

Factors Contributing to Low Performance of Students in BECE Exams in Lambussie District towards Improving Performance Rate

Adams Zuwii, Ruby Marfo

Philippines Christian University

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the low academic performance of students in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at Junior High Schools (JHS) in the Lambussie District of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The study sought to identify the factors contributing to poor performance in the BECE within the Lambussie District and propose policy interventions to address them. The researchers used a case study design incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyse the data. They employed simple purposive sampling techniques and utilised interviews, questionnaires, and records as data sources. The study population comprised head teachers, teachers, students, School Management Committee (SMC) members, and officers in charge of examinations. Purposive sampling was used to select twenty (20) Junior High Schools from the District. The study found that most respondents agreed that various factors such as teachers, school management, school environment, parents, and students were primarily responsible for the low academic achievement of the students in the BECE. The identified school environmental factors include a limited number of highly qualified teachers, inadequate physical and material resources, and misuse of contact hours by students and teachers. The teacher factors that were found to be contributing to the low academic performance were incidences of chronic lateness and absenteeism to school, inability to complete the syllabi, inadequate exercises and homework assigned to students, and insufficient motivation from employers. The significant characteristics found among students were lateness to school and absenteeism, lack of assistance with studies at home, involvement in vices such as internet fraud, also known as “sakawa”, farming, dance halls, drug abuse, and having hope in their religious leaders, etc. On the parental side, the inability to provide textbooks and supplementary readers, low level of interaction with children’s teachers, and low involvement in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings are contributing factors causing low performance. The study proposes policy interventions to address these factors, including improving teacher motivation and training, enhancing parental involvement, and creating a more conducive school environment. Therefore, all stakeholders must play their respective roles in addressing these concerns. With concerted efforts, there is a real potential for significant improvement in academic performance.

Keywords: Absenteeism, Low Performance, Stakeholders, Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), School Managers, Teachers, Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

INTRODUCTION

Any nation or community's development largely depends upon the quality of education available to its citizenry. It is generally believed that the basis for any actual development must commence with the development of human resources. Hence, formal education remains the vehicle for social-economic development and social mobilization. Education is the foundation on which every nation is built.

Education has two primary purposes. The first purpose is to produce a literate and numerate population that can jointly deal with problems at home and work. It also serves as a foundation for further education (Hanushek, 2019; Lockheed & OECD, 2020). Achieving Universal Basic Education is an international priority set by the United Nations (UN). 1990, Education for All (EFA) was declared in Jomtien, Thailand (UNESCO, 2020). In April 2000, a World Education Forum was held in Dakar to achieve the EFA goals. The UN declared the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to assist developing countries in increasing people's living standards. The second MDG is to “ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able

to complete a full course of primary schooling” (United Nations, 2020). This millennium target is often measured through primary school enrollment, primary completion, and the literacy and numeracy rate among school learners (UNESCO, 2020). Between 2006/2007, gross primary school enrolment was 90.8 per cent (ISSER, 2008). In addition, the government of Ghana put in place valuable strategies to encourage enrolment, daily attendance, and retention of learners in primary schools across the country to realise the objectives of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy as well as the provision of Education for All (EFA) agenda (MOE, 2015). These strategies include the provision of school learners with teaching and learning materials, school uniforms, the school feeding programme (SFP), and the introduction of the capitation grant per child enrolled (MOE, 2016).

The government also instituted best teacher awards and career development to motivate teachers to ensure the quality of education for its children (MOE, 2019). Despite these achievements, the education sector continues to face many challenges. According to ISSER (2008), the performance of many children needs to meet the minimum learning requirements and acquire essential skills and competencies. In 2021, the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results released by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) showed that Lambussie District was at the Bottom with the Lowest Percentage of passes in the 2021 BECE Performance assessment with a percentage of 6. This means that the district has a shortfall of 94%, which is woefully discouraging in terms of educational performance. Most Students and potential students are at risk and exposed to abject poverty if the Development stays. In 2022, the District Director of Education for Lambussie assured stakeholders he was working to change the narrative.

Therefore, the low performance of learners at the basic level of education has led to public outcry and occupied educationists, who have been increasingly occupied in their attempt to identify factors that influence learners' performance, especially in the Basic Education Certificate Examination in Ghana.

Therefore, the study focuses on the low academic performance of students in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at the Basic schools in the Lambussie District of Ghana. It seeks to determine the causal factors that contributed to such an outcome. Inputs and processes such as teachers, school environment, parents, and learners were primarily responsible for the low academic achievement of the students. The school environmental factors identified include a limited number of teachers with high educational qualifications, inadequate teaching and learning materials, misuse of contact hours with learners, poor school infrastructure, and corporal punishment. The teacher factors contributing to the low academic performance were lateness to school and absenteeism, inability to complete the curriculum, headmasters with poor leadership skills, and inadequate homework assigned to learners.

The learner's significant characteristics were lateness to school and absenteeism, lack of assistance with studies at home, and use of local (first) language in the classroom. Home conditions or parental support variables causing learners to perform poorly academically were their inability to provide textbooks and supplementary readers, low level of interaction with children's teachers, poor parental control, and low involvement in the Parent Teacher Association. It is, therefore, essential not only to carry out an empirical study on the causes of low academic performance of learners but also to look for opportunities and propose measures to assist ongoing efforts at improving learners' academic achievement in general. Therefore, the causes of such low performance are worth investigating.

It is therefore concluded that all stakeholders- government, departments, teachers, parents, students, etc.- must play their respective parts in addressing the factors contributing to low student performance in the basic schools under study in the Lambussie District. Adomako et al. (2022) attribute the phenomenon to a lack of adequate supervision and monitoring at school, teacher motivation, and an inadequate number of qualified teachers to fill empty classrooms.

Similarly, other researchers found that factors such as intellectual ability (Busato et al., 2000), poor study habits (Okesina, 2019), achievement motivation, lack of vocational goals (Thaashaar et al., 2023), low self-concept, low socio-economic status (Liu et al., 2022), low income, family structure, and anxiety (Ahmetovic et al., 2020) contribute to educational performance. Poor academic achievement in school may result from the interplay of several factors. It is, therefore, essential not only to carry out an empirical study on the causes of

low academic performance of learners but also to look for opportunities and propose measures to assist ongoing efforts at improving pupil academic achievement in general. Therefore, the causes of such low performance are worth investigating.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Basic Education refers to the level of education in any country that constitutes the foundation stage for all children (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1991). Nelson Mandela stressed the importance of education by stating that “education is a great engine of personal development. Only through education can a peasant's daughter become a doctor, the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, and the child of a farm worker can become the President of a great nation (Mandela, 2000, p. 559) while Hoyle (1986) argues that schools are established to impart knowledge and skills to those who attend them.

According to Udeogalanya, (2020)., high academic performance, as measured by the examination results, is one of the primary goals of a school. Over the past few years, stakeholders have raised concerns about the low academic performance of learners in the Lambussie District. At a durbar organised by the Upper West Youth Parliament on August 12, 2019, addressing the Youth Parliament during the International Youth Day celebration in Wa, the Upper West Regional Education Public Relation Officer (PRO), informed the youth that Upper West continues to perform below 50% of the BECE for the past six (6) years (ghananewsagency.org). He was concerned that this situation could lead to economic hardship within the Region.

A study of the BECE results in the Upper West Regional Ranking 2021 buttresses this. The table below are the details:

No.	Name of District	Percentage (%) passed
1	Wa East	66
2	Daffiama Bussie Issah	34
3	Wa Municipal	33
4	Wa west	25
5	Lawra	25
6	Nadowli	12
7	Nandom	11
8	Sisaala East	10
9	Sisaala west	10
10	Jirapa	8
11	Lambussie	6

Source: upperwestmedia.net

TREND PERFORMANCE BY SUBJECT

SUBJECTS	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ENGLISH	823(39.98)	925(40.76)	870 (25.29)	770(42.82)	832 (13.22)
MATHEMATICS	823(78.86)	925(37.73)	870(20.34)	770(6.23)	832(5.65)
INTEGRATED SCIENCE	822(76.56)	896(44.98)	870(20.23)	770(10.26)	832(15.50)
SOCIAL STUDIES	823(70.35)	898(34.30)	870(27.93)	770(32.21)	832(10.46)
ICT	770(57.01)	839(13.47)	870(14.02)	770(9.48)	802(5.24)
RME	369(48.24)	905(51.60)	870(33.91)	770(26.88)	832(22.60)
GHANAIAAN LANGUAGE	788(90.36)	852(77.58)	870(59.31)	770(53.90)	832(57.57)
BDT	810(51.60)	927(31.18)	870(15.17)	770(22.60)	832(8.29)
FRENCH	49(100)	66(84.85)	0	68(4.41)	0

Source: Lambussie district GES office

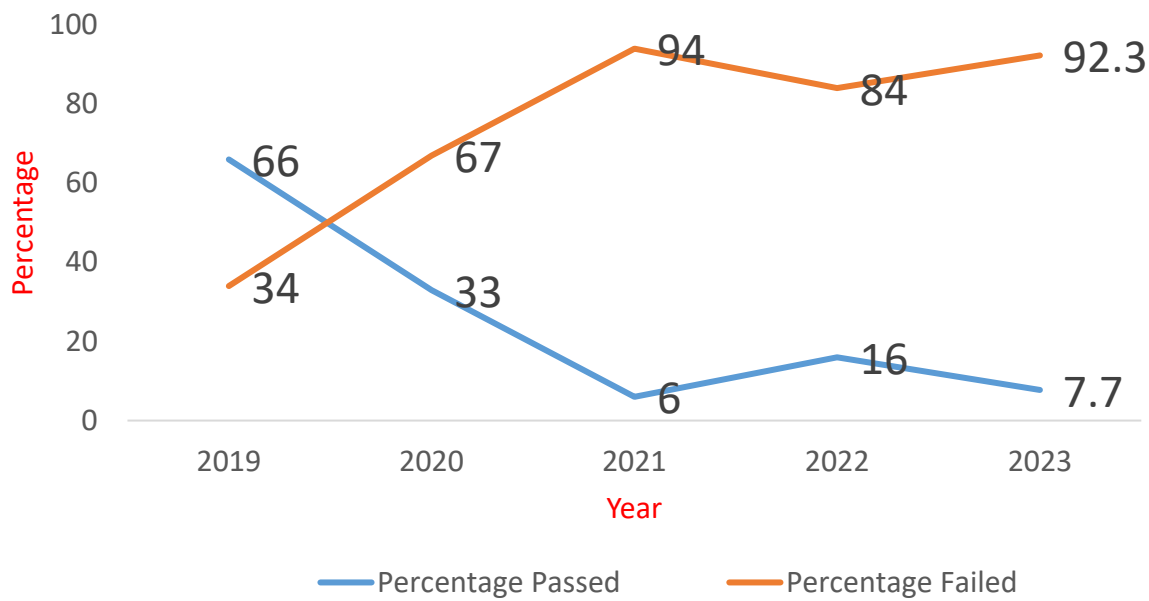


Figure 1: Gap analysis

NO. OF STUDENTS OBTAINING AGGREGATE FOR 2023 BECE			
AGGREGATE	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
6	0	0	0
7-10	0	0	0
15-Nov	0	0	0
16-30	33	19	14
31-36	31	15	16
36+	768	350	418
TOTAL PRESENTED	832	384	448
PERCENTAGE PASSED	7.7	8.9	6.7
PERCENTAGE FAILED	92.3	91.1	93.3

Source: Lambussie District Education Office

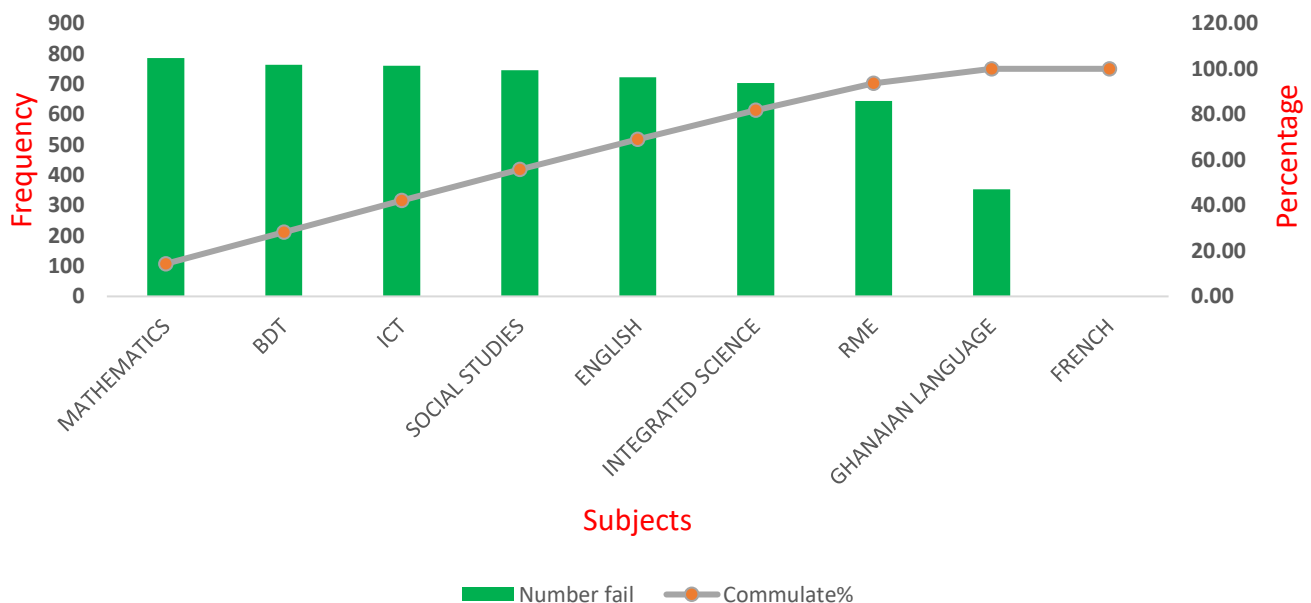


Figure 2: Pareto chart

This situation raises questions about the depth of understanding factors affecting the low performance of learners in the BECE at the Lambussie District. Therefore, the pertinent questions to address are: What causes this low academic performance of learners in BECE within the Lambussie District? Is the fault entirely that of teachers, learners or both? Or is the low performance of students caused by parents' neglect or school environmental factors? Therefore, the present study sought to identify factors affecting the poor academic performance of learners at the JHS level in the Lambussie District and recommend appropriate strategies and interventions to assist educational authorities in improving learning outcomes in the area causing students of Lambussie District to perform poorly academically to assist educational authorities in developing appropriate strategies and interventions to improve Learning outcome.

Research Questions

1. What causes learners' low academic performance in BECE within Lambussie District?
2. What policy interventions can be applied to curb the problem of low academic performance in BECE within the Lambussie District?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Some theories have been advanced to understand the phenomenon of low performance of learners in school. (Coleman, 1988; Newmann et al., 1992; Ogbu, 1992) cited in Rwechungura (2014). These theories originated from some of the social science disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, geography, and economics, and they identified a range of specific factors related to low (poor) performance. This study is, therefore, specifically guided by the following theories:

The Poor Family Socialization Theory

Poor Family Socialization refers to a child's development within his/her family. This theory proposes that dysfunctional family dynamics and inadequate parenting contribute to delinquency and academic underachievement. The theory suggests that poor family socialization hinders the development of essential life skills, leading to poor academic performance, delinquent behavior and mental health issues. A student's performance in school is directly affected by his family history, including divorce, stress, and parental behavior. The most critical aspects of this theory are the education level of the student's parents and their plans for the child. Factors of low-income family socialization include low parental expectations and a parental lack of formal education.

The Poor Family Socialization Theory was not found by a single individual. Instead, it emerged from the collective work of various researchers and theorists in sociology, psychology, and criminology (Shaw and McKay, 1942; Glueck & Glueck, 1950; Walter Reckless, 1957)

Theoretical Review

The theory adapted for this study was derived from the System's theory input-output model developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1952. According to Koontz and Weihrich (1988), the theory postulates that an organised enterprise does not exist in a vacuum; it depends on the environment in which it is established. They add that the organisation receives input from the environment and transforms it into output. As adopted in this study, the learners (inputs) are admitted into the Basic Schools from different social and economic backgrounds and various school backgrounds; when they get into the school system, the management of the school transforms them through the process of teaching and learning and the students' output is seen through their academic performance in their final examination (BECE).

The Concept of Basic Education

The concept of primary education came to the fore following the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All (1990). In its Report presented to UNESCO, “Learning the Treasure Within” (1996), the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century stated that “Basic education is the first step in attempting to attenuate the enormous disparities affecting many groups—women, rural populations, the urban poor, marginalized ethnic minorities and the millions of children not attending school and working”.

The concept of basic education has broadened the magnitude of the right to education: “extending from initial or basic education to lifelong learning”. Regarding access to primary education, the Jomtien Declaration of 1990 moved the definition of primary education beyond acquiring basic skills towards empowering children to meet their future personal and social needs (UNESCO, 2021). Basic education thus creates the opportunity to provide the right channel for children to continue to higher levels of learning. For those who cannot, it allows them to acquire work-related skills (UNESCO, 2019, p. 12). World Bank (2022, p. 15) indicated that Basic education, in its proper sense, is described as an action formulated to meet learners' basic learning needs and must correspond to the actual needs, interests, and problems of the individuals in the learning process.

In Ghana, Basic education is an eleven-year system, comprising two years of kindergarten, six years of primary, and three years of junior secondary school (MoE, 2017).

The Concept of Low Academic Performance

According to Aremu and Sokan (2003), low academic performance is a performance adjudged by the examinee, and some other significant factors are shown as falling below an expected standard. In the words of Asikhia (2010), poor academic performance is any performance that falls below a desired standard. Similarly, Okoye (1982) defines poor academic performance of the candidate in a learning situation as one in which a candidate fails to attain a set performance standard in a given evaluation exercise such as a test, an examination or a series of continuous assessments. A candidate who scores below the standard is regarded as showing poor academic performance in school. Academic failure is not only frustrating to the students and the parents, but its effects are equally grave on society regarding the dearth of human resources in all spheres of the economy and politics.

Research Hypothesis

H1: Students' low performance in the BECE exams in the Lambussie District is significantly influenced by inadequate teaching resources, insufficient teacher training, and socio-economic challenges.

H2: Addressing targeted educational interventions and support programs will improve students' performance on these exams.

Explanation of the Hypothesis

Inadequate teaching resources refer to the need for textbooks, learning materials, and technological tools essential for effective learning.

Insufficient teacher training involves the quality and extent of professional development and training teachers receive, which impacts their ability to deliver effective instruction.

Socio-economic challenges include poverty, family support, and access to extracurricular educational resources, which can affect students' academic performance.

Educational intervention and support programs are strategies or programs designed to address the identified issues, such as providing more resources, improving teacher training, and offering socio-economic support to students and their families.

This hypothesis sets the stage for a research study to identify and analyze these factors and evaluate potential solutions to improve student performance in the BECE exams.

Causes of Low Academic Performance in Basic Schools

The socio-economic development of any country is directly linked to student academic performance in schools. Learners' academic performance is essential in producing the best graduates who will one day become leaders and human capital for the country's economic and social transformation (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2016; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018; Tahir, et al., 2020). A multiplicity of factors, including the following, influences the phenomenon of low performance of learners;

The Internal School Factors

The internal school factors that closely determine learners' academic performance include teachers' motivation, class sizes, availability of textbooks, school discipline, and the learners' attitude toward learning. Other internal factors include adequate supervision, the availability of physical facilities, teaching and learning materials, and others (Eugene, 2020). Other school environmental factors identified include a limited number of teachers with high academic qualifications, inadequate teaching and learning materials, misuse of contact hours with learners, and ineffective supervision of schools by external supervisors (Stinchcomb, 2020). The teacher factors contributing to the low academic performance were lateness to school and absenteeism, inability to complete the curriculum, poor leadership skills by headmasters, and inadequate homework assigned to learners. The learner's characteristics found significant were lateness to school and absenteeism, lack of assistance with studies at home, and use of the local language (mother tongue) in the classroom.

Home Conditions or Parental Support Variables

Home conditions or parental support variables causing learners to perform poorly academically were their inability to provide textbooks and supplementary readers, low level of interaction with children's teachers, and low involvement in the Parent Teacher Association. OECD (2020), attributed the phenomenon to a lack of adequate supervision and monitoring at school, a lack of motivation for teachers, and an inadequate number of qualified teachers to fill empty classrooms. Similarly, Dunlosky et al. (2019) found that factors such as intellectual ability, poor study habits, achievement motivation (Wigfield et al., 2021), lack of vocational goals, low self-concept (Marsh et al., 2020), low socio-economic status (Li et al., 2023), low-income family structure, and anxiety contribute to educational performance. In our humble view, poor academic achievement in school may result from several factors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed mixed research design methods using a qualitative method as the principal methodology. The qualitative method was mainly used to gain insight into the problem of low performance in the BECE in the Lambussie District. The qualitative study aims at gathering an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour. Hossain (2011:145), cited in Simofrosa & Rosemary (2015), asserts that qualitative researchers study people in their natural settings to identify how their experiences and behaviours are shaped by the contexts of their lives, such as the social, economic, cultural and physical environments. Qualitative methods produce information only on the cases studied.

The qualitative approach was also used to a limited extent to determine the prevalence and frequency of opinions and perceptions of the low performance of learners in BECE within the study area. Within the qualitative approach, the study adopted a case study research design. A case study is a field of inquiry that investigates a specific area to gain access to the real-life context where the problem is visible (Merriam, 2020; Simons, 2022). It is an in-depth study of a specific individual, group, or institution in a specific context.

The case study design was used because the researchers wanted to understand why and how the problem happened. The study population comprised head teachers, teachers, learners, parents, and the District Education Exams Officer. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 Junior High Schools from 35 Junior High

Schools in the district where the problem was prevalent. Purposive sampling seeks individuals and sites that best supply relevant information to answer research questions (Cresswell, 2008, p. 214). The sample consisted of 10 head teachers, 21 teachers, 150 parents, 120 learners, and 1 district education exams officer, totaling 302 participants.

Data was collected using interviews as a primary instrument. Several strategies were used to ensure data quality. The research team provided remote guidance on data quality assurance by regularly examining the data collected from the field. The team also shared feedback to ensure that data can be verified and changes to the data collection can be implemented when necessary. The study also used secondary data from published dissertations, textbooks, journals and the Internet. This ensured that primary information was collected for in-depth analysis of the problem. Apart from formal and informal interviews, focus groups were also targeted for in-depth and accurate research work. This was to help determine how people may think about low performance using their views.

Quantitative techniques

To address students' low performance in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in the Lambussie District, a structured approach for quantitative data collection was conducted to identify critical variables in student performance data such as:

- BECE scores of students over the several years, pass and failure rates, performance in specific subjects and school-related factors.
- The student-to-teacher ratio indicates the availability of teaching materials and resources, school infrastructure quality, and teacher-related factors.
- Teacher qualifications and experience include professional development, training opportunities, teacher attendance, and punctuality.
- The socio-economic background of students, attendance rates and dropout rates, student health and nutrition, student demographics and community and parental involvement.
- Level of parental support and involvement in education.
- Community support and resources available for education.

Data Collection

Data was gathered through surveys and questionnaires: Surveys were administered to students, teachers, and parents to gather information on educational resources, teaching quality, and support systems. Structured questionnaires were employed to collect data on socio-economic status, health, and school records analysis.

Data Collection

Review of Records

A review of performance data from previous BECE results, school attendance records, dropout rates, and academic records was conducted to investigate learners' academic performance in BECE in Junior High Schools in the Lambussie District.

Interviews

Structured interviews with teachers, school administrators, and education officials were conducted to verify the performance of the BECE in the Lambussie District.

Focus Group discussions

Focus group discussions with students and parents were conducted to gain insight into the educational challenges.

Observations

Observation of classroom environments, teaching practice, and student engagement, were conducted to confirm teachers' performance in the Lambussie District.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics

Average BECE scores, pass rates, and failure rates were employed to determine the distribution of student performance across different schools and subjects. Student performance was calculated using Mean, Median, and Mode in Excel.

Correlation analysis

SPSS was used to analyse relationships between performance and variables such as teacher qualifications, student-to-teacher ratio, and school resources.

Comparative analysis

Performance data across different schools or years to identify trends and patterns were compared using SPSS.

FACTORRS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW PERFORMANCE

Student perspective

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Age	14.57 +_ 1.45	
Gender		
Female	135	44.85
Male	166	55.15
Study hours	5.03 +_ 2.18	
Received help for homework		
Never	98	32.56
Occasionally	177	58.8
Regularly	24	7.97
Regularly;Occasionally	1	0.33
Regularly;Occasionally;Never	1	0.33
Level of Confidence in Maths, science, English		
1	34	11.3
2	174	57.81
3	75	24.92
4	15	4.98
5	3	1
Access to texboks and educational materials		
No	233	77.41
Yes	68	22.59
Attend extracurricular activities		
Never	57	18.94
Occasionally	190	63.12
Regularly	54	17.94

Reasons for low performance		
Inadequate teachers,	142	47.18
Insufficient contact hours	13	4.32
lack of books	93	30.9
Lack of parental guidance and supervision	53	17.61

Source: Field data

Teacher perspective

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Subjects you teach		
All subject	2	2.6
BDT	4	5.19
Career Technology	1	1.3
Class teacher	1	1.3
Creative Arts	3	3.9
Dagaagree	2	2.6
English	19	24.68
French	2	2.6
ICT	8	10.39
KG	2	2.6
Mathematics	11	14.29
Mathematics and Ghanaian language (Da..	1	1.3
Mathematics, English, Science, RME ETC	1	1.3
RME	2	2.6
Religious and moral education	2	2.6
Science	5	6.49
Social studies	10	14.28
Number of years teaching	8.13 +_ 4.35	
Level of education		
Diploma	13	16.89
Degree	54	70.13
Masters	10	12.99
Receive regular training and professional development		
No	17	22.08
Yes	60	77.92
Mode of accessing students		
Both	29	37.66
Formative	35	45.45

Summative	13	16.88
Have adequate resource and support for teaching		
Maybe	3	3.9
No	73	94.81
Yes	1	1.3

Source: Field data

Parents prespective

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Involved in your child education		
Not at all	4	1.72
Somewhat	101	43.53
Very	127	54.74
Provide good environment for studies		
Maybe	82	35.34
No	92	39.66
Yes	58	25
How often you communicate to child teacher		
Never	40	17.24
Occasionally	169	72.84
Regularly	23	9.91
Expectation for your child education		
Average	73	31.47
High	158	68.1
Low	1	0.43
Provide additional academic support		
Maybe	4	1.72
No	189	81.47
Yes	39	16.81
Imporyance of child education in future		
Somewhat Important	43	18.53
Very Important	189	81.47
Challenges in supporting your child education		
Not Challenging	6	2.59
Somewhat Challenging	44	18.97
Very challenging	182	78.45
Strategies used to improved your child education		
Counselling	178	76.72

Setting Goals and expectation	38	16.38
Supportive Learning Environments	16	6.9

Source: Filed dat

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Interviews with most respondents revealed that the pupil's low performance in the final BECE within the Lambussie District is actual. Some factors exacerbate the low-performance rate, particularly among learners in basic schools within Lambussie District as far as BECE is concerned. These include the following:

A. Lateness and Absenteeism

Head teachers' and parents' responses to the BECE results indicate a strong correlation between habitual lateness and absenteeism and academic performance. Moreover, head teachers' responses regarding the BECE results show the significance (effect) of lateness and absenteeism on academic performance. This means that both head teachers and parents thought that lateness and absenteeism on the part of teachers and learners significantly correlated with performance, which impacted the schools' low performance within the Lambussie District. Such findings support Ingersoll & Merrill (2017), Darling-Hammond (2018), and Kraft & Papay (2020) contention that some public school teachers and authorities' attitudes toward their duties do not enhance the student learning process. This conclusion also corroborates Marzano's argument (2017) that the success or failure of the curriculum depends on the teacher. Kaur (2020) and Sorensen (2022) posited that the lack of professional standards, support and control by education authorities, and cultural demands on teachers are significant issues in this context.

On the issue of lateness and absenteeism, Mr A, a head teacher in one of the Junior High Schools within the Lambussie District, said:

"Teachers are to blame for the low performance of learners in our district due to habitual lateness and absenteeism. As a result, most teachers can only complete topics in the syllabus after the learners sit for their final examination". Mr. A (not real name)

However, teachers deny the fact that they have contributed to the problem. Nevertheless, it appears that lateness and absenteeism among teachers still exist. Another head teacher said:

"I record very few passes in my school because most teachers do not use their prepared lesson notes in the teaching-learning discourse. The few who primarily use their lesson notes to teach fail to evaluate their lessons after they have been taught to ascertain the extent of their learners' understanding of the topic taught"—Mr. K (not real name).

Based on these accounts, learners' and teachers' negative attitudes and behaviour alike have led to learners' low performance in the BECE within the Lambussie District.

B. Inadequate Physical and Material Resources (including Teaching and Learning Resources)

Data from interviews with respondents showed that logistical constraints also contributed to the low performance of learners in the BECE within the Lambussie district. Headteachers, Teachers, learners and parents' responses regarding the BECE results indicate a strong correlation between the availability of learning materials and academic performance. Moreover, students' responses regarding the BECE results show the significance of the availability of learning materials on academic performance. This means that students thought the shortcomings significantly correlated with their performance, impacting the schools' low performance.

In describing the severity and frequency of low performance, Mr M. (not real name), a head teacher, asserted that inadequate logistics such as textbooks, lesson notebooks, chalk, teaching and learning materials, etc and the long delay in their arrival to the schools by the GES (Ghana et al.) account partly for the low performance

of learners in the BECE in Lambussie District. Further interactions with respondents revealed the need to improve the supply of instructional materials to the Lambussie District. A teacher said, "The Lambussie District needs more facilities, such as textbooks and other instructional materials, especially for technical skills and drawing". Mr. T. (not real name): "Most learners have yet to see some of the instruments used for drawing". This confirms Bui's work, "The retention rate of information is significantly higher when both visual and auditory senses are engaged, with studies showing a 50% retention rate compared to 20% for auditory alone (Bui, 2020)."

This view, therefore, indicates that using a variety of teaching aids could benefit learners by significantly improving their chances of perception, understanding, and retention of subject matter. From the preceding, logistics that aid teaching and learning, when not provided on time and adequately, will primarily affect learners negatively in their final examination. From the above account, it appears that when adequate logistics are provided and on time, it will enhance teaching, learning, and hence high performance.

C. The Attitude of Learners Towards

Learning Attitude is an important learning aspect that can hinder or enhance learning. According to some of the teachers in the district, learners do not have time for studies. They would rather have time for the Internet. With evidence, a teacher showed the researchers several cell phones seized from JHS one and two learners in the school. Some learners chat on Facebook, Instagram, Tiltok and WhatsApp as teaching and learning progresses in the classroom. He added that some parents must show more concern for their wards' education. As a result, some of the learners watch television till midnight without revising their notes. He also blamed Imams and Mallams for the poor academic performance of learners. Lambussie is predominately an Islamic community and, for that matter, believes in its leaders. The belief these learners had from some of their Imams and Mallams was that they would pass their examinations very well if they could recite the Quran well. This belief made most learners not take their studies seriously because they only need to recite the Quran verses during the examination, and they will pass. It is, therefore, believed that learners are likely to perform poorly when they give more attention to other priorities than their studies.

D. Indiscipline

Another important factor responsible for learners' low performance in the BECE in schools within the Lambussie District is indiscipline among learners. Headteachers, parents, teachers, and learners all said that students no longer have the zeal to learn, and this was mostly blamed on the menace of internet fraud, popularly known as "sakawa" among the youth. Also, most of the respondents said that visiting video centres, dance halls, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy, among others, were cited as dominant indiscipline acts in their schools that negatively affect students' performance within the Lambussie District. Respondents say these play a critical role in learners' academic performance. They deliberately do these because they know no action will be taken against them. Corporal punishment, which the colonial masters introduced to instil discipline, is abolished in Ghanaian schools.

According to a teacher in one of the schools, irresponsible parents attacking teachers when their ward is punished encourages learners to be indisciplined. He added that learners' discipline is a master key to their hopes and aspirations, without which they cannot progress significantly.

The above discussion confirms a study by Duckworth (2016), which concluded that discipline is the master of one's hopes and aspirations, without which one cannot make significant progress. Kumar (2017), observes that discipline is the key that unlocks the door to wealth, happiness, and success and turns one's dreams into reality.

E. Poor Parental Control

One other factor, according to the respondents, responsible for the low performance of learners in the Lambussie District is poor parental care; according to some of the Headteachers, learners and teachers in the schools within the district claim that parents are to blame for the low performance of their wards. The majority

of the learners come to school without pocket money. Some of these attitudes of parents result from poverty and ignorance of the benefits of their ward's education. One teacher said:

“Parents are not interested in interacting with their wards’ teachers to know their wards' performance levels”. Mr. X. (not real name)

One of the head teachers said:

“Most parents do not attend PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meetings to discuss pertinent issues concerning their wards”. Mr. S. (not his real name).

A pupil during our interview in one of the schools in the Lambussie District said:

“My parents still need to provide me with appropriate school materials such as exercise books, textbooks, school uniforms, etc., and I am about to take my final exam. How will I get good grades so I can go to SHS? I think my parents do not care about my education”. I.M (not real name).

This finding is in line with Jeynes, 2024 and Hill & Tyson, 2025, who concluded that students value their education when they see the interest shown by their parents. Despite the efforts of the government and parents to improve learners' performance, these efforts yield little fruit, as learners' performance is still going down

Teachers’ Motivation

Teachers' low motivation at all educational system levels significantly challenged learners' performance. Interviews with head teachers, teachers, parents, and learners across the junior high schools indicate that low motivation caused teachers' underperformance in the teaching-learning discourse, leading to learners' low performance in the BECE in the Lambussie District.

During the interviews, the teachers were unanimous in saying that if their employer takes a second look at their motivation package in terms of salary and other allowances as well as their promotions, it will encourage them to stay in the classroom and teach. One of the teachers said:

“Only when the employer seriously considers our plight can it be done to curb this incident”—Mr. B (not real name).

This supports the works of Gallagher et al. (2020) and Kunter et al. (2019), who said that work motivation indeed influences teachers’ work performance. It also aligns with Battistich (2019) and Ryan & Deci (2017), who concluded that employees, including teachers, are motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors and that employers should overlook none of the two sets.

The above discussion shows that teachers are not satisfied with the motivation given to them. They are convinced that for performance to improve, the employer will have to take a second look at the motivation package of the employee, in this case, the teachers.

F. Ineffective Supervision of Schools by External Supervisors

A significant cause of the poor performance of learners in the Basic Education Certificate Examination in the Lambussie District is poor supervision. According to one of the teachers in the District, circuit supervisors are only interested in lesson notes rather than how effectively a teacher presents his or her class lessons. He added that if supervisors were interested in how competent a teacher is in class and how frequently he or she gives exercises or homework and marks, learners' academic performance would improve in the district. He argued that low teacher absenteeism and a high level of group involvement in planning for curriculum instruction can enhance performance. This confirmed the assertion by Glatthorn & Jailall (2020), that effective and efficient management of curriculum and instruction in educational institutions is a prerequisite for stability and improvement of academic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Proper guidance and counselling systems should be instituted in schools so learners can regain interest in learning.
2. Parents should live up to their responsibilities. They should be encouraged to actively show interest in the education of their wards to keep them in school and build a better future for themselves and their communities.
3. The government, NGOs, and PTA should do well to put up learning facilities in our schools. Government and NGOs working in the education sector should provide logistics such as chalk, textbooks, registers, exercise books, and others in primary schools to urge learners to stay and learn for a brighter future.
4. School Improvement Support Officers (SISO) should be provided with means of transport to visit schools within their jurisdiction at least twice a week to prevent lateness and absenteeism.
5. Teachers who often absent themselves from school without reason should have their salary blocked or withdrawn from the teaching service
6. Teachers should be appropriately motivated by their employers regarding promotion, salary, and other allowances to enable them to stay in school.
7. Parents and teachers should institute measures to ensure students are well-behaved at home and in school.
8. Management of the Ghana Education Service should engage parents, community members, and all stakeholders in improving learning outcomes.
9. Management of the Ghana Education Service should provide leadership training for all headteachers of the JHSs in the Lambussie District.

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