

Performance of parent teacher associations of private and public basic schools: Implications for embracing inter-team learning in adult organizations in Agona Swedru Municipality

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to compare the performance of Parent-Teacher Associations (P.T.As) of private and public schools within the Agona Swedru Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana. The research design was a descriptive survey. The population of the study was P.T.A members, school heads, teachers, and parents. Purposive sampling was used to select 138 respondents (69 from private schools and 69 from public schools). It comprised 60 teachers, including P.T.A secretaries, 12 school heads, 60 parents, and 6 P.T.A Chairmen from 3 private and 3 public basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Frequency counts and independent t-test were used to analyze the data. Data collected and analyzed indicated that with a significant level of 0.05 and a degree of freedom of 136, a significant difference existed between P.T.As of private and public basic schools in areas such as financial resources at the disposal of P.T.As, performance of executives of the P.T.As, and teamwork or collaboration. It is recommended that areas of mutual interest among private and public institutions should be explored through inter-organizational learning so that both P.T.As of private and public basic schools can capitalize on the maximum output of their respective operations. The Ghana Education Service, and the Ghana National Association of Private Schools should audit P.T.A accounts to ensure financial accountability and sustainability of funds.

Key words: Parent-Teacher Association, Inter-team Learning, Adult Learning, Efficiency, Effectiveness

Introduction

In Ghana, Government policy on education allows the operation of both private and public schools at all levels of the educational system. This brings into focus the government's commitment to expanding the frontiers of education, seeing it as a potent tool for socio-economic development. Edet and Bocco (2007) conceptualize education as the power, yet known by man for its

improvement, and the most powerful instrument ever invented for scientific, economic, and social progress, and it should be delivered effectively. But Government is also of the conviction that the delivery of education should be the responsibility of both the teachers and parents. To this effect, the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) as a matter of policy, stipulates that both private and public schools should have in place Parent-Teacher Associations (P.T.As) to complement the efforts of the schools as friends and as

advisory bodies (Asare, 2005). Globally and historically, parent's involvement in schools is characterized by volunteers, mostly mothers assisting in the classroom supervising students and doing fund raising (National Education Association, 2008). PTA has been part of the Ghanaian education system since colonial time however, it was during the Dzobo Committee Reforms 1974 and the 1987 Education Reforms that it gained prominence. This involvement of parents in the management of schools was done through the creation and formation of the Parent Teacher Associations (P.T.As), School Management Committees (SMCs) and District Education Oversight Committees (DEOC) (Mankoe, 2004). As a voluntary and a welfare association of parents and teachers, P.T.As in both private and public basic schools aim at ensuring cooperation between parents and teachers. Parent Teacher Associations at both sides of the educational divide, incorporate into the minds of parents that they assume joint ownership of the schools.

Marsh (2002) also argues that it is advantageous for parents to be involved in the running of their schools as there is the chance that the schools will develop a strong sense of identity since what is taking place in the schools will be a reflection of the community at large. In other words, P.T.As serve as a veritable link between the home and the school for the moral upbringing of the child. According to Sofoluwe (2006), Parent-Teacher Associations have a crucial role to play in the process of improving the decision-making and information dissemination process of the school and the community. Mention can also be made of provision of infrastructure.

However, it would be misleading for anyone to think that all P.T.As will perform at an optimal level due to a combination of constraining factors which may include resources at their disposal, the performance of their executives, and team working strategies as individual organizations. This brings to the fore the need for inter-team learning among these organizations. A research finding by (Belfied & Levin, 2017) in Ghana unequivocally affirms the role and effects of P.T.As on student learning. However, research relating to varying degrees of performance between P.T.As in private and public schools is often overlooked or less researched. (Mankoe, 2004).

Theoretically, Bandura's Theory of Social Learning is applied to this research. The theory postulates that individuals learn behaviors (in this context, P.T.As learn how other P.T.A groups do things) by modeling and learning from others in their environment. The theory implies that learning would be laborious if people rely solely on their actions and experiences to inform them what to do (Marsh, 2002). Adults indeed, also learn observationally through emulation and from the experiences of others.

It is perceived that the activities of the Parent-Teacher Associations in private basic schools have yielded a higher dividend not only academically, but also in the area of fundraising in support of infrastructural developments than public basic schools (Afful-Broni, 2005). While Parent Teacher Associations of private schools are perceived to have ease in providing materials and labor for school buildings and teaching-learning materials such as textbooks

and teaching aids, their public counterparts are known to struggle with these commitments (Asare, 2005; Boateng, 2015). Reference to the work of Boateng (2015), the idea of fee-paying associated with private basic schools makes the level of patronage of activities of P.T.A seems high among teachers and parents for the progress of the children. But the question that immediately arises is: what could be the cause for the perceived low performance of public basic schools in which parents do not pay school fees and therefore are expected to commit much greater resources to P.T.A contribution and performance? Could public basic schools perform better in some areas of PTA performance? Is the perception that private basic schools perform more than public schools true?

Particularly significant and noteworthy is the notion that an institutions aligned to public ownership receives comparatively less patronage in terms of financial contributions and institutional development. These expositions articulated by Afful-Broni (2005), Mankoe (2004), and Asare (2005) could be significant conjectures accounting for the differences in the performance of private and public basic schools. However, Zinth (2005) observes that one key factor that spurs performance in all institutions, especially those manned by adults, is the knowledge level and experiences of the key players in those organizations. The knowledge and experience either resides in individual organizations or are external to the organizations and must be cultivated through inter-team learning. Inter-team learning in the context of this research is organizational learning that provides organizations with the opportunity to expand their performance and potentials. Regarding the proposition of inter-team or inter-organizational learning, what lessons can be learned by the P.T.As in public and private basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality in which according to Agona Swedru Municipality Report, 2019, there are huge disparities in their performances. It is against the background of the above arguments and postulations that the researcher investigates the performance of public and private schools, and the implications for embracing inter-team learning in the Agona Swedru Municipality of the Central Region in Ghana.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the Performance of P.T.As in private and public basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality.

Objectives

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To ascertain differences in financial resources allocation of P.T.As of private and public basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality;
2. To assess the performance of P.T.As in private and public basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality

3. Examine the extent of collaboration between P.T.As in private and public basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality.

provides a more accurate and meaningful picture of event and seek to explain peoples' behaviours and practices on the basis of data gathered (Phillips, 2006).

Research Questions

The following were the questions the research sought to address;

1. What is the difference in terms of financial resource allocation at the disposal P.T.As of private and public basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality?
2. What is the difference in terms of performance of P.T.As of both private and public basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality?
3. What is the difference in terms of collaboration between parents and teachers of both private and public basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality?

Significance of the study

The findings of the study would influence the government of Ghana policy on the establishment of PTAs in that, it would unearth the problems militating against the performance of Parent-Teacher Associations (P.T.As) and set forth what can be done to make such a vital body function properly. Again, the results of the research would assist the government in better empowering Parent-Teacher Associations through training to be more than fundraising bodies in the various schools in Ghana. Further, the results would reveal to school heads in Agona Swedru Municipality and other municipalities, practical and sensitive steps to put in place for them to benefit fully from the activities of P.T.As. Regarding parents and teachers, it would strengthen the teamwork and co-operation that ought to exist between them for the effective performance of their schools.

Delimitation and Limitation

The researcher restricted the study to Agona Swedru Municipality in the Central Region. Even though the researcher encountered some problems in the initial stages in obtaining responses to the questionnaire from respondents, however, the researcher took turn to allay their fears of being reprimanded by explaining the objectives of the study to them, that indeed the research was solely for academic purposes.

Methodology

Research Design

The survey design was considered most appropriate for the study because the researcher dealt with occurrences and conditions of a particular phenomenon (performance of private and public basic school P.T.As). The survey design was also considered appropriate in that the investigation dealt with a relatively large population, and there was the establishment of the differences that exist in the performance of private and public basic schools. This design

Population

The population of the study consisted of heads of basic schools, classroom teachers, including P.T.As secretaries, parents, and P.T.A chairmen in public and private basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality. The estimated population was 1000.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size in this study was 138, comprising 12 headteachers, 60 teachers, including P.T.A secretaries, 60 parents, and 6 P.T.A chairmen. Sixty-nine respondents each were taken from public schools and private schools, respectively. The sample size was deemed adequate based Seidu's (2006) recommendation that a sample size of 10% to 30% of a population is representative in quantitative study. The Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the participants. First, the purposive sampling technique was employed to select the school heads in private and public basic schools that had varying performances. According to Seidu (2006), in purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the judgment of the respondents in terms of the typicality of the cases. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs. Second, stratified simple random sampling was used to select 5 teachers from each of the 12 schools while convenient sampling was used to select 60 parents and 6 P.T.A chairmen.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study consisted of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire items were close-ended and embodied multiple-choice questions. The Likert-type scale of questioning format was adopted. The Likert –type scale questionnaire was considered preferable because it consists of a set of response categories constructed around a continuum of strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree and strongly agree, to which a selected sample were asked to respond (Phillips, 2006)).The questionnaire was divided into three sections in due reference to the three research questions which dealt with differences in resource allocation, the performance of executives, and collaboration, respectively, between private and public basic schools.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was scrutinized by colleague researchers in meeting the condition of content validity and were pre-tested on a group of heads, teachers, parents, and students in selected schools in Effutu Municipality in the Central Region as a means of establishing the reliability. Based on the pre-test which yielded an Alpha Cronbach coefficient score of 0.7, some of the question items were restructured.

Method of data analysis

The data were edited; questions were serially numbered, and analyzed one after the other. Simple frequency counts, t-test, mean and standard deviation were used to analyze responses from the research questions.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What is the difference in terms of financial resource allocation at the disposal of P.T.As in private and public basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality?

Research Question one sought to determine the differences relating to the allocation of financial resources at the disposal of public and private basic school P.T.As in the Agona Swedru Municipality.

Table 1: Allocation of Financial Resources

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	T-values	t-values	P values
Public schools	69	1.50	.507	17.748		.000
-0.301						
Private schools	69	1.47	.506	17.447		.000

*P<0.05 Source: Field Data, 2020

With regards to whether the financial resources of P.T.As are adequately and efficiently allocated, public basic schools (M=1.50, SD=.507) had a significantly better financial resource allocation than private basic schools (M=1.47, SD+.506). The difference here could stem from the fact that public basic schools are constantly scrutinized by audit personnel from G.E.S, hence, allocation of financial resources was done according to laid down procedures, compared to private ownership where most financial allocations were at the discretion of proprietors. A t-value of $t(136) = -0.301, p < 0.05$ indicates that a statistically significant difference existed between private and public basic schools on the issue of allocation of financial resources. This finding is very significant especially in terms of the historical antecedents of P.T.As. Zinth (2005) narrates that in the past, parental involvement in schools was characterized by volunteers, mostly mothers assisting in classrooms, and old students giving moral support to students who saw them as role models. At that time there was no fundraising. Today, this old model has been

replaced with a much more inclusive approach to the effect that mothers and fathers, step-parents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives, caregivers, business leaders, and community groups – all participate in goal-oriented activities linked to student achievement and school success. Key among these goal-oriented activities is the allocation of financial resources mainly achieved through fundraising.

Now, in light of the findings that public basic schools outperformed their private counterparts, what are the implications for inter-organizational or team learning, especially for private schools that are behind in this respect? How can private school P.T.As learn from the G.E.S and their public school counterparts regarding the constant accounting of their financial books? Indeed, the inter-team learning approach among public and private schools, when implemented, would be a useful lesson for private schools to learn from the experiences of their public counterparts in the Agona Swedru Municipality. This is the basis of social learning among adults as exposed in the Social Learning Theory.

Table 2: Financial Contributions and School Development

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	T-values	t-values	P values
Public schools	69	1.89	.854	13.263		.000
2.214						
Private schools	69	1.94	.754	15.477		.000

*p<0.05 Source: Field data, 2020

Table 2 indicates that on the average, private basic schools (M = 1.94, SD = .854) were significantly better in terms of financial contribution and school development than public basic schools (M = 1.89, SD = .754). The t-value of $t(136) = 2.214, p < 0.05$ shows that there was a significant difference between private basic schools and public basic schools in the area of financial contribution and optimal school development. One reason for this difference could be that most parents whose wards were in private basic schools were mostly those from relatively rich socio-economic backgrounds as opined by Boateng (2015). But low socio-economic background should not serve as the only

hindering factors for public basic schools not performing to expectation. Inter-term learning should be considered if the possibility exists. Epstein and Salinas (2016) observe that one of the reasons many organizations fail is their inability to learn from others.

It can hardly be denied that financial contribution and school development constitute a broad range of community-school engagement. In line with this proposition, Epstein and Salinas (2016), in research at the John Hopkins University conceptualized financial resources contribution and school development as fundraising, parenting, creating communication lines between parents and schools, helping

children learn at home, parental involvement in school decision-making and volunteering in school projects by parents. If as per the data in Table 2, public basic schools also factor in these variables that were the object of research at the John Hopkins University, then it means that so much learning is needed by public schools to catch up in terms of their performance. This assertion is tied in with the argument of Reynold and Clements (2005), who note that the capacity of organizations such as P.T.As to undertake successful transformation is linked very much to their ability to cope with or initiate inter-team learning and change. Implicitly, cross-functional organizational or inter-

institutional learning is needed among the public basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality. Inter-institutional learning finds expression in the Social Learning Theory.

Research question 2: What is the difference in terms of performance of executives between P.T.As of private and public basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality?

This research question sought to find out if there was any difference in terms of performance of the executives of P.T.As of public and private basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality.

Table 3: Efficient Functioning of P.T.A executives in activities of the schools

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	T-values	t-values	P values
Public schools	69	1.22	3.12	16.855		.000
0.000						
Private schools	69	1.39	.494	16.855		.000

*P<0.05 Source; Field Data, 2020

It is seen from Table 3 that public basic schools (M=1.22, SD=3.12) had their executives functioning efficiently better than private basic schools (M=1.39, SD=.494). A t-value of t (136) =0.00 p<0.05 indicates that a statistically significant difference existed between private and public basic schools

in terms of their executives in the activities of the schools. What this implies is that executives of P.T.As of public basic schools were actively better involved in the efficient use of resources than privates basic schools.

Table 4: Effectiveness of P.T.A Executives in their duties to the school

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	T-values	t-values	P values
Public schools	69	2.47	1.230	12.057		.000
0.895						
Private schools	69	2.64	1.222	12.952		.000

*p<0.05 Source: Field Data, 2020

With regards to the level of effectiveness of their respective P.T.A executives, private basic schools (M=2.64, SD=1.22) were significantly more effective than public basic schools (M=2.47, SD=1.23). A t-value t (136) =0.895, p<0.05 indicates that there was a statistical difference between private basic schools and public basic schools concerning the level of effectiveness of their respective executives.

by “homegrown” solutions in their respective organizations, but by “looking beyond the wall” and learning how others are succeeding. This implies inter-team learning. Indeed, Education Testing Service (2007) observes that organizations such as P.T.As need to acknowledge that the work of the executives is not just about implementing projects, or organizing special events; it also requires shifting at times from inward thinking and having an outward approach to learning from others as social groups.

The profile of the data in Tables 4 and 5 centers on two important variables: efficient functioning of the executives and effectiveness of the executives. Effectiveness means achieving the desired results. Efficiency means the judicious use of resources. In the former, the public basic schools outmatched the private ones, while in the latter; the private schools surpassed the public schools. What is significant regarding these findings is that they relate to the performances of the executives of both organizations. While it is true that the journey, mission statement, and vision of each group (private school and public school P.T.As) are different, and for either one, challenges at the executive level may vary, however, their followers and the larger society look forward to them as senior managers and key stakeholders who must show visible commitment, confront their challenges and strive for excellence (working effectively and efficiently). These can be achieved not only

Research question 3: What is the difference in terms of collaboration that exists between parents and teachers in private and public basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality?

Research Question three sought to examine the difference in terms of collaboration between parents and teachers in private and public basic schools.

Table 5: Collaboration between parents and teachers

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	T-values	t-values	P values
Public schools	69	1.31	.467	16.733		.000
11.009						
Private schools	69	3.03	.654	27.776		.000

*P<0.05 Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 5 presents data on the difference in the collaboration that exists between parents and teachers in private and public schools P.T.As. Reference to whether P.T.As encourages collaboration between parents and teachers, private basic schools had better (M=3.03, SD=.654) collaboration existing between parents and teachers compared to public basic schools (M=1.31, SD=.467). The t-value of $t(136) = 11.009$, $P < 0.05$ shows that a statistically significant difference existed between private and public

basic schools regarding collaboration between parents and teachers. The extent of collaboration in private schools looks better than public basic schools probably because, educating a child is more expensive in private schools compared to public schools. Boateng (2015) argues that parents of private schools who pay school fees are more concerned about having a good relationship with teachers to keep track of their children's or wards' performance.

Table 6: P.T.As encourage parents and teachers to have a sense of ownership of the school

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	T-values	t-values	P values
Public schools	69	1.31	.467	16.767		.000
11.009						
Private schools	69	3.03	.654	27.776		.000

*P<0.05 Source: Field Data, 2020

Table 6 presents data as to whether the P.T.A encourages parents and teachers to have a sense of ownership of the schools. The results indicate that private basic schools (M = 3.03, SD=.654) on average were better than public basic schools (M=1.31, SD=.467). A t-value of $t(136) = 11.009$, $p < 0.05$ indicates that a statistically significant difference existed between private basic schools and public basic

schools relating to the P.T.A as a forum to instill a sense of ownership of the school in parents and teachers. The difference here could stem from the idea that public schools are communal assets, therefore, parents tend to have the notion that these schools belong to them or they are joint owners, compared to private schools which are most often than not private entities owned by private individuals.

Table 7: Parents assisting with monitoring learners' activities at home

Respondents	N	Mean	SD	T-values	t-values	P values
Public schools	69	1.69	.624	16.286		.000
6.903						
Private schools	69	1.08	.280	23.189		.000

*P<0.05 Source: Field Data, 2020

The results in Table 7 show that public schools (M=1.69, SD=.624) on average had significantly higher scores regarding monitoring of learners' activities at home than private basic schools (M=1.08, SD=.280). A t-value of $t(136) = 6.903$, $p < 0.05$ shows there was a statistical difference between private basic schools and public basic schools regarding parents complementing the efforts of teachers by assisting learners at home.

Analytically, the results in Tables 5-7 dwell on collaborative relationships, joint ownership of the schools, and lending assistance to students at home. These three variables are interrelated. In Africa, there is an adage that it takes a whole village to raise a child. This implies that the African child and the school he attends are jointly owned by parents and school authorities. The whole community according to the National Education Association (2008) has an essential role to play in the development of its young people, and the joint ownership of the school correlates with higher academic learning because parents are involved with

learners' learning at home. The edge private schools have over their public school counterparts regarding joint ownership and the high scores of public schools relating to monitoring learners' activities at home are all issues of collaboration that require sharing of ideas. Rationally, if school authorities and parents conceive one another as teams in both public and private basic schools in the Agona Swedru Municipality, then they should imbibe the realization that the success of outstanding teams is a measure of their capacity to learn from each other's experiences and develop innovative plans to meet the challenges they face.

This argument is typical of the observation made by Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, and Davies (2007) who referred to the Japanese proverb that none of us is as smart as all of us. Implicit in this proverb is the elements of inter-team and intra-team cooperation and learning. This concept should be deeply ingrained in the attitudes of both public and private basic schools' P.T.As in the Agona Swedru Municipality. Arguably, what happens before and after

school is as important as what happens during school. Particularly relating to inter-team learning, this will center on forming consultative committees between the two sets of P.T.As and strengthening inter-organizational relationships.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, some conclusions can be made: First, contrary to the perceptions that private schools outperformed public schools in the operations of the P.T.As, the study revealed that in some cases such as financial resource allocation, efficient functioning of executives, and monitoring learners' activities at home, public basic school P.T.As performed better. These are areas in which private schools' P.T.As can learn from their public counterparts by doing serious soul-searching relating to unleashing the true potentials of their members. Also revealed in the findings is the comparatively higher points scored by private school P.T.As. These included the effectiveness of P.T.A. executives, encouraging parents and teachers to have a sense of ownership of the schools, and encouraging collaboration between parents and teachers. These findings should arouse the commitment of private school P.T.As to learning from public school P.T.As. The knowledge to be gained by each set of P.T.As from each other is fundamental to their respective survival and successes.

Recommendations

1. The results showed that in terms of monitoring, efficiency in performance and better financial resource allocation, public basic schools performed better than private schools. It is therefore recommended that the Agona Swedru Municipality Education Directorate should institute a reward system for high-performing private schools P.T.As executives in the Municipality as a form of motivation for other private schools to emulate. This award scheme can be funded by the Agona Swedru Municipal Assembly.
2. It was shown in the results that in matters of financial contribution and school development, collaboration between parents and teachers, and the sense of joint ownership of schools by parents and teachers, private schools performed better than public schools. It is therefore recommended that the Ghana Education Service conduct a sensitization workshop for public basic schools to emphasize more the value placed on education by the public, and the value of home-school collaboration in terms of public ownership of schools.

Based on the results and conclusions that collaboration and joint sense of ownership was a key issue, the following are also recommended:

- a. The executive members of the P.T.As of private and public basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality should establish inter-

organizational learning networks in which their executives will collaborate and circulate discovery of ideas either by newsletters, emails, or other monitoring processes.

- b. The executives of the P.T.As of public and private basic schools in Agona Swedru Municipality should establish joint reflective practice consultative meetings or forums in order to examine their respective performances and to obtain innovative knowledge from each other.
- c. The Agona Swedru Municipal Education Directorate should hold a sensitization workshop or inter-team learning for all P.T.As in both public and private basic schools and help them initiate an association to be called Agona Swedru P.T.A Association.
- d. Since all P.T.As members in basic schools may not be trained teachers, with the knowledge of reflective practice regarding feedback of their performances, the Agona Swedru Municipal Education Directorate should enlist the assistance of the University of Education, Winneba to organize a workshop on reflective practice for P.T.As executives in the Municipality.

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