QUIPS best practices

The QUIPS programme adopted some best practices in education delivery in terms of quality assurance and teacher Development for the effective implementation of the programmes. In this vein the questionnaire first and foremost considered all the best practices of the QUIPS programme and its usefulness to the partnership schools, communities and district offices of the cohort five districts. One hundred and eighty-nine (189) people responded to the questionnaire.

Various best practices were mentioned and they included; workshops on lesson planning and delivery, proper record keeping methods, strengthening good school community relationships, team building methods, re-structuring of School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations and community sensitisation on the importance of formal education to the communities and the need for community members to play vital roles in the development of the schools in the communities.

These and a lot more practices were mentioned however; they were summarized into three broad areas. They included workshops on effective lesson planning and delivery, community sensitisation methods and formation of Parent Teacher Associations/School Management Committees (28.6%) and instructional leadership and management (16.8%). One hundred and three respondents representing 54.6% said effective lesson planning and delivery was ranked the first best practice, followed by community sensitisation methods and formation of Parent Teacher Associations/School Management Committees with 54 respondents representing 28.6% and Instructional Leadership and management with 32 respondents representing 16.8%.

Lesson planning and delivery

Lesson planning and delivery which was ranked as the best practice implemented. The researcher wanted to find out how regular teachers prepared their lesson plans. Only teachers, head teachers and circuit supervisors responded to this particular item. 55% indicated that, they prepare their lesson plans on daily basis, 7% said they prepare their lessons on weekly basis and 4% who were mostly the circuit supervisors and attached head teachers said they prepare lesson plans only when they have conduct demonstration lessons. During each two-year intervention cycle, the QUIPS programme achieved the planned results identified by the SO2 Results Framework for cohort V schools.

Table 2. Seeking professional support

| No | Item | Freq | % |
|----|--|------|------|
| 1 | Lesson planning and delivery and classroom managerial challenges | 35 | 60.3 |
| 2 | Selection and preparation of appropriate teaching and learning materials | 14 | 24.2 |
| 3 | Difficult content areas and observing teachers teach | 8 | 13.8 |
| 4 | Observing teachers teach while constructive giving feedback | 1 | 1.7 |

By the second year of the QUIPS intervention, pupils in QUIPS schools were able to read with meaning more than control schools. Further, as a consequence of the perceived reputation of the QUIPS schools as being “good,” enrolments, particularly of girls, were increased in these schools. Nonetheless, in many schools these gains have not been sustained, in large part because the basic conditions that existed during QUIPS, especially staffing and supervision, have not been maintained.

Pupils cannot be expected to make appreciable gains within a two-year intervention period in the absence of accelerated programmes in literacy and numeracy. Pupils throughout Ghana were performing far below development expectations in English reading and mathematics. Two years of QUIPS interventions was simply not enough time to remedy this deficiency.

Seeking professional support

The researcher also wanted to know the types of professional support teachers got from their colleagues, head teachers and circuit supervisors. Most respondents 60.3% said they seek professional support from their colleagues on lesson planning and delivery and classroom managerial challenges as their foremost entanglements. 24.2% said they seek support on the selection and preparation of appropriate teaching and learning materials, 13.8% indicated difficult content areas and 1.7% observing teachers teach while constructive feedback is provided as areas they solicit support from respectively. Again it was clear from some teachers’ lesson plans that, they could not select the appropriate topics and activities from the syllabus yet no teacher mentioned it in the responses given. (Table 2)

The relevance in the learning context is supremely important. The study’s consideration what pupils were and were not able to do showed that mathematics story problems using common experiences of children were completed at higher grade levels (even to a smaller extent, problems at the same grade level of the pupil) than basic mathematics operations.

Giving professional support

As a complement of the previous question asked, there

was a follow-up to find out about the type of professional support that individual teacher was capable of given to his/her colleagues since he/she also seeks support from others. Majority the respondents (65.6%) mentioned lesson planning and delivery and classroom management as areas they provide support, 14.1% said they provide support in the selection and preparation of appropriate teaching and learning materials (TLMs), 12.5% mentioned difficult content areas and the rest (7.8) indicated planning and conducting demonstration lessons.

Irrespective of the fact that several workshops were organised on team building, most teachers still want to work in isolation. From the figures in the itemized analysis summarised at the appendix, it would be observed that people did not respond to the questions on seeking/giving support professional support.

The QUIPS Programme achieved an immediate return on training in that teachers were responsive and implemented most of the reforms in QUIPS classrooms. Specific targeted QUIPS teacher training and support activities were associated with high pupil learning during the two-year intervention cycle, particularly encouragement of pupils, especially girls, to participate; teacher questioning and feedback to pupils; and facilitation of pupil interaction and creative thinking. However, there is little evidence that these classroom reforms were sustained. The study identified a number of factors impeding sustainability; the most serious was teacher mobility. Given the diffuse distribution of QUIPS schools across the nation, and an in-service training programme targeting teachers in these schools, there was insufficient support for teachers to carry on the new practices over the long run.

The positive impact of effective head teachers on learning was clear in high-performing schools, whether the school received QUIPS assistance or whether it was a “control” school. Enhancing school leadership pays off by increasing school effectiveness. Further, the scaling up and spread of QUIPS influenced the practices of head teachers across districts observed by the evaluation teams and revealed that QUIPS was successful in spreading good practices in non-QUIPS schools. However, better head teachers must have better material support if they are to do effective training in their schools on their own.

Coverage of syllabuses

On the coverage of the teaching syllabuses for Mathematics and English Language, four indicators were provided; two for the affirmative and two for the negative. The affirmative responses were:

- Teachers prepare their schemes of work on termly basis to cover the terms work and via the year's work. This interrogation attracted only 15% of the total respondents. This clearly indicates that most of the teachers, though have the necessary knowledge and skills to do the work yet they do not perform their routine task regularly
- Teachers considered strictly the number of periods allocated to each topic and follow it as such. 3% of the respondents said they follow their periods strictly.

The negative responses were:

- Pupils are not fast enough to grasp the concepts taught as expected as such their inability to complete the syllabus. The inability of teachers completing their teaching syllabi according to this study is attributed to low level of understanding of the content with a high ranking of 32%.
- Lack of the full complement of teachers to take the classes. These shortages of teachers make some teachers to teach two or more classes. This stumbling block does not allow teachers to perform up to expectation. Surprisingly, most respondents did not actually view this constraint as a major issue and rather attributed it to the low level of the pupils understanding of the content

Increases in enrolment figures

Enrolment figures had increased tremendously in most of the partnership schools since the inception of the QUIPS Programme. Respondents therefore gave various reasons for the increase in enrolment figures. Some of the reasons given were as a result of the following:

- Quality teaching and learning and the food support being provided for the schools by CRS. They further explained that, in the schools where lunch was not provided but located in the same community, some pupils run away from their schools to seek admission in the partnership schools where they could always take lunch. The Wulugu community in the West Mamprusi District of the Northern Region is a clear example where one school was completely empty while the partnership school was over crowded;
- Intensive sensitisation on the importance of formal education both at the community and the district levels and the roles and responsibilities of community members spelt out;
- The infrastructure support given to the school/com-

munities provided opportunity for more children to attend school and;

- Some respondents were very emphatic that there were just marginal increases in enrolment figures in their communities since the inception of the programme. The reasons advanced were that some parents do not still see the need to send their wards to school.

Girl-child enrolment

Girls are victims of discrimination even when they have access to be enrolled in schools; there are other constraints, which adversely affect them and their participation in school activities and their retention. Some of these are socio-cultural: for example the position of women in society; early marriage; the economic exploitation of girls in agriculture; and the perception, which stems from the practice of, exchange dowries, of girls as economic commodities. CRS/QUIPS has therefore made an effort in this direction to increase general enrolment figures and it was only prudent to find out whether there have been any increases in the enrolment of the girls as compared with that of boys.

The responses gathered from all the school communities were very positive and four main reasons accounted for this.

- Forty-two percent (42%) of the respondents said intensive awareness had been created on the importance of girls' education in the social development of every nation and the role women play in the various communities;
- Ten percent (10%) had the opinion that the increases were as a result of the 'Take Home Ration' given to girls who are able to make 85% attendance in a month;
- Thirteen percent (13%) said some parents had still not paid heed to all the discussions on the importance of the girl-child education as such most girls of school going age were still at home and;
- Seventeen percent (17%) said most of the girls enrolled were either withdrawn for marriage or they are made to live with their aunties to help in household chores, as such opportunity is not provided for them to complete school.

Textbooks Support

Effective and efficient teaching and learning cannot take place in an institution not well equipped with the relevant teaching and learning materials and textbooks. One of the areas the QUIPS programme focused on were the provision of appropriate and sufficient textbooks to the partnerships. The researcher therefore wanted to know the textbook situation in the schools. In response to this question, 70% of the school communities confirmed that CRS/QUIPS provided them with funds and

they purchased enough Mathematics and English Language textbooks as such every pupil has a mathematics and English Language textbooks each. Eight percent (8%) of the respondents indicated that though CRS/QUIPS provided them with some funds, the community also contributed money to complement CRS/QUIPS' support and this, they were able to purchase enough textbooks for every pupil in their various schools.

One percent of the respondents said they did not have enough textbooks. Reasons advanced were that enrolment figures in their schools were rather very high with very little supplies from Ghana Education Service while two percent said apart from limited supplies and the support from CRS/QUIPS, most community members had refused to contribute money to complement the support CRS/QUIPS had provided them.

Other direct support programmes

The CRS/QUIPS programme apart from providing money for the purchase of Mathematics and English Language textbooks, she also provides interventions such as training, finance, infrastructure and provision of furniture as part of the programmes support system. Respondents were made to rank these supports according to school/community needs and these were the findings made.

- Both teachers and community members ranked the training programmes implemented first. They affirmed that they were most appreciative of that support provided by CRS/QUIPS and wished the programme could continue in order to consistently upgrade their knowledge and skills;
- Financial support was the next in the ranking. Each partnership district was given an equivalent of \$10,000.00 in cedis depending on the exchange rate to organise workshops, buy teaching and learning materials and intensify supervision of schools in the various districts;
- Most of the partnership schools were housed in 'Thatch Roofed Structures'. Apart from that, most teachers of the schools were residing outside the communities in which they teach and ride between fifteen to twenty kilometres to school each day because they could not get places to rent in the communities. In view of the appalling infrastructure situation, CRS/QUIPS instituted an infrastructure programme into its work plan and schools and communities were selected based on needs assessment to be provided with this assistance. This support was one of those mentioned support the communities benefited from and;
- The last of the interventions mentioned was the provision of furniture. Schools that had very good structures with doors and windows qualified for this kind of support. The reason being that the furniture must be kept safe from either being stolen or bad weather. They

should not be exposed to rain and severe sunshine. Before then most pupils had to either bring stools from their homes or lie flat on their stomachs.

Some partnership schools/communities have either received all these forms of supports or one or more of the supports. These supports invariably have facilitated the QUIPS motto of 'Learning for ALL'.

While there was no direct evidence that QUIPS-financed infrastructure improvements were tied to school performance and pupil learning, QUIPS infrastructure was successful in increasing communities' sense of ownership of their schools by involving them in the construction process. Teachers' work conditions in the QUIPS schools improved, schools stayed open during the rainy season and positive relationships were developed between schools and communities.

Findings from the study suggest that infrastructure programmes should first define their goals. If the main goal is to improve pupil learning, an infrastructure project might consider building teacher housing to encourage retention, keep teachers punctual, and build their commitment and sense of accountability to the communities where they teach. On the other hand, if the goal is to facilitate community sense of ownership in the schools, the building of classroom blocks and acquisition of furniture may be more useful. In both cases, the responsibility for part of the construction or procurement process needs to be shared with the community leadership.

Management of educational resources

Quality teaching and learning can neither be sustained nor spread without eminent leadership and effective management of resources. It was therefore against this background that CRS/QUIPS provided funds and resource for every partnership district. The QUIPS programme was therefore focused on strengthening planning, management, monitoring and evaluation to ensure that children at all levels can read and make simple calculations. The rationale was that, the overall system of management, financing and oversight within Ghana Education Service seldom provide rewards for good leadership and management, or sanctions for poor management. The researcher wanted to know the type of management strategies put in place in the various school communities. On this issue respondents gave various management methods they used. They included:

- Committees were set to plan and distribute educational materials based on needs assessment.
- Work plans were drawn for the proper allocation of the materials based on the activity under implementation. This method offered the QUIPS programme officers an effective approach for monitoring and evaluation.

- Budgets are discussed and reviewed with schedule officers whenever necessary.

The M and E training provided through the QUIPS district grants led to a shift in thinking about district responsibility and accountability. The skills developed in collecting and, most important, using data to inform management decisions are remarkable, although their sustainability is challenged by shifting district priorities and funding limitations.

Personal and community initiatives

The programme encouraged personal as well as community initiatives. Individual respondents stated that, they had on their own zeal organised communal labour, wrote to their district assemblies, Non-Governmental organisations and philanthropic individuals, for support to develop their school communities and also made personal donations in the form of cash and community sensitisation on the importance of formal education in their communities to supplement the work of QUIPS.

Community participation in primary school education was a key policy objective for the Government of Ghana over the past decade. However, the policy has been narrowly understood by District Education Officers to mean that communities should send their children to school and ensure that they are well supplied with pens, pencils, and notebooks. It was evident through QUIPS experience that raising the quality of education requires stronger community oversight and advocacy, as well as contributions to school material needs. Response to community to educational issued revealed that:

- Community members mobilise themselves into groups to plan projects for the development of their various schools and communities.
- They make financial contributions to the development of the schools in their communities.
- The communities were always ready to support in providing communal labour for any project initiated.

Community drama

Community dramas were used as a viable method of generating community involvement and mobilization strategy. Community drama seem most adequate in the mobilization, education and collective action process because through the medium, people could raise community issues and involve others in discussing the issues in a community forum.

It further helped communities mobilise themselves to take action on the issues. Apart from that it provides a forum for collective interrogation towards a

communal search for better life. Not that alone, drama as an educational strategy combines with entertainment value of the performing arts with their capacity to highlight issues relating to community development. Based on all these reasons, the CRS/QUIPS programme adopted community drama as an implementation strategy to improve upon quality of teaching and learning. Communities were particularly appreciative of this strategy and have confessed that it was worthwhile adopting that strategy.

Regularity of community meetings

Community participation in education is indispensable. It is crucial for attaining the goals of universal basic education. This has necessitated QUIPS to mobilised communities to work on issues of education and developed the capacities of School Management Committees (SMC) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) to become more effectively involved in their schools. As a result of these excellent methodologies, manuals, training and monitoring procedures were developed by QUIPS. The researcher was of the view that there was a comparative advantage for communities to be more responsive to issues concerning education. Meetings were the only way through which the (SMCs) and (PTAs) could be more functional. It was against this background that the questionnaire sought to find out about how regular communities organised meetings to discuss issues concerning the development of their schools. Respondents reacted differently. Three different types of responses were gathered.

- A consortium of 14% them said they organise their Parent Teacher Association (PTA) / School Management Committees (SMC) meetings once in every school term;
- Another syndicate of 36% said they organise their meetings two times every school term. At the beginning of the term and at the end and;
- The last group of 27% said they organise theirs three times in a school term. At the beginning of the term, the middle and at the end.

Participation of women in community meetings

Reports that came from the field indicated that women do not participate actively in most of the communities especially the Northern Region communities. The reports specified clearly that even at the meeting grounds women do not mix up with men, they sit separately.

These were the entry point observations made. It was therefore necessary to find out at this point whether this attitude had changed since these selected communities had gone through a lot of training programmes with QUIPS personnel on gender issues and role women in

national development. The responses given were in the affirmative with further explanations.

- Women were highly encouraged to participate in community meetings. The main idea being that, they are human beings and must be made to contribute effectively to the development of their communities as such some of them were made executive members of the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs).
- The second explanation was that, most of the women made laudable contributions, suggestions and recommendations during meetings and these were considered paramount. This, according to them; gave the women the zeal to actively participate in community projects. There was no negative response to that effect.

School community relationship

No quality teaching and learning can take place in an environment of chaos. It was against this background that both the community and the school must relate very well in order to achieve the ultimate goals of education at that level. Based on this idea, both teachers and parents resolved to maintain this rapport by:

- Paying regular visits to one another frequently to talk about pupils performance, school needs and teacher challenges and;
 - Attending PTA meetings regularly and punctually to discuss about issues affecting the progress of the school.
- Responses to this question showed that there has been very cordial relationship between the schools and the communities since the inception of the CRS/QUIPS programme.

QUIPS-fostered community involvement in school management has had a lasting impact on the quality of education and resultant learning. Strengthening the role of SMCs/PTAs in primary education was the broadest QUIPS intervention, and because communities are far more stable than teachers or district personnel, the impact is more likely to last. QUIPS also strengthened the internal leadership structures in communities and encouraged communities to contribute and plan towards school improvement. The community focused interventions had a positive correlation with high performing schools and enhanced learning outcomes.

Visits to school/community

In order to strengthen the relationship between teachers and parents/guardians, they do pay regular visits to one another and vice versa. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of teachers said they visit their pupils at home and on daily basis according to a planned schedule. 43% said they visit at least one pupil in a week and the last group made up of 16% said they were able to visit each pupil at least

once in a school term.

To reciprocate, parents who were very particular and interested in the education made up of 22% said they visit their children/wards at least once every week to find out about the academic performance and their school needs, 19% said they visit their wards once in a school term to interact with the teachers about their children's performance and 33% of the adamant parents/guardians said they visit the school only when their wards are absent and they have to inform the class teacher.

These reciprocal visits create a very cordial relationship between teachers and parents. It also instils some kind of confidence in the children that they can rely on their teachers and parents for any support needed.

Building national awareness about the responsibilities of communities to support schooling was one of the major accomplishments of QUIPS. The importance of empowered parents and local authorities working with school personnel to improve instructional quality was emphasized by stakeholders throughout the evaluative fieldwork. Mainstreaming of SMC/PTA training across the nation has built awareness of the need to involve communities and share responsibility for primary education.

Provision of school needs

Community participation in primary school education is not without commitment to the provision of pupils school needs though it is sometimes misinterpreted as the only reason for which the QUIPS programme encourage community participation. To find out how many parents provide their children/wards all their school needs, 54% responded in the affirmative, 42% said they provide some and 4% said they were unable to provide anything.

The study found that many children started the school day hungry and tired, thus undermining their ability to learn. All the groups with whom the researchers interacted with spoke of how children's readiness to learn was affected by hunger. In QUIPS low-performing communities, parents often were neglecting the basic needs of their children. Interviews with children revealed that the vast majority of parents were not ensuring that their children's basic food needs were met before and during school. Findings from the field suggested that USAID's school feeding programme (PL480) was an excellent complement to the QUIPS program because it ensured that most children were able to obtain a basic meal that gave them enough energy to learn effectively, thereby ensuring that QUIPS interventions were supported.

Methods of sustaining the QUIPS programme

As a project, it was evident that, it would come to an end

sometime some day. In this respect the designers of the QUIPS programme took into consideration, three main ideas which included:

- Rationale for designing the project;
- Methods of implementing the project and;
- Methods of sustaining the project.

Considering the fact that the aims and objectives have been clearly stated and the method of implementation described into details, there was the need to structure activities and methods of sustaining the project. It therefore became eminent to find out from beneficiaries of the programme how it was going to be sustained if CRS/QUIPS withdrew their support. The respondents had this to say:

- Forty-seven percent (47%) of the teachers basically recommended regular organisation of school-based in-service training to refresh themselves and up-date the knowledge and skills of newly posted teachers to their schools;
- Community members made up of 42% had the opinion that frequent organisation SMC/PTA meetings to discuss matters concerning the development of the school, would go a long way to sustain the best practices initiated by QUIPS and;
- 8% of the respondents gave prominence to regular monitoring and evaluation by circuit supervisors and head teachers. They had the believe that effective supervision when intensified would put everybody on his/her toes. Regular visits by community members to the schools will also support in the sustenance of the programme.

Education reforms targeting improvements in teacher instructional practices that fail to address systemic issues related to teaching (recruitment, training, remuneration, conditions of service) cannot be sustained. The QUIPS assumptions that desire for professional growth, improvement in the performance of duties, or commitment to the teaching profession would be sufficient to motivate teachers were misplaced.

Under QUIPS, district support and attention to school demands and supervision was found to be a major contributor to a school's success in teaching. However, the amount of district support provided to the QUIPS schools served to marginalize other schools in the district. Further, after the QUIPS intervention ended, district supervision of the QUIPS schools would deteriorate.

The training provided by QUIPS for DEO personnel enhanced their capacity to operate more effectively in management, supervision, planning, and M and E including district officers in training activities for teachers and SMC/PTA executives gave them learning opportunities and modelled effective ways to operate. Many of the activities that the district officers undertook as part of the QUIPS experience are no longer being done because funds to support them are not yet forthcoming.

Spreading the best practices of the QUIPS programme

Beneficiary communities of the QUIPS programme are only five in each district. Even in the first three groups of communities selected only three school communities benefited, which was woefully insignificant implying that most communities have not had the opportunity to benefit. Therefore, there was the need to find ways of spreading the best practices to non-beneficiary communities. Sampling and summarising views from respondents, the following were gathered:

- They stated that cluster-based INSETs could be organised jointly with non-QUIPS schools where teachers of QUIPS schools will serve as facilitators to share their experiences with the non-beneficiary schools teachers.
- Organise joint SMC/PTA meetings with non-QUIPS communities to discuss some of the best practices adopted from QUIPS programme.
- Invite non-QUIPS communities', SMC/PTA executives, head teachers and opinion leaders to participate in QUIPS activities especially on Open Days and festive occasions. On such days, talks could be given on the best practices of the QUIPS programme.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study, which took into account quantitative and qualitative information gathered through interviews among teachers, GES office staff and PTA executives in the 'Cohort V' schools in the northern sector of Ghana.

- The evaluation teams found that many children started the school day hungry and tired, thus undermining their ability to learn. All the groups with whom the evaluation teams interacted with spoke of how children's readiness to learn was affected by hunger. In QUIPS low-performing communities, parents often were neglecting the basic needs of their children. Interviews with children revealed that the vast majority of parents were not ensuring that their children's basic food needs were met before and during school. Fortunately in these schools hot lunch was served every pupil who was present at school and so it did not affect learning outcomes much.
- Pupils cannot be expected to make appreciable gains within a two-year intervention period in the absence of accelerated programs in literacy and numeracy. Pupils throughout Ghana were performing far below development expectations in English reading and mathematics. Two years of QUIPS interventions was simply not enough time to remedy this deficiency.
- QUIPS-fostered community involvement in school management has had a lasting impact on the quality of education and resultant learning. Strengthening the role of SMCs/PTAs in primary education was the broadest QUIPS intervention, and because communities are far

more stable than teachers or district personnel, the impact is more likely to last. QUIPS also strengthened the internal leadership structures in communities and encouraged communities to contribute and plan towards school improvement. The community focused interventions had a positive correlation with high performing schools and enhanced learning outcomes.

- By the second year of the QUIPS intervention in the Cohort V schools, pupils in QUIPS schools were able to read with meaning. Further, as a consequence of the perceived reputation of the QUIPS schools as being “good,” enrolments, particularly of girls, were increased in these schools. Nonetheless, in many schools these gains have not been sustained, in large part because the basic conditions that applied during QUIPS, especially staffing and supervision have not been maintained.

- QUIPS infrastructure development was successful in facilitating community involvement. Teachers’ work conditions in the QUIPS schools improved and schools stayed open during the rainy season. QUIPS micro-grants to promote school infrastructure development built positive relations between schools and communities.

- The QUIPS Programme achieved an immediate return on training in that teachers were responsive and implemented most of the reforms in QUIPS classrooms. Specific targeted QUIPS teacher training and support activities were associated with high pupil learning *during the two-year intervention cycle*, particularly encouragement of pupils, especially girls, to participate; teacher questioning and feedback to pupils; and facilitation of pupil interaction and creative thinking. However, there is little evidence that these classroom reforms were sustained. The evaluation identified a number of factors impeding sustainability; the most serious was teacher mobility. Given the diffuse distribution of QUIPS schools across the nation, and an in-service training program targeting teachers in these schools, there was insufficient support for teachers to carry on the new practices over the long run.

- The positive impact of effective head teachers on learning was clear in the Cohort V schools. Enhancing school leadership pays off by increasing school effectiveness. Further, the scaling up and spread of QUIPS influenced the practices of head teachers across districts observed by the study and revealed that QUIPS was successful in spreading good practices in non-QUIPS schools. However, better head teachers must have better material support if they are to do effective training in their schools on their own.

- High mobility of teachers and district personnel trained by QUIPS undermined the long-term effectiveness of in-service training for teachers.

- While QUIPS in-service training exposed teachers to a variety of specific child-centred instructional and classroom management strategies, few of these were observed in practice during the study. The teachers who

provided regular positive reinforcement and involved children actively in a friendly learning environment were seen most often in high-performing schools.

- The *relevance* in the learning context is supremely important. The study found out what pupils were and were not able to do showed that mathematics story problems using common experiences of children were completed at higher grade levels (even to a smaller extent, problems at the same grade level of the pupil) than basic mathematics operations.

- Teachers are encouraged to teach to the class level syllabus in spite of the fact that children are functioning two or more classes below class level. Even though teachers in QUIPS were encouraged to help students lagging behind and were exposed to continuous assessment, there was little evidence that these particular skills were perfected and are not being applied today.

- High teacher absenteeism continued to undermine pupil learning in spite of QUIPS interventions.

- The training provided by QUIPS for DEO personnel enhanced their capacity to operate more effectively in management, supervision, planning, and M and E including district officers in training activities for teachers and SMC/PTA executives gave them learning opportunities and modelled effective ways to operate. Many of the activities that the district officers undertook as part of the QUIPS experience were no longer being done because funds to support them were not forthcoming.

- Some districts reported increased capacity to access funds from other agencies as a result of their QUIPS experience, permitting them to spread good practices emanating from QUIPS to other schools. This created a realization that being proactive with well-grounded initiatives can increase a district’s ability to address locally identified needs.

- Since all districts were involved in the QUIPS experience, the impact of the programme on local management has the potential to influence delivery of primary education everywhere in Ghana. As decentralization moves more and more responsibility to the districts, this core of expertise will become better used.

- Under QUIPS, district support and attention to school demands and supervision was found to be a major contributor to a school’s success in teaching. However, the amount of district support provided to the QUIPS schools served to marginalize other schools in the district. Furthermore, after the QUIPS intervention ended, district supervision of the QUIPS schools deteriorated.

- Current USAID-funded school feeding programmes in areas where food security is an issue should be continued. A reassessment should be undertaken to ensure that coverage in fact addresses areas in need to ensure that children’s learning is not jeopardized by mal-

nutrition.

- Children's voices should be included in the design of programmes addressing educational reform since they are the beneficiaries.
- Future education reform activities should include modules for parents and communities on the importance of feeding to child learning. They should include activities to help parents prioritize spending to allow for support for their children's education.
- The stability of the community makes it a good centre for activities designed to foster involvement in school management.
- Investment in the SMCs/PTAs by government and its development partners should be continued through the District Assemblies as well as the GES. Integrated planning and budgeting in financially viable assemblies has funded and made use of DEO technical expertise to implement innovations in primary schools as well as the initiatives from SMCs/PTAs.
- The demonstrated effectiveness of strong head teachers points to this group as an ideal target for continued intervention to improve primary schools, though interventions that enhance the head teachers' capacity to deliver and support teacher training also must ensure adequate support for such activity.
- Infrastructure projects for rural schools should be continued as vehicles for improving community management capacity and teacher retention and for coping with increasing enrolment. Construction of classrooms, latrines, and teacher accommodation should remain an integral part of USAID education projects.
- As decentralization proceeds in Ghana the capacity of both District Assemblies and DEOs to manage change and finances will grow. This is an area that will become increasingly important in new education development programmes.
- Longitudinal measures of change in pupil achievement and targeted behavioural change in instruction, head teacher support, parent involvement, and community practices are critical to measuring learning outcomes and their source. The model of an integrated database that QUIPS provided is exceptional and is recommended for any school quality reform programme.
- Donors and other stakeholders need to influence systemic reforms by working with both the formal teacher training system and the Ghana National Association of Teachers. The latter has considerable influence over teachers and would be an ally for reform. If clear concerns of GNAT members, such as allowances, were negotiated at this level, disagreements about them could cease to be impeding factors. Donor projects need to consider allowances for personnel who are assigned activities that are beyond the scope of normal classroom and office practice.
- Both pre-service and in-service teacher training are critical to build a teaching force capable of meeting the

learning needs of Ghana's children. Project support must address both, and thought should be given to how to integrate the two in order to maximize use of resources.

- USAID requires implementing partners to measure and report results. At times the reporting requirements distract from the delivery of the technical assistance and training that is the focus of the project. The system of deliverables, data, and deadlines needs to be adjusted to allow for greater flexibility. The intent to measure results should also encourage implementers to seek opportunities to better serve clients, including being on-call for unforeseen requests for assistance and support.
- Similar programmes such as the QUIPS one should consider establishing community schools, which will take care of children who were not enrolled into the mainstream schools. To provide access for all children of school going age, an interface should be established between the formal schools and non-formal schools where children between the ages of eight and twelve years who are not enrolled in the formal sector are offered equivalent courses outside the conventional school environments to be able to do some basic reading and simple calculations through the use of the local language. These children could be moved into the mainstream after acquiring this basic knowledge.
- The research revealed that despite the interventions implemented by the QUIPS programme, teamwork was still lacking in most communities. It is therefore recommended strongly that partners of QUIPS and other stakeholders in education delivery who still operate in those communities should be encouraged to develop the attitude of teamwork in them. Teamwork is a viable approach to reaching higher levels especially in the teaching and learning peripheral where performance is measured by the holistic standard of the school and not the standards of the individual classrooms. So if some classes perform well and others perform below average, it will not raise the image of the school.
- Some stakeholders in education also do work in some of the communities that the QUIPS programme operated in yet there was no form of collaboration with them to know their areas of concentration. It was however, very necessary to have a realistic plan and vision together with a widespread of consultation, collaboration and participation of all stakeholders in education delivery in order to attain complete success in the partnership communities. It was also to avoid the duplication of implementing similar programmes in the same communities. The resources duplicated could have been used in other communities.
- It is also recommended that before a programme such as that of QUIPS to be implemented in any community, a more intensive baseline survey should be conducted in the community before the programme is implemented. The research revealed that communities had varying needs however the implementation strategy did not consider different strategies depending on com-

munity needs.

- Government should make a policy where teenage girls who get pregnant in the basic schools are allowed to return to school after delivery provided their husbands do not attend the same school.

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