

Spring 2014

An Appraisal of Quality Basic Education in Ashanti Farming Communities of Ghana

Sophia Larsen
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School for International Training
Study Abroad- Ghana
[Social Transformation and Cultural Expression]

Spring 2014

An Appraisal of Quality Basic Education in Ashanti Farming Communities of
Ghana

Sophia Larsen
(Whitman College)

Project Advisor: Prof. Nathan Dampney
Institute of African Studies
University of Ghana, Legon

Academic Director: Dr. Olayemi Tinuoye

Abstract

- Title:** An Appraisal of Quality Basic Education Ashanti Farming Communities in Ghana
Author: Sophia Larsen (larsensp@whitman.edu; Whitman College)
Objective: The objective of this project was four-fold:
- i. To identify factors that prevent children from completing their basic education and continuing to secondary school
 - ii. To evaluate governmental responsiveness to the needs of the educators and students
 - iii. To examine relations between the community and the school
 - iv. To essay the quality of basic education in light of community (mal)development

Methodology: I lived in two Ashanti farming villages, Senchi and Okaikrom, for a total of eight days with four additional day trips. I also commuted to two other rural communities in the Sekyere East district. In these villages I conducted a total of 28 formal interviews of three headmasters, four primary teachers, 10 JHS teachers, nine JHS students, and two nurses. Within the schools I conducted a few group interviews and polls to gain quantitative data about student interest and education aspiration. I visited the regional and district offices of education where I spoke with five administration officials within various sectors. These professional meetings helped me gather concrete information about the interworking of Ghana's public education system. To gain perspective on conditions and attitudes in farming communities, I traveled throughout these villages and informally discussed student attendance and academic performance with students and parents alike. All interviews with teachers, education administrators, and nurses were conducted in English, while the interviews with students and community members were supervised and translated by local teachers. Pre-determined inquiries were set for every interview, but I allowed for flexibility and asked follow-up questions to particular answers I found deserved further investigation.

Findings: The quantitative and qualitative data collected indicates that within farming communities, students in public basic schools are not pursuing higher education. Although parents and community members declare the importance of education for their children, many students are left unfunded and unsupervised to make their own value judgments about school. Truancy and drop-out rates are high, particularly among Form 3 JHS students who report financial problems and disinterest as the main causes for their absence. Schools lack adequate funding, resources, and learning materials to provide students with the quality basic education promised by national policy. Those who do have access higher education emigrate out of these rural communities, leaving the villages with the persisting problem of limited opportunities and no role models for students to emulate.

Conclusion: The intended goals of Ghana's public education system are not being realized in Ashanti farming communities. Students and parents proclaim that education is important for a successful life, but their prevailing behaviors and interactions with the school suggest otherwise. The root of the problem cannot be isolated to one factor; low socio-economic conditions, government unresponsiveness, and incompatible community norms are all interconnected causes that deny children access to a quality education. From policy-makers to student peers, responsibility lies on all parties to promote and ensure an environment suitable for learning and growth.

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Introduction

Basic education, considered as the minimum period of schooling needed for every child to acquire fundamental literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills, is critical for the development of a child. It provides opportunity for children to build the foundation for lifelong learning and knowledge-based economic and social development. Access to a quality basic education is therefore imperative for creating future generations capable of tackling challenges the world faces today and presents tomorrow. Ghana recognizes the importance of basic education and has made great strides over the past few decades to ensure every child receives a good basic education. In 1996, the government of Ghana launched the Free Compulsory Basic Education program (FCUBE) aimed to provide free and compulsory basic education to every school-aged child, as its name suggests. The main objectives of the FCUBE are “to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, improve the efficiency in the management of the education sector, and provide full access to educational services by empowering all partners to participate in the provision of education to all children” (UNICEF, 2007). Along with other government and local initiatives, Ghana is working to achieve this goal of universal primary education by 2015.

But herein lies the problem- efforts put into basic education do not extend to retention of students. Issues of student disengagement, poor academic performance, truancy, and staggering drop-out rates are endemic in farming villages. These problems are compounded by the harsh realities of poverty, isolation, and limited opportunity that characterize these communities. Although Ghana’s national education policy declares equal treatment of all public schools, primary and JHS schools in these communities are neglected and lack the proper funding, resources, and learning materials to fulfill the mission of the FCUBE program. This is by no

means to say rural farming communities are inherently helpless, mal-developed, or deprived; in fact, they are full of intelligent, hard-working people who lack access to educational opportunity.

The purpose of this study is to shed light on challenges to the realization of free and compulsory basic education within Ashanti farming communities. Because of the direct and interdependent relationship between the government and public schools, I chose to focus my research on public, rather than private, education to assess governmental responsiveness to the needs of students in rural villages. I seek to discover the root causes of a stunted education and identify any discrepancies between ideology and execution within Ghana's education system.

Literature Review

Because I was unable to interview any education administrators at the national level, I accessed the official website of the Ministry of Education to gain information about the mission, functions, and responsibilities of this government sector. Supplementing interviews with teachers, I read pertinent sections of the GNAT *Conditions and Scheme of Service* to understand the official roles and expectations of teachers. I also read a working paper that analyzed the feasibility of the government-initiated Free Compulsory Basic Education for children by 2015. Additionally, I read an online journal that contextualized the challenges to quality education existing in developing countries. These critiques helped shape my approach to researching the same issue within Ashanti farming communities. To gain a basic understanding of Ghana's education system, I read a few online articles that traced the history and outlined the structure of public basic schools. More specifically, I scanned government-issued textbooks to identify the pertinent and irrelevant content coexisting in the national curriculum.

Methodology

My initial research centered on special education for students with mental disabilities in Kumasi. I sought to examine the vocational skills taught at some of these special needs school and assess their ability to prepare students for future careers. However, a number of factors prompted me to transfer my focus to education within farming communities in the Ashanti Region. I spent the better part of Sunday April 13th conferring with my advisor Prof. Nathan Dampsey, Papa Attah, and Yemi to make the appropriate adjustments so that on Monday I began my research in the field. My modified topic now looked at the state of basic education in rural farming villages as seen through the eyes of education administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members. I sought to identify and assess cultural, economic, political, and personal reasons for the persisting high drop-out and truancy rates among JHS students and observe the implications of a stunted education.

To achieve this holistic study of basic education and the challenges it faces in Ashanti farming communities, I divided my time between Kumasi, Effiduase and four Ashanti villages within the Sekyere East District. My study centered on this particular Ashanti district because I had previous contacts and rapport established in two of its villages. In Kumasi and Effiduase, I interviewed administrative officials at their respective regional and district offices of education and gathered hard facts about bureaucratic policy, funding, division of administrative responsibility, and the intended functions of basic education. In Okaikrom, Senchi, Ntumkumso, and Asukoko, I interviewed parents, teachers, headmasters, and students to essay the various perspectives on the local primary and JHS schools' ability to meet the needs of the community and vice versa. During these interviews I also observed the varying attitudes towards education and its perceived importance, or lack thereof, to each informant. Apart from data collection

through interviews, I wanted to fully immerse myself in village life and therefore stayed in Senchi and Okaikrom for a total of eight days with an additional four full-day visits. This extended time spent living among locals in the villages allowed me to experience the culture, hardships, and life described by my informants.

In this study I conducted three types of interviews. The first was formal one-on-one interviews with teachers, headmasters, nurses, administrative officials, and students. With the students, I always had a teacher present for translation and supervision purposes. All of these interviews were pre-arranged and conducted in a formal setting (school, clinic, or office) with a memorized list of questions that guided each interview. At the Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom I formally interviewed two KG teachers, two Primary 3 teachers, and conducted a group survey of one of the Primary 3 classes. After these interviews I realized issues of truancy, disinterest, and dropping out rarely occur at the primary level and thus focused the rest of my research on students at the JHS level. At the Okaikrom D/A JHS I interviewed the headmaster, four teachers, and five JHS students. In Senchi I interviewed the headmaster, three teachers, and four students at the Senchi D/A JHS. I also took a group survey of the 45 JHS students present on that particular day. At the Asukoko D/A JHS I interviewed the headmaster (headmaster of both the Asukoko Primary and JHS schools), two teachers, and conducted a group interview with eight Form 3 students. Finally, I spent a day at the Ntumkumso D/A JHS where I interviewed one teacher and conducted a group interview with six Form 3 students. I also visited the Efuduasi District Office of Education where I formally interviewed the District Director, Guidance and Counseling Coordinator, and Community Participation-Welfare Officer. At the Kumasi Regional Office of Education I interviewed the Public Relations Officer and the Regional Planning and

Budget Officer. Lastly I formally interviewed two nurses about teenage pregnancy at the Okaikrom Health Clinic.

The second type of interview I employed was informal interviews with JHS students and their family members. I was assisted by three local JHS teachers to help me identify the homes of truant, struggling, or drop-out students and translate my informal interviews with them and their families. These type of joint interviews were unstructured such that I had certain points I wanted to cover, but left the majority of the interview open to following up on answers that deserved greater enquiry. These informal interviews allowed me to observe the tensions between parent and child in the comfort of their homes and contextualize the information provided. I also informally interviewed a few students individually if no family member was present (usually they were at the farm). In Okaikrom, I informally interviewed four students, three of which were accompanied by a parental figure and in Senchi I met with eight students, six of which were with a family member. Lastly, I questioned two students and one parent in Nkumtumso. This amounts to a total of 24 informal interviews of JHS students and their family members.

The third type of interview I conducted was group interviews and surveys. I used the group surveys to collect quantitative data about students' academic interest and its relationship to their desired career path. At the Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom I conducted a group survey of one of the Primary 3 classes and at Senchi D/A JHS I conducted a poll among 45 JHS students. I utilized group interviews with two sets of Form 3 JHS students to gain a greater understanding of why Form 3 students tend to lose interest in school and become truant. The group interview setting created an open forum for students to contribute and build off each other's answers to this multifaceted question.

Because of the national Easter vacation commencement on April 17th, I was only able to spend a few days in the classroom. I did not have enough time to ascertain school attendance records or observe normal classroom activities because the teaching staff was busy administering mock BECE exams to their JHS students. However, this seemingly unfortunate circumstance shed light on the large portion of students who did not take all eight sections of the exams. This discovery prompted further investigation that became the core of my research. My participation observation therefore took place mostly outside the classroom where I lived among the locals and experienced the toils, hardships, joys, and culture of a farming lifestyle.

Difficulties I encountered during my study involved inaccurate and dishonest information provided by some students and their family members. Many students and their families felt embarrassed and intimidated by my foreigner status and therefore spoke positively of education to avoid my anticipated disapproval. This social acceptability bias had the potential to skew my data, but I tried to mitigate it by assuring respondents of my neutral position and insisting on the importance of their honest opinions to my research. Sometimes I reworded or repeated questions when informants provided answers that were restrained or contradicted previous reports. There was also potential for reporting error due to the additional presence of a local educator during interviews. Because the language barrier necessitated a translator and my topic required knowledge of student profiles, I employed local teachers to help identify and converse with troubled students and their parental figures. However, these teachers deal directly with the interviewed students, which may have prompted students to abstain from speaking negatively, yet honestly, about the quality of their basic education. To eliminate this “Us vs. Them” dichotomy, I was active in the village and made great efforts to be approachable and friendly with the local students, parents, and community members.

Division of Responsibility within the Public Education system

Administration at all levels of Ghana's public education system seeks to promote quality and accessible education. Each level plays an instrumental part in fulfilling this mission by following specific protocol, and sometimes interpreting policy, when executing their administrative powers.

Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is a government ministry that is responsible for the governance and management of Ghana's education system. Within the MOE is the Ghana Education Services (GES) that institutes national curriculum. The government of Ghana is solely responsible for funding the FCUBE using the Capitation Grant and other channels. The Ministry therefore holds the national education budget and distributes textbooks, teaching learning materials (TLM), and money to the districts. It is also tasked with providing and improving infrastructural facilities. Ministry officials meet with various national leaders to discuss how to make education more relevant to national goals (Ministry of Education, *About MOE*).

Regional Office of Education

The Ashanti's Regional Office of Education is located in Kumasi and oversees all public schools within its 27 governing districts. The role of this office is not to create, but rather to implement, nationally mandated policy. For instance, regional offices are responsible for running and attending government-funded workshops for teachers and headmasters (Nana Otuo-Acheampong, Formal interview, 23 APR 14). Administrators at this bureaucratic level act as liaisons between the Ministry and the Ashanti districts by compiling data reported by the districts, sending it to Accra, and executing the government's new or altered stipulations among its districts. Theoretically, any change to national education policy is a constructive response to

the grievances expressed by the districts through the regional office. According to Kumasi's Public Relations Officer Cassandra Twum, every school within every district within every region abides by the same regulations and codes of ethics. With respect to funding, learning materials, and extracurricular programs, allocations are proportionally based on school enrollment. The Regional Office is responsible for collecting each district's absentee, transfer, and school enrollment statistics at all levels of public basic education (primary, JHS, special, vocational). Currently there are 83,859 registered candidates for the BECE (Cassandra Twum, Formal interview, 28 APR 14). This means there are 83,859 Form 3 students on the precipice of continued higher education or entrance into the work force. Every term this data is put together with reports from the teaching staff and headmaster and sent to be analyzed by the MOE.

District Office of Education

Sekyere East's District Office of Education is located in its district capital, Effiduase, and oversees over 90 JHS and primary schools. District office responsibilities are similar to those of the regional office. Its function is also to implement government policy, but directly to the schools. However, because the district is the schools' most immediate governing contact, it has more influence in day-to-day school activity. The district director has a list of objectives and can effect local initiatives and informal policies to accomplish his or her vision for the district. For example, the previous District Director of Education in Effiduase pushed the concept of mass promotion within the schools because she believed students who have to repeat a grade are more likely to become discouraged and drop out (Isaac Otoo, Formal interview, 23 APR 14). The district director also has sway over the extent to which government policy is applied in the district. For instance, the previous director heavily enforced the national abolishment of corporal punishment within the schools. The newly appointed district director, Nana Otuo-Acheampong,

aims to ensure literacy and numeracy of every school-aged child. District directors meet with national leaders, regional directors, headmasters, teachers, and community members alike to address problems and discuss solutions.

The district offices of education also employ a Guidance & Counseling and Community Participation-Welfare Coordinator. These positions share the task of frequenting schools to interact with and assess the needs of the teachers, students, and community members. The Guidance & Counseling Coordinator is specifically concerned with the well-being of students while the Community Participation-Welfare Coordinator focuses on school-community relations. However, transportation expenses and the sheer amount of schools within the district limit the impact two district coordinators can make.

Headmaster

The headmaster is “in charge of the school” (Akuuamoah Boateng, Formal interview, 20 APR 14). He or she is responsible for overseeing student attendance, teacher welfare and performance, and the school’s finances. Headmasters at every primary and JHS school are required to prepare a School Performance Improvement Plan (SPIP) at the beginning of each term. This fiscal plan includes budgeting for quality control (in-service training), maintenance (repairing doors, locks, benches, etc.), school promotion (drums, banners, etc.), management, and community contribution (construction of new facilities). The SPIP must also include allocation of Capitation Grant funds and government-provided teaching learning materials (TLM). This proposed plan is sent to the budget officer at the district office for approval. Once it has been approved, money is directly transferred from the Ministry of Education to the district and put into the school’s account wherefrom the headmaster withdraws and distributes funds (supposedly) according to the plan (Eric Adom Marfo, Formal interview, 28 APR 14). This

budget should cover all expenses and relieve the headmaster of any personal financial investment. The headmaster is also expected to periodically meet with the district director to discuss school-related issues and strategies to solutions (Mawunyo Kwesikuma, Formal interview, 14 APR 14). There is also a grey area of authoritative responsibility in reporting student behavioral problems. According Akuuamoah Boateng, the headmaster at Senchi D/A JHS, over-reporting of problems within the school indicates headmaster incompetence to the district and should generally be avoided (Akuuamoah Boateng, Formal interview, 20 APR 14).

Teaching Staff

Public school teachers are posted to their location by the government through their National Service Requirement or teacher training and vocational schools. These teachers are responsible for teaching students the national curriculum and preparing them for the correlating exit exams. Apart from academics, teachers are responsible for non-corporal punishment within the classroom, being present at the school from the first class at 8:00am to closing at 2:30pm, and administrating termly PTA meetings. These PTA meetings act as a forum in which the teaching staff and parents collectively discuss absenteeism, fees, student academic performance, discipline for misbehavior, and any other school-related issues (Collins Oppong, Formal interview, 16 APR 14). No teacher should have to pay for any school-related materials. It is not stipulated by the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) that teachers involve themselves in the extracurricular lives of students. Instead, GNAT instructs teachers to “tutor only in accordance with officially approved policies” and “make discreet use of available information about the students” and “inform appropriate individuals and agencies of the student’s education needs and assist in providing an understanding of his education experiences” (GNAT *Conditions and Scheme of Service*, Principle I). Teachers are not mandated to provide

after-school tutoring for kids or visit the homes of truant, struggling, or drop-out students. With regards to community involvement, teachers should “evaluate through appropriate professional procedures conditions within a district or institution of learning, make known serious deficiencies, and take any remedial action deemed necessary and proper” (GNAT *Conditions and Scheme of Service*, Principle II). These general principles as outlined in the GNAT constitution are overarching objective and are rather vague and leave much room for interpretation. It is up to the individual teacher to interpret these codes of ethics and expand upon them if desired.

Reality of Government Funding within the School

Government funding is key to the success and vitality of a school, especially those schools in poor communities that cannot rely on community investment to compensate for government failure. The public education system is charged with providing the basic materials necessary for the acquisition of knowledge and students are responsible for retaining and applying this knowledge. Unfortunately, not all educational sectors fulfill their duties, leaving students without adequate resources to further their education.

Capitation Grant

Until 2004, schools were responsible for financing school sports and culture programs and called upon parents to pay the fees. Economic hardship prevented many families from doing so and consequently children could not afford to go to school. The government responded to this problem by abolishing mandatory fees at the lower education level and introducing the government-funded Capitation Grant. This grant initially endowed each school with 3 GH cedi per student every term to cover the various finances within the school. In 2012 the rate was increased to 4.5 GH cedi per child to reflect inflation rates. Because the Capitation Grant is based on school enrollment, schools rely on student attendance for adequate government funding (Eric Adom Marfo, Formal interview, 28 APR 14).

The Capitation Grant consistently arrived every term up through the 2012-2013 academic year, but this year no public schools in Ghana have received any money from the government. When asked the reason for this absence, no interviewed teacher, headmaster, or education administrator could produce an informed answer. Even the Regional Planning & Budget Officer Eric Adom Marfo did not know why the grant has not come. When Marfo questioned officials at the Ministry of Education in Accra about the status of the grant, they reportedly lied and told him

the money had already been transferred to the districts. Other national authorities have told him schools should be receiving their Capitation Grant before the reopening of schools in May, but to-date (9 MAY 14) not a single peswa has arrived. All informants debriefed on this subject assumed the cause to be limited government funding due to the current economic crisis.

Teaching Learning Materials

According to regional and district education administrators, the government consistently provides sufficient teaching learning materials for the local schools. Chalk and exercise books are to be supplied each term and last until the next installment. Primary students should receive approximately 6-8 exercise books to cover their six subjects. Although JHS students take only eight subjects, they are to receive 14-15 books to accommodate for their rigorous course load and intensive note-taking extensive lessons. According to Sekyere East's District Director of Education, Nana Otuo-Acheampong, there is no shortage of these TLM. He says, "The money is there. If there is a problem, I have not heard of it. The schools have not reported it" (Nana Otuo-Acheampong, Formal interview, 29 APR 14). However, teachers and headmasters at the Asukoko, Senchi, and Okaikrom D/A JHS and primary schools complained of such a shortage. Bajaba Abdul-Mumin, a Mathematics teacher at Senchi D/A JHS, said that chalk has not come this entire academic year. Headmaster Akuuamoah Boateng responded by paying out of pocket to replenish the chalk supply. Additionally, only 5-6 exercise books were given to each JHS student at the beginning of the year, but none have come the subsequent terms. English teacher Maxwell Boachie at Okaikrom D/A JHS reported that only 2-3 exercise books per student and one box of chalk were supplied last term and no chalk or exercise books this term. Primary 3 teacher Faustina Dufie gave a similar account of TLM at Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom. At Asukoko D/A JHS, headmaster Asamoeh Amaniampong lamented that teachers

do not have chalk and so improvised by borrowing chalk from the local police station. These conflicting testimonies indicate the poor communication between the schools and district office and its harmful effect on student access to a quality education.

The district office and schools are in relative agreement about the status of textbooks. The Ministry of Education declares every child should have a textbook for each subject (*About MOE*, moe.gov). Abdul-Mumin, Boachie, and Dufie report sufficient numbers of Science, English, and Mathematics textbooks at their respective Basics schools, but the same cannot be said for the other subjects. Because textbooks are the property of the school, educators have the authority to prevent students from taking their books home. This is true at Senchi D/A JHS where previous students were allowed to keep textbooks, but because the books were frequently spoiled or lost, the teaching staff decided to confine them to the classroom (Bajaba Abdul-Mumin, Formal interview, 15 APR 14). To compensate for the lack of textbooks within the home, students are instructed to copy homework assignments from the board and complete them at home. This indicates the need for extra exercise books, beyond the recommended amount not met by government.

Remedial Classes

According to regional and district education administrators, remedial classes are up to district initiative and consensus between parents and the school. In most cases these remedial classes take the form of extra classes in which students pay 20 peswas a day to come to school an hour early and stay 30 minutes past closing. During this time, teachers are to be available at the school to help struggling students and deal with any behavioral or academic-related matters. The fees are used to compensate the teachers for their time. The primary and JHS schools at

Okaikrom, Senchi, and Asukoko have adopted this scheme after negotiation and confirmation with parents and community members.

Although these fees are not legally compulsive, students are expected to pay them daily. This allegedly proves to be a financial burden on some of the poorer families and was frequently used as an excuse for truancy by interviewed students and parents alike. However, because parents have already agreed to these fees and some teachers, specifically Charity Manu and Bajaba Abdul-Mumin, described paying for those students who can't afford it, extra class fees do not appear to be a main factor in student absenteeism. Other more pertinent and urgent causes will be explored and further articulated in this report.

Basic Education Certificate Exam

To graduate from JHS, every Form 3 student must pass the Basic Education Certificate Exam (BECE). This exam consists of 8 components that tests student knowledge of all aspects of JHS curriculum. The exam takes place at the end of the third term in June, but there are mock BECE exams administered right before Easter vacation at the end of the second term. Practice exams cost 5 Ghana cedi and the final exams cost 40 Ghana cedi (Charity Manu, Formal interview, 14 APR 14). Once again money becomes a problem when poor families are expected to pay these comparatively large expenses. Families are left to decide whether or not to sponsor their child's BECE. If the student is struggling academically or if there is no money to continue on to higher education, families tend to forgo spending the money (Collins Oppong, Formal interview, 14 APR 14). Therefore the BECE expense is another financial burden placed on the family that discourages parental support of their children's education.

School Based Feeding Programs

The government of Ghana proposed a school-based feeding program in 2005 called the Ghana School Feeding Program (GSFP). The objectives of this program are to reduce hunger and malnutrition, boost local food production, and increase school enrollment, retention and attendance. The basic concept of the GSFP is to provide students with one nutritious, locally-grown meal on every school going day (ECASARD/SNV Ghana, 2009). By relieving parents of the cost of lunch for their school-aged children, the SBFP also gives students incentive to go to school and encourages parents to send them. Although good in theory, this program has yet to gain footing or traction in the schools because of limited funding and the labor intensity required of such an endeavor. However, kindergarten students at the Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom are currently benefitting from this program and are fed most school days through the SBFP (Alice Baafi, Formal interview, 14 APR 14). There are plans for further implementation of this program, but for now the vast majority of students at public primary and JHS schools are left to fend for themselves.

Statement of Problem: The Disconnected Student

Just as government policy is not executed fully in practice, student behavior does not always mirror their proclaimed interest in school. Reiterating phrases like “The key to success is education” are by no means wrong or naïve, but the fact is many students in rural farming communities do not complete their basic education.

Truancy

Truancy is a huge problem among schools in Ashanti rural villages. It is much more blatant at the JHS level, but is overall a great concern to educators and some community members. No data was collected from the primary schools, but numerous teacher and headmaster accounts indicate that truancy is not an issue at the primary level. Despite several persistent visits at the District Office of Education, I was unable to obtain any district attendance records. District administrators reported not having access to records after sending them to the regional office wherefrom I was told to ask the district office for that information. Despite from that frustration, I was able to ascertain attendance records at the Asukoko D/A JHS for this most recent term. This primary source revealed the severity of truancy in the district’s rural communities.

Each term contains 13 weeks and attendance is compiled at the end of each school week. The least-attended week for Form 1 girls had 65% attendance while the least-attended week for Form 1 boys had 64% attendance. Form 2 attendance was a lot worse for boys with a low of 42%, while girls remained static with 68%. In

Total	10TH WEEK					11TH WEEK					12TH WEEK				
	MONTH: MAR					MONTH: MAR					MONTH: MAR				
	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
	10/11	12/12	13/13	14/14	Total	17/18	19/19	20/20	21/21	Total	24/25	26/26	27/27	28/28	Total
	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
3 42	/	/	/	/	5 42	/	/	/	/	5 50	/	/	/	/	5 55
3 33	/	/	/	/	3 38	/	/	/	/	4 42	/	/	/	/	4 42
2 12	0	0	0	0	1 13	0	0	0	0	1 13	0	0	0	0	3 16
0 20	0	0	0	0	0 20	0	0	0	0	1 21	0	0	0	0	5 24
5 32	0	0	0	0	0 32	0	0	0	0	0 32	0	0	0	0	1 33
3 33	/	/	/	/	2 35	/	/	/	/	3 38	/	/	/	/	3 41
1 23	0	0	0	0	1 29	0	0	0	0	1 30	/	/	/	/	4 34
3 37	/	/	/	/	3 38	0	0	0	0	3 31	/	/	/	/	4 35
3 27	/	/	/	/	3 42	/	/	/	/	5 47	/	/	/	/	5 52
3 37	/	/	/	/	5 51	0	0	0	0	3 32	/	/	/	/	1 33
3 37	/	/	/	/	3 42	/	/	/	/	5 47	/	/	/	/	5 52
3 40	/	/	/	/	3 43	/	/	/	/	5 48	/	/	/	/	5 53
2 30	0	0	0	0	1 31	0	0	0	0	1 32	/	/	/	/	5 37
3 36	/	/	/	/	3 39	/	/	/	/	5 44	/	/	/	/	5 49
4 21	/	/	/	/	3 45	/	/	/	/	5 50	/	/	/	/	5 55
3 38	0	0	0	0	3 48	0	0	0	0	4 44	0	0	0	1 33	
4 71	/	/	/	/	3 44	/	/	/	/	5 45	/	/	/	/	4 49
3 38	/	/	/	/	3 44	/	/	/	/	5 45	/	/	/	/	4 49

Fig 1. Sample of truancy records at Asukoko D/A JHS

Form 3 the girls dropped to a low of 51% and the boys had 64%. There were also weeks with almost perfect attendance, but these occasions were rare and overshadowed by trends of truancy.

Although no statistical evidence was collected, educators in Senchi, Okaikrom, and Ntumkumso D/A JHs schools frequently reported rampant truancy rates among students. Teachers were particularly concerned about Form 3 students, explaining that after these students register for the BECE in February, they stop coming to class because their graduation is contingent on passing the exams, not attendance (Faustina Obeng, Formal interview, 23 APR 14). Social Studies teacher Alexander Afifa adds, “Form 3 students think they are mature enough to make their own decisions” (Alexander Afifa, Formal interview, 15 APR 14). Form 3 drop-out Abigail Donka agrees. She disliked being told when to be quiet in class, when to wake up for school, and other commands a student obeys. She, and many others like her, believes she is mature enough to control herself and can fare well without a complete basic education (personal communication, 20 APR 14). This feeling of superiority is common among JHS students and leads them to disengage from parental and institutional control and instruction.

Drop Outs

Drop-out rates are even harder to trace because of the context in which students drop out. When students travel or are sick or injured for an extended period of time, the school may misinterpret their absence as dropping out. Also many families do not inform the school when they move to another town and leave teachers and the headmaster wondering what happened to them (Mawunyo Kwesikuma, Formal interview, 20 APR 14). With these exceptions aside, many students do drop out of school before completion of their basic education. Students report dropping out for many reasons including financial problems, sight impairment, teenage pregnancy, disinterest, and confidential, personal issues. Current students also contributed

narratives of classmates who have stopped going to school. In a group interview of six Form 3 students at the Ntumkumso D/A JHS, informants described some of their peers as hustlers who roam the street believing education is a waste of time better spent making money. To this mentality, student Samuel Duku replies, “If you think education is expensive, try ignorance” (personal communication, 25 APR 14). Most justifications drop-out students provided for their early termination of education are mere manifestations of deeper problems. The root causes of these problems are discussed in the following chapter.

Causes and Implications of a Stunted Education

Student loss of interest in school is a result of a multitude of issues that cannot be ignored. The quality of education affects a student greatly, but it is also the community in which they live that shapes their attitudes towards the institution.

Poverty

Rural farming communities in the Ashanti region are overall deficient in money, jobs, infrastructure, and access to resources. This poor economic status should not be confused with cultural underdevelopment as community networks in these villages are thriving and based on a rich history. However, financial difficulties are an ever-present stress in many rural homes that pressure families to prioritize their investments. Student and parent informants alike report it is the parents' responsibility to support a student's basic needs (Adamu-Issah and Elden, 2009). The mentioned needs are defined by sponsoring a child's uniform, shoes, lunch, and learning material fees. As these parental duties are purely financial, it lends to the conclusion that support of education, as viewed in farming communities, is measured by money. Headmaster Mawunyo Kwesikuma disagrees, saying, "It's not about money, it's about commitment" (Kwesikuma, Formal interview, 14 APR 14). The culture of poverty is therefore both a cause and effect of student and parental disenchantment with education and should be viewed as an underlying factor in many of the causes about to be discussed.

Impactical Course Subject Content

At the primary level, teachers and headmasters applaud the overall useful and practical nature of elementary education for promoting basic literacy and numeracy comprehension. Mathematics does not generally upset students because the course curriculum is tangible and applicable. For instance, primary students use small rocks to practice their addition and

subtraction skills (Issah Haruon, Formal interview, 13 APR 14). In Faustina Dufie's Primary 3 class, roughly 80% of her students reported Mathematics to be their favorite subject. The Natural Sciences center around the studies of ecosystems and seasons, two fields children in farming communities know well. Lack of provided resources for science demonstrations leave teachers up to their own ingenuity, but the relevance of the subject makes up for this deficiency.

Inapplicability greatly effects student comprehension of Information Communication Technology (ICT). There is not a single computer available for student use at the schools in Asukoko, Senchi, and Okaikrom and most children have never seen, much less used, a computer before.

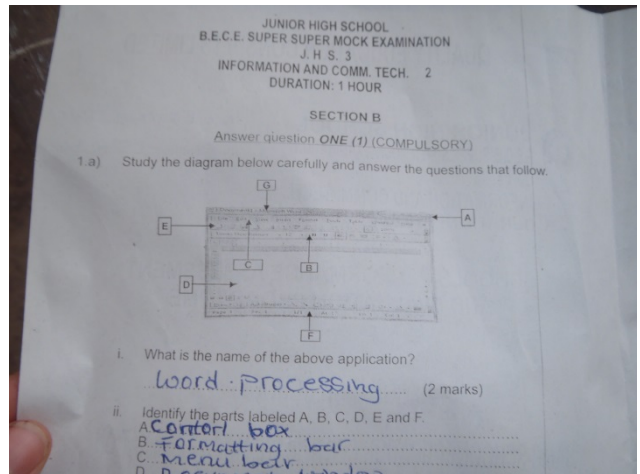


Fig 2. ICT test for JHS students

Instead, students are expected to learn computer functions and operating skills from a textbook. In theory, ICT skills are important for jobs in this increasingly global world, but this phenomenon is not visible in rural farming villages. Although educators and community members agree on the importance of learning the national language, English proves to be the most difficult subject for many primary students (Issah Haruon, Formal interview, 13 APR 14). Dufie and Haruon identify the cause to reside outside the classroom where English is not spoken at home and rarely in the community.

JSH curriculum is more intensive, comprehensive, and theoretical than its primary predecessor. Courses are structured upon the assumption that JSH students absorbed and retained the information presented at the primary level. This basic understanding of fundamental concepts is imperative for furthering knowledge and students who lack this foundation struggle to grasp

related abstractions. For example, a student who cannot perform basic mathematical operations will find it impossible to solve algebraic equations. There is also the issue of irrelevant course content that hinders learning and provokes disinterest among students. Of the nine JHS teachers interviewed, all stressed the importance of education, but conceded that abstract topics are difficult to teach to students. Social Studies teacher Collins Opong at Okaikrom JHS attests that social studies imparts “practical life knowledge” to student by covering a breadth of relevant topics including reproductive health, environmental degradation, and the socio-economic history



Fig 3. Two brothers manning the sales at their family's shop

of Ghana. Educators believe basic math skills are essential for counting, calibrating, and measuring, but as Senchi JHS Mathematics teacher Bajaba Abdul-Mumin explains, “advanced math concepts theoretically have to relate, but practically don't” (Abul-Mumin, Formal interview, 15 APR 14). Ten out of the 12 students asked directly about their least favorite or most difficult subject responded with Mathematics.”

Students blamed confusing formulas, multi-step solving procedures, and complicated word problems to be the source

of their aversion. A few also contributed that abstract concepts are not useful in their day-to-day lives. Kate Kwakye, a Form 3 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS, explained that basic numeracy and counting skills are important in the market, but geometry and other advanced types of math are not necessary. Abdul-Mumin adds that disinterest in math is derived from the perception that math is difficult and students' inability to understand questions written in English.

English teacher Collins Oppong describes the English language as “the gateway to a quality education” (Oppong, Formal interview, 14 APR 14). Because it is the national language, Ghanaians need to be literate in English to reads the writing on government property, like road signs and fertilizer bottles. English literacy and comprehension is also

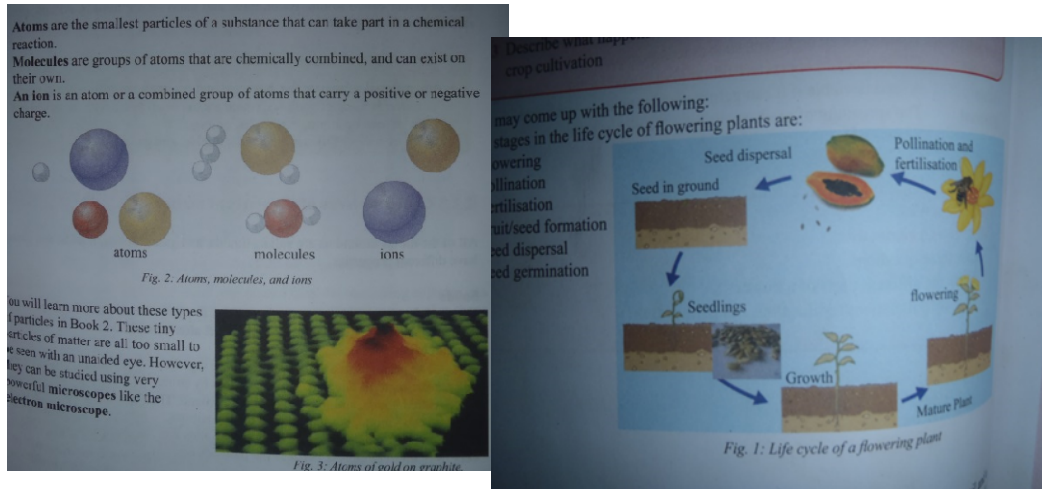


Fig 4. Command to “Speak English” written by a teacher on the walls of a JHS school

important because all subjects, save Ghanaian language, are conducted in English. Although many teachers revert back to Twi when students do not understand the lecture, textbooks and homework assignments are in English and without a good grasp of the English language, it is incredibly difficult to do well in the other subjects. Many student informants also explained that English is useful in communication with non-Twi speakers in business transactions and day-to-day interactions. The problem is that students in Ashanti farming villages are not forced or encouraged to speak English as they are raised in insulated communities by adults with limited English-speaking skills.

Science at the JHS level is an integrated discipline that involves agricultural studies, chemistry, physics, and biology. Students overwhelming prefer the agricultural aspect over the other components because, as one boy put it, “We already know it” (Personal communication, 21 APR 14). Science teacher Florence Adade described how her students participate wholeheartedly in lessons about farming techniques, seasons, and other familiar material. But when it comes to balancing chemical equations and understanding how a battery operates, students lose interest. Schools in farming villages lack the resources to carry out the textbook’s recommended practices

that may have otherwise helped students understand the abstract content.



Figs 5/6. A comparison of science material taught at the JHS

With regard to direct relevance to career opportunity, public JHS schools offer core, vocational, and specialized technical skills through the Basic Design and Technology course. Home economics, or core skills, cover nutrition, hygiene, cooking, table dressing, and sewing. The visual arts component teaches color work, pictorial drawing, and elements of design while the technical skills aspect teaches carpentry, electrical work, tools and processes, and construction (A Basic Design & Technology for Junior High Schools Pupils' Book, 2008). The

curriculum of this class has the potential to equip students with wage-earning skills, but schools in rural Ashanti villages lack the resources to give students practice. Technical Skills teacher Charity Manu addressed this issue when describing how students are supposed to learn how to construct products without ever having the chance to hold the required tools.

The table below shows general operational sequence.

PART NUMBER	STEPS	OPERATION/ PROCEDURE	SKETCHES	MATERIAL
	(a) PLANING	Measure, mark, cut and plane all members to required size		Mahogany
	(b) MARKING OUT	Mark out shape of all members and indicate areas where joints would be cut.		Mahogany
	(c) CUTTING OF JOINTS	Cut all joints in various positions as indicated on work-pieces		Mahogany
	(d) SHAPING	Shape all members as required		Mahogany
	(e) DRY ASSEMBLING	Dress up all joints and dry assemble members		Mahogany
	(f) SANDING	Sand/glasspaper all members smooth		Glasspaper Mahogany
	(g) GLUING	Applying glue to all members, assemble the members, clamp the unit and allow it to dry		P.V.C glue
	(h) FINAL SANDING	Apply sanding sealer/priming coats and then sand the unit ready for polishing		Sanding sealer, primer, paint, old glass paper/emery cloth

Fig. 7 Procedures for carpentry construction in a BDT textbook

Children learn by relation and poor quality education prevents students from understanding certain subjects they might otherwise want to pursue. Teachers see a direct relationship between relevance of subjects and interest of students. Although student informants did not directly address this connection, they described their favorite subject, typically Social Studies, RME, or Environmental Studies, to be the easiest and most relatable course while Mathematics, BDT, ICT, and Chemistry and Physics were viewed with aversion.

Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage sexuality is both a cause and effect for female disinterest in school and termination of education. Guidance & Counseling Coordinator Isaac Otoo is particularly concerned by the district's high rates of teenage pregnancy in rural communities. He described how even girls in primary school are getting pregnant and dropping out, yet consented it most often occurs at the JHS level. The farming village of Ntumkumso is especially afflicted by astonishing rates of teenage pregnancy. Form 3 student Susie Fojo at Ntumkumso's D/A JHS reported that 18 of the 25 girls in her class have older boyfriends in town. She also knows of seven primary and JHS students who are expectant or current mothers. These "town boys" are JHS graduates or drop-outs who did not continue to secondary school and instead spend their time hustling on the streets. These young men entice poor girls with gifts, food, and money to demonstrate their ability to financially provide and care for the girl in ways her family cannot (Personal communication, 24 APR 14). Some boys feign interest in the girl's education and offer to pay her school fees. Young, vulnerable girls are susceptible to this kind of attention and reject parental and school authority, believing the boy's promises of money, marriage, and nurture. Minlim Lambonim is one such girl. Now 18, Lambonim began dating in Primary 6 and got pregnant in Form 3. The father is her older ex-boyfriend whom she met roaming the streets of

Okaikrom. Her parents provided for her basic needs, yet she preferred older boyfriends because they gave her money and had luxurious amenities, like a TV. She was a good student, but once she started seriously dating older boys, her priorities shifted; she no longer made time to study and began to struggle academically. Lambonim dropped out of school after giving birth, but hopes to return to become a nurse. Her grandmother doubts this aspiration, chastising, “If you wanted to continue your education, you shouldn’t have gotten pregnant” (Personal communication, 27 APR 14). This narrative illustrates the disastrous affect teenage pregnancy has on a girl’s education.

Once girls are impregnated, they receive much criticism from teachers and teasing from peers. Susie Fojo admits to taunting such girls in the past, but stopped when she realized she could be in the same situation if she isn’t careful. To avoid insults and staring eyes, Francisca



Fig 8. Okaikrom Health Center that offers contraceptives to local adolescent

Boahema hid her pregnancy throughout its gestation. She was only 13 years old when she became pregnant after accepting 20 cedi for a one-night-stand with a visiting high school student. Her mother did not care when she learned of her daughter’s prostitution (Personal communication, 25 APR 14). Lack of parental supervision and concern is a major contributing factor to teenage pregnancy, according to Okaikrom Health Clinic nurse Gloria Kyeremee. In reference to parents’ reactions to their teenage daughter’s pregnancy, Kyeremee describes, “Parents think it is okay

because they gave birth when they were young” (Gloria Kyeremee, Formal interview, 30 APR 14). JHS students adopt this attitude, viewing the reproductive health lectures in their Social

Studies class as instruction to “put into practice the minimal knowledge they’ve acquired” (Faustina Obeng). Since national curriculum does not include discussion of contraceptives, nurses periodically visit schools to teach students about sexual health, STD prevention, and contraception use. This information fall on deaf ears as students prefer to freely explore their sexuality, unchecked by their parents or community oversight.

Parental Negligence

Parents of disinterested, struggling, truant, and drop-out students tend to have a personal history of uncompleted basic education. Out of the six parents interviewed about their educational background, five did not finish primary school. Reasons for their stunted education included financial problems, death of parent, domestic duties, and poor academic performance.

The attitudes towards, and quality of, education in their time were reportedly much worse and many elderly informants expressed a desire for

their children and grandchildren to receive the education they were not afforded. For instance, Serwaa Akosia dropped out of school when she was in P 5 because her parents didn’t see the importance of her education. It now pains her to see her 17-year-old daughter refuse to go to school because Serwaa learned from experience



Fig 9. Cement bricks at Nana Yaa Akua’s home

that education is necessary for acquiring a good, steady-paying job. Denied access to a quality education forced many parents to resort to farming, setting the module means of livelihood for their children.

Despite claiming education to be important for their children, many parents prioritize their money and efforts elsewhere. Nana Yaa Aku is a local priestess in Senchi and mother to six kids. Two of her children attend school infrequently and one has dropped out. Her son, Johnson Amoah, says that he likes school, but his family is too poor to pay for his lunch and extra class fees. Nana Yaa echoed Johnson's complaints of financial problems, yet she has some 500 cement blocks prepared for an addition to her home. Each brick costs 25 peswas, more than the daily school fee. The district's Community Participation-Welfare Officer Faustina Obeng contributed the example of parents who say they cannot afford to send their kids to school, but then buy the finest funeral cloth for themselves. Money is truly an issue among poor farming families, but some parents fail to see the socio-economic benefits of investing in their children's education.

Hostile parent-school relations also inhibit a student's education. Social Studies teacher Collins Oppong recounts how during PTA meetings, some parents scold teachers and place blame on their children for truancy, behavioral, and debt-related issues. Regional Planning and Budget Officer Eric Adom Marfo speaks to community distrust of government institutions and their reluctance to pay any school fees. Opoku Kwesi, BDT teacher at Ktumkumso JHS describes how parents are unwilling to lend or donate learning materials (silverware, scraps of fabrics, etc.) for in-class practicals. According to the headmaster at Okaikrom JHS, when parents and educators do come to an agreement on policy reforms and discipline of children, parents do not execute these strategies at home and the problems persist.

Parents assume responsibility for enforcing school attendance, but only to a certain point. The demands of a farming lifestyle compel many parents to leave at dawn to farm and come home in the evening. Those adults who stay at home are occupied with labor-intensive chores around the community and preparing food for the family. This type of environment leaves

school-aged children virtually unsupervised to ready themselves and go to school. Johnson's younger sister decided to stop school for no apparent reason. Nana Yaa was initially upset with her daughter's behavior, but now claims there is nothing she can do; her education, her choice. A similar situation persists at Appiah Rose's home. Rose is in Form 2 and refuses to go to school for reasons she chooses to keep confidential. Her family has tried interrogating, counseling, and lecturing her, but to no avail. They believe there is nothing else they can do.

Children do not obey their parents' commands because they feel they are mature enough to govern their own lives. Parents feel they are unable to combat this assault on parental authority because they are too poor. There is no precedent for any serious punishment for students who do not attend school, and so children capitalize on this opportunity knowing their parents are helpless.

Lack of Role Models

Tying into weak parental control and the pervasiveness of poverty is the lack of role models within Ashanti farming communities. This is not to say that parents and community leaders are bad influences on children; they impart good morals and work ethic to the kids. What farming villages lack are educated individuals that have used their schooling to make gainful employment and are now contributing back to the community. Children need to see the benefits of education with their own eyes before they change their resistant and rebellious attitudes. Mother of two consistently tardy kids, Akua Boatema spoke to the reasons her children ignore her commands to go to school in the morning. She has identified the source of their disregard to come from her own poverty. Akua explained that because she is poor and cannot always provide for her children's wants and needs, her children have lost respect for her and now believe they are better able to care for themselves than she is (Personal communication, 21 APR 14). This

unfortunate truth is amplified by the fact that there are no good role models around to correct these children's behavior.

The absence of educated community leaders is directly related to the absence of job opportunities suitable for educated people. Apart from nursing and teaching positions, jobs in Ashanti farming villages require little to no formal education and consist of catering, operating small provisions shops, hair dressing, cab driving, brick laying, and of course farming. There are a few carpenters, seamstresses and other careers necessitating vocational training, but no trade or technical school present nearby. Even more harmful is



Fig 10. Street vendors rest next to a seamstress in Okaikrom

the fact that many of these villages do not have senior high schools. Asukoko, Okaikrom, and Senchi are neighboring villages a 2 GH cedi cab ride away from the nearest senior high school in Effiduase. The transportation, boarding, and supplies costs to send JHS graduates to senior high

is too great for most families in these villages.

Even if they are able to sponsor their child,

admission to senior high school is competitive.

Over 280,000 Ghanaian students take the Basic

Education Certificate Examination at the end of

their third year in JHS 3, but only 70,000 students



Fig 11. Promotional poster for the Shiloh SHS/ Tech School

can be admitted into the 500 secondary schools (*The Education System of Ghana*, usembassy.gov). The Shiloh Church in Effiduase aims to help adolescents beat the odds by raising funds for and establishing a senior high and technical training school in Senchi.

Peer Pressure

Small, rural communities are very tight-knit and insulated such that children grow up roaming the town in packs. Children are very impressionable and easily influenced by parents, teachers, community members, and peers with whom they interact daily. Once they reach adolescence, students begin to operate on hormonal instinct with the desire for independence and are therefore eager to explore their sexuality and challenge norms in the pursuit of creating their own autonomous identity. JHS students in particular strive for social acceptance and disassociation from parental authority. This is a natural stage of development, but can lead to serious consequences if left unchecked.

The pressure for girls to date and become sexually active arises in the last years of primary school and increases throughout JHS. Minlim Lambonim can attest to this trend because she was encouraged by her female classmates to flirt with the town boys. Now three of these friends have children as well, and none of the fathers are around (Personal communication, 23 APR 14) There is also pressure coming from the town boys who coerce girls into believing education is lame and unimportant. Many girls fall for this ploy and throw their education away to be with an older boy they think will provide for them for the rest of their lives.

Drugs, mainly Marijuana, are a prevailing issue among JHS boys. JHS students experiment with drugs as a means to retaliate against authority and to figure things out for themselves. Boys also steal and snort “Asra,” a pain-killer commonly taken by elders (Isaac Otoo, Formal interview, 25 APR 14). Some claim that these drugs help them focus and learn, an

attempt to validate decisions made in opposition to adult caution. Boys also pressure each other into trying these drugs which leads to a habit of skipping school to do drugs, gamble, and hang out with the town boys and fellow truant classmates. Ntumkumso Form 3 student Emmanuel Agyei admits to leaving the middle of a school day to go gamble when he deems lessons to be boring or uninteresting (Personal communication, 26 APR 14). Many other students, especially Form 3 boys, lose interest in school and prefer to stay home or go to bush. They sometimes convince school-bound classmates, like Kwame Antwi, to skip school and join them to roam the town or go to bush. Kwame Antwi, a Form 3 student at Senchi D/A JHS justifies caving into peer pressure because he agrees when the boys tell him school will not be interesting today; school is boring without his friends there (Personal communication, 20 APR 14). Kwame admits that his behavior is not conducive to his graduation from JHS, but he believes he can still pass his final exams. Many Form 3 students share Kwame's cockiness such that there is a general air of superiority that students feed off of.

Poor Infrastructure

The government was prolific in erecting school blocks and infrastructural facilities back in the 1980s. Some 30 years later, these school buildings are weathered and in need of repairs. For example, the roof at Asukoko's JHS is littered with holes and students report leaks during rain storms (Personal communication, 28 APR 14). Another example comes from Senchi where an entire school block has been abandoned because the walls are disintegrating and classrooms were therefore declared unsafe to inhabit. Additionally, power outages occur almost daily in rural villages in the Sekyere East district. When lights go out in the evenings and nights, families rely on battery-operated torches, candles, or their own night-vision to complete their chores and prepare for bed. Students complain finishing their homework in dim lighting is not conducive to

their study habits (Personal communication, 20 APR 14). Electrical issues and poor infrastructure are fixable problems that inhibit a student's ability to learn, but have yet to be addressed in farming communities.



Figure 12. Vacated old primary classroom in Senchi

Conclusion

The intended goals of Ghana's public education system are not being realized in Ashanti farming communities. High rates of truancy, teenage pregnancy, and drop-outs are clear indicators that the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education initiative is not achieved everywhere. Government funding for this program is not present in rural villages; this disappointing truth is reflected in the local schools' lack of teaching learning materials, poor infrastructure, and limited resources. The problem is compounded by the fact that community investment in education is low due to financial constraints and a culture that does not prioritize education. Students and parents proclaim that education is important for a successful life, but their prevailing behaviors and interactions with the school suggest otherwise. Lack of role models, peer pressure, and minimal parental supervision are all interconnected factors that contribute to children's inability to access to a quality education. Instead of playing the blame-game for who is accountable for this dilemma, communities and governing authorities should devote their attention and efforts to creating reform initiatives that are both feasible and effective.

From national leaders to student peers, responsibility lies on all parties to promote and ensure a learning environment for the acquisition of basic literacy, numeracy, and analytical skills. This basic education is designed to install attitudes that will help children cope creatively with their surroundings and stimulate them to be an asset to their country. Beyond a basic education, ambitious and qualified students should have the opportunity to pursue a higher education. The socio-economic conditions and attitudes that characterize the culture of poverty prevent many from this pursuit, but it does not have to be this way. Cooperation on part of the government through responsiveness and funding is critical for instigating reform. With proper

infrastructure and investment in community development, educated professional positions will have a place in rural farming communities, giving students good role models to emulate. Parents are tasked with reclaiming control over their children and establishing a firm stance on their commitment to their children's education. Through these changes, it is the hope that students who are taught "education provides opportunity" can experience it for themselves.

Recommendations for further research should concern expanding the interview sample to include more perspectives. My study could be bolstered by considering the opinions and narratives of community members, chiefs, and elders on their perspective of basic education within rural farming communities. These people may shed light on additional factors that affect community attitudes by sharing the history of the village and its development with respect to education. It would also be interesting to interview those educated people who have emigrated out of the villages to understand the push and pull factors of this decision. I would especially want to interview more fathers to see if there is a gendered difference in approach to their children's education. The increased variety of opinions, backgrounds, and positions in life would augment my study and make it more comprehensive.

If I were to conduct this study again, I would focus my research on in-depth interviews with students and their parents because this qualitative data provided a critical insight into the home life of these children. I would spend more time becoming familiar with my informants to gain their trust and confidence before prying into their personal lives. This connection and mutual respect is key to any good research and will provide data useful to creating and implementing beneficial, feasible, and appropriate reforms to Ghana's public education system.

Informants

Abigail Donka. (21 APR 14). Informal interview on *disinterest in school*. Former Form 2 student at Senkyi D/A JHS. Donka's home- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Adam Seduu. (15 APR 14). Formal interview on *usefulness of education for career development and general knowledge*. Form 3 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Adams Owusu. (16 APR 14). Formal interview on *causes of high truancy and drop-out rates*. Form 1, 2 & 3 Ghanaian Language teacher at Asukoko D/A Primary & JHS- Asukoko, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Akua Boatema. (21 APR 14). Informal interview on *children's lack of respect for elders*. Farmer, mother of Giddian Owusu. Owusu and Boatema's home- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Akuuamoah Boateng. (20 APR 14). Formal interview on *government and community-based challenges facing the schools*. Headmaster at teacher at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Alexander Afifa (16 APR 14). Formal interview on *disinterest among Form 3 students*. Form 1 & 3 Social Studies teacher at Asukoko D/A Primary & JHS- Asukoko, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Alice Baafi. (14 APR 14). Formal interview on *the connection between education and success*. Kindergarten 1 teacher at Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Ama Antwi. (21 APR 14). Informal interview on *responsibility for son's academic performance and attendance*. Farmer, mother of Kwame Antwi. Antwi's shop- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Ama Debora Owusu (20 APR 14). Informal interview on *son's resistance to go to school and its implications*. Farmer, mother of Michael Owusu. Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Amaniampong Asamoeh. (16 APR 14). Formal interview on *school's relationship with parents and the national government*. Headmaster at Asukoko D/A Primary & JHS- Asukoko, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Asukoko JHS Students (16 APR 14). Group survey of eight Form 3 students at Asukoko D/A JHS- Asukoko, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Bajaba Abdul-Mumin. (15 APR 14). Formal interview on *the relationship between the school and community*. Form 1, 2 & 3 Mathematics teacher at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Charity Manu. (14 APR 14). Formal interview on *application of vocational skills*. Form 2 & 3 Technical skills teacher at Okaikrom D/A JHS- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Cassandra Twum. (28 APR 14). Formal interview on *regional office of education's role and administrative procedures*. Public Relations Officer. Ashanti Regional Office of Education- Kumasi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Clement Boateng. (16 APR 14). Formal interview on *difficulties and usefulness of certain subjects*. Form 3 student at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Collins Oppong. (15 APR 14). Formal interview on *student and parent attitudes towards education*. Form 1, 2 & 3 Social Studies teacher at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Ebenezer Agyemeng. (16 APR 14). Formal interview on *peer influence affecting school attendance*. Form 3 student at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana

Eric Adom Marfo. (28 APR 14). Formal interview on *allocation of government funds within the school*. Regional Planning and Budget Officer. Ashanti Regional Office of Education- Kumasi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Faustina Dufie. (14 APR 14). Formal interview on *relevance of subjects and importance of education*. Primary 3B teacher at Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Faustina Obeng. (23 APR 14). Formal interview on *common reasons for dropping out of school in the Sekeyere East district*. Community Participation- Welfare Officer. Sekeyere East District Office of Education- Efuduasi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Favor Jatsivi (30 APR 14). Formal interview on *sexual health resources offered at the clinic*. Nurse at Okaikrom Health Clinic- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Florence Adade. (15 APR 14). Formal interview on *student interest in the various science components*. Form 1, 2 & 3 Integrated Sciences teacher at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Florence Ntim. (15 APR 14). Formal interview on *English and its uses outside the classroom*. Form 3 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Francisca Boatema. (24 APR 14). Informal interview on *dating for financial support..* Former Form 1 student at Ntumkumso D/A JHS, mother. Ntumkumso, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Giddian Owusu. (21 APR 14). Informal interview on *tardiness and respect for authority*. Form 2 student at Senkyi D/A JHS. Owusu's home- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Gloria Kyeremee (30 APR 14). Formal interview on *community attitudes towards teenage pregnancy*. Nurse at Okaikrom Health Clinic- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Grace Agyemang. (16 APR 14). Formal interview on *relationship between education and career opportunities*. Form 2 student at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Haruon Issah. (15 APR 14). Formal interview on *Academic performance of students in each subject*. Primary 3A teacher at Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Isaac Otoo. (23 APR 14). Formal interview on *challenges facing education in the Sekyere East farming communities*. Guidance and Counseling Coordinator. Sekeyere East District Office of Education- Efuduasi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Johnson Amoah. (20 APR 14). Formal interview on *financial constraints preventing school attendance*. Form 2 student at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Joseph Kwaku Mensah. (21-27 APR 14). Participation observation of farming techniques, practices, labor intensity. JK's home and farm- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Joyce Achara. (14 APR 14). Formal interview on *job opportunities in Okaikrom*. Kindergarten 2 teacher at Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Kate Kwakye. (15 APR 14). Formal interview on *career opportunities in Kumasi versus Okaikrom*. Form 3 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Kwadwo Afrifa. (25 APR 14). Informal interview on son's intelligence and attitude towards school. Farmer, father of Yaw. Afrifa's home- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Kwame Antwi. (21 APR 14). Informal interview on *peer pressure and truancy*. Form 3 student at Senkyi D/A JHS. Mother's shop- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Kwesi Opoku (24 APR 14). Formal interview on *applications of technical skills with limited resources*. Form 1, 2 & 3 Basic Design and Technology teacher at Ntumkumso D/A JHS- Ntumkumso, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Matilda Asirifi. (16 APR 14). Formal interview on *importance of learning English in school*. Form 1 student at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Mawunyo Kwesikuma. (14 APR 14). Formal interview on *usefulness of curriculum and access to learning materials*. Headmaster of Okaikrom D/A JHS- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Maxwell Boachie (14 APR 14). Formal interview on *students' grasp of English language and literacy*. Form 1 & 2 English teacher at Okaikrom D/A JHS- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Maybel Obeng. (25 APR 14). Informal interview on *preparedness for final exams*. Form 3 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS. Obeng's home- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Michael Kusi. (14 APR 14). Formal interview on *truancy and its connection to home life*. Form 3 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Michael Owusu. (20 APR 14). Informal interview on *lack of interest in school and career aspirations*. Form 3 student at Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Minlim Lambonim. (25 APR 14). Informal interview on *dating and its effect on academic investment*. Former Form 3 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS, mother. Lambonim's home- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Mildred Lambonim. (25 APR 14). Informal interview on *responsibility for granddaughter's pregnancy and its consequences*. Lambonim's home- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Moses Agyei. (15 APR 14). Formal interview on *agricultural science taught in the classroom and on the farm*. Form 3 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Nana Otuo-Acheampong. (23, 29 APR 14). Formal interviews on *execution of the district's education goals*. Sekyere East District Director of Education. Sekeyere East District Office of Education- Efuduasi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Nana Yaa Aku. (20 APR 14). Informal interview on *prioritization of financial investment in children's education*. Farmer, priestess, mother of Johnson Amoah. Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Nancy Obeng. (21 APR 14). Informal interview on *responsibility for her sister's education and health*. Obeng's home- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Noami Obeng. (21 APR 14). Informal interview on *sight problems and its effect on her education*. Former Form 1 student at Senkyi D/A JHS. Obeng's home- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Ntumkumso Form 3 students. (24 APR 14). Group interview of six students. Ntumkumso D/A JHS- Ntumkumso, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

P 3A Students at Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom (13 APR 14). Group survey of 27 P 3 students- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Portia Donkor. (20 APR 14). Informal interview on *distribution of finances between food and school*. Form 3 student at Senkyi D/A JHS. Donkor's home- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Rose Appaih. (25 APR 14). Informal interview on personal problems affecting school attendance. Form 2 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS. Appaih's home- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Ruth Appail. (25 APR 14). Informal interview on *efforts to convince sister to go to school*. Appaih's home- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Samuel Anim. (20 APR 14). Informal interview on *bullying and the social environment at school*. Form 3 student at Senkyi D/A JHS. Anim's home- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Senkyi JHS Students (15 APR 14). Group survey of 55 Form 1-3 students. Senkyi D/A JHS- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Serwaa Akosia Donka. (21 APR 14). Informal interview on *career prospects for students who do not complete their basic education*. Seamstress, farmer, mother of Abigail. Donka's home- Senkyi, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Sister Fojo. (24 APR 14). Informal interview on *prevention of teenage pregnancy*. Caterer, mother of Susie. Fojo's food stand- Ntumkumso, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Susie Fojo. (24 APR 14). Informal interview on *perception of teenage mothers*. Form 3 student at Ntumkumso D/A JHS. Fojo's food stand- Ntumkumso, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

Yaw Afrifa. (25 APR 14). Informal interview on interest in school and career. Form 1 student at Okaikrom D/A JHS. Afrifa's home- Okaikrom, Ashanti Region, Ghana.

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Appendix A: Supplemental Pictures



Fig 13. Planting corm with students at Asukoko JHS



Fig. 14 Primary 3 class at Salvation Army Primary School Okaikrom



Fig. 15 Father teaches kids how to harvest avocado