

Perspective Analysis of the Reputation of Public Basic School Teachers in Ghana through Students. The Case of Accra in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to assess the perception of students about the reputation of public basic school teachers in Ghana. Overall, 377 respondents from three (3) geo-political zones (Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies) in Accra which doubles as the capital city of the Republic of Ghana and the regional capital of the Greater Accra Region were selected. The study revealed an overall positive perception of the students about the teachers' reputation but also very critical shortfalls concerning the teachers' professional competences. Personal and professional reputations as well as their trickling effects on students' learning outcomes and career choices were also noted. The study recommends further studies which should increase the sample size; and include responses from the teachers and head teachers as well.

Keywords: Students Perception, Teachers' Reputation, Public Schools, Society

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Education plays a major role in the development of every individual and nation. Quality education serves as the foundation for the capital development of the human in every nation; and drives social transformation and economic growth (Adebayo, 2013; Asare & Nti, 2014). The teacher defines education as a prerequisite for development therefore the teacher plays a solid role in providing quality education and harnessing its gains. The interaction between the teacher and the learner is key in the process of education and the achievement of quality education (Adebayo, 2013; Asare & Nti, 2014). This is because one cannot function without the other (Adebayo, 2013). While the teacher is expected to possess the professional knowledge to impart to the learners, he is also a mentor, supervisor, and counselor; and in some communities a community leader. The ability of the teacher to instruct eloquently and coherently is a reflection of his or her knowledge based, pedagogical skills and communication skills (Adebayo, 2013).

An academically honest teacher discharges his duty transparently and responsibly while maintaining a high level of integrity by excellently pursuing the objectives of education as indicated by regulatory authorities (Adebayo, 2013). Furthermore, a teacher of high integrity should also satisfy the needs of the learners and community. Thus, teachers are expected to work towards the maintenance of institutional integrity as well as protecting their personal and professional reputations (Adebayo, 2013).

In Ghana, the reputation of teachers, especially in public basic schools, has suffered inimical or injurious publicity in recent times. Recurrent media reportage about teachers' behavioral patterns, academic and professional integrity, leaves stakeholders (governments, regulatory bodies, parents, etc.) apprehensive about the outcome of their wards' education. The situation is worsened by the continuous under-performance by public school candidates in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) in recent years (Gakure, Mukuria, & Kithae, 2013).

It is with this setback that this paper sought to assess students' perception about the reputation of public basic school teachers in Ghana. Students' perceptions about teachers are relevant information that can be used to reshape teachers to effectiveness (Coats, Swierenga, & Wickert, 1972; OCDE, 2014). The study therefore uses students' ratings and feedback about the teachers' teaching methods and classroom management skills, attitudes and personalities, and teacher "performance" (proxy for professional competence) and statuses of teachers in the society, to evaluate the reputation of public basic school teachers' in Ghana. The study hopes the findings will make vital contributions to academia and will translate into shaping the education policy directions of stakeholders in Ghana and beyond.

The teacher represents a vital stakeholder in knowledge impartation and character formation in any educational institution (Adebayo, 2013; Asare & Nti, 2014). For years, many have referred to teaching as a "noble" profession with its impeccable reputation. In fact, the teacher's role transcends the physical boundaries of the classroom. In addition to serving in an instructional capacity in the classroom, the teacher is equally a mentor, supervisor, counselor and community leader (Adebayo, 2013; Asare & Nti, 2014). In the end the teacher is expected to nurture, develop and shape young minds and talents into well refined global citizens, intelligent workforce and critical thinkers for the good of society (Adebayo, 2013; BOADU, 2013). The enormity on the teacher in shaping the future of the society therefore compels him or her to maintain high levels of

integrity and reputation (Adebayo, 2013; BOADU, 2013; Lopez et al.). Teaching is a multifaceted and demanding activity which involves excellence in content delivery and technique, efficient classroom management and command. The teacher's behavior and actions are therefore expected to be consistent with a set of moral or ethical principles and standards that are embraced by individuals as well as institutions (Adebayo, 2013).

Students' perceptions about teachers have been explored severally in extant literature on education to assess teachers' performance, effectiveness, classroom management, mastery of content, attitude, personality, communication skills and other teacher factors (Abiola, 2013; Adebayo, 2013; Coats et al., 1972; Essuman, 2010; Gaertner, 2014). Students' perceptions about teachers represent significant information about teacher effectiveness (Adebayo, 2013; Ampadu, 2012). Collecting data from students on this issue provides genuine feedback from students' interactive experiences with the teachers (Adebayo, 2013; Ampadu, 2012). Furthermore, a number of studies have shown that the use of students' ratings to assess teachers is reliable, adaptable and is one of the best methods of evaluating teachers' instructional practices (Adebayo, 2013; Ampadu, 2012).

In a study on stakeholders' perception of teachers' integrity in elementary schools in Nigeria, the teachers scored creditably in the mastery of subject ratings, job performances and human relations. However, the study reported inadequacies in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), examination malpractices and resourcefulness on the teachers' integrity (Adebayo, 2013). A similar study on the teaching and learning of English language in Nigerian secondary schools found a significant relationship between teachers' attitude, methods of teaching and classroom management and students (Abiola, 2013). Another study on students' on mathematics in or on educational zones in Nigeria concluded that the students being influenced positively by teachers in mathematics, communication skills (Etuk, Afangideh, & Uya, 2013).

Consistent with the methodology and findings of parallel studies, a similar study in Australia identified merits and demerits on teachers' performances. These findings provide valuable tools to stakeholders in education in shaping the teaching and learning process (Dalley-Trim, 2007).

In Ghana, colleges and universities extensively use students' rating and feedback on teachers to evaluate their performance and integrity (Ampadu, 2012). A very few studies have assessed teachers output by examining students (Ampadu, 2012). In a related study on mathematics in Ghana, majority of the students reported that teachers' actions and inactions respectively impact positively and negatively on their learning acquisitions (Ampadu, 2012).

The downward trend in the reputation of teachers in Ghana in general and those of public basic schools in particular has recently triggered isochronal media reportage. In turn the reportage arouses stakeholders' apprehension about the future of their wards. The media reportage concurs with the ongoing incessant under-performance of largely public school candidates in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) (Gakure et al., 2013). The education system in Ghana is divided into the following categories: Pre-School, Primary School (Grades 1 to 6), Junior High School (Grades 7 to 9), Senior High School (Grades 10 to 12), and Post-Secondary Institutions. The Primary Schools and the Junior High Schools (JHS), together make up the "Basic School" system (Akyeampong, 2009; Oduro, 2000). JHS is the first terminal point in Ghana's education system that earns the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). Thereafter, the pupil can pursue the secondary cycle (Akyeampong, 2009). The role of the teacher is therefore very demanding especially at the basic school level because it determines the student's academic progress.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

2.1.1 Population and Sampling

The target population for the study was Six (6) public basic schools randomly selected to represent all public basic school students in Accra. The study sample was drawn from three (3) geo-political zones (metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies) in Accra which doubles as the capital city of the Republic of Ghana and the regional capital of the Greater Accra Region. However, before the research, a pilot test of the questionnaires was done in six (6) schools in these three (3) geo-political zones (Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies) in Accra which were not within the sample selected and the results were used to correct some anomalies on the instrument.

Randomly selected students from two (2) schools within each geo-political zone participated in the study. The sample included 150 students in the Lower Primary level (Grade 1- 3; Age: 4-9years), 150 students in the Upper Primary level (Grade 4 - 6; Age: 10 -12years) and 150 students in the Junior High School level (JHS 1 - 3; Age: 13 -15years). In all, 450 students were given the questionnaire.

2.1.2 Measures and Data analysis

We adopted a well-structured paper-and-pencil survey questionnaire in assessing the students' perceptions about the reputation of public basic school teachers. The questionnaire included some demographic characteristics of respondents and a series of questions for each variable used: – Teaching Method and Classroom Management (TMCM), Teachers' Attitude and Personality (TAP), Teachers' Performance (TP) and Teachers' Statuses in Society (TSS). Some of the questionnaires were as per literature (Abiola, 2013; Adebayo, 2013; Coats et al., 1972; Essuman, 2010; Etuk et al., 2013; Kane, Mallon, & Butler, 2006; Lawal, 2012; OCDE, 2014; Pelcerová, 2013; Schleicher, 2011) while others were according to survey pretest and adapted to the Ghanaian settings.

A seven-point Likert scale was adopted, with anchors ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 7(strongly agree). Data collected were statistically computed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 and Epi-Info statistical software's. The results were analyzed and interpreted. Tables and figures were utilized to report the research data and results of statistical figures. The data were first captured into spreadsheet format with the aid of Epi-Info, a data capturing and analysis software SPSS was the main analysis software because of its high flexibility in data management and manipulations. In order to totally eliminate errors in data entry, all data were entered through the Epi-Info software interface. The Epi-Info provides an interface just like capturing of data as they appear on the respondent questionnaires in a faster and accurate manner. Inter-rater reliability was assured using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient (α) test. Generally, a value of around 0.7 was considered adequate to show internal consistency as per (Agyeiwaa et al., 2015; Nie, Bent, & Hull, 1970; Oppong et al., 2015; Tiong, He, & Rayman-Bacchus, 2010).

The α values for TMCM (0.76), TAP (0.78) ,TP (0.86) and TSS (0.72) all satisfied acceptability consistency measure as per (Buabeng-Andoh, 2012; Gliem & Gliem, 2003) and provided strong

support for the reliability of the study instrument. Overall, there was forty-one (41) items measured. TMCM and TSS had twelve (12) items apiece measured. TAP and TP had ten (10) and seven (7) items separately measured.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Summary Statistics on respondents

Overall, 377 students out of 450 invited participated in the study, representing 89.8% response rate. 106 (28.12%) of the respondents were in the Lower Primary level (grade 1-3, 55 males and 51 females), 137(36.34%) in the Upper Primary level (grade 4-6, 60 males and 77 females) and 134 (35.54%) were in JHS (grade7-9, 80 males and 54 females). Table 1 shows the summary of statistics on the participants.

Table 1: Summary of Statistics on Respondents

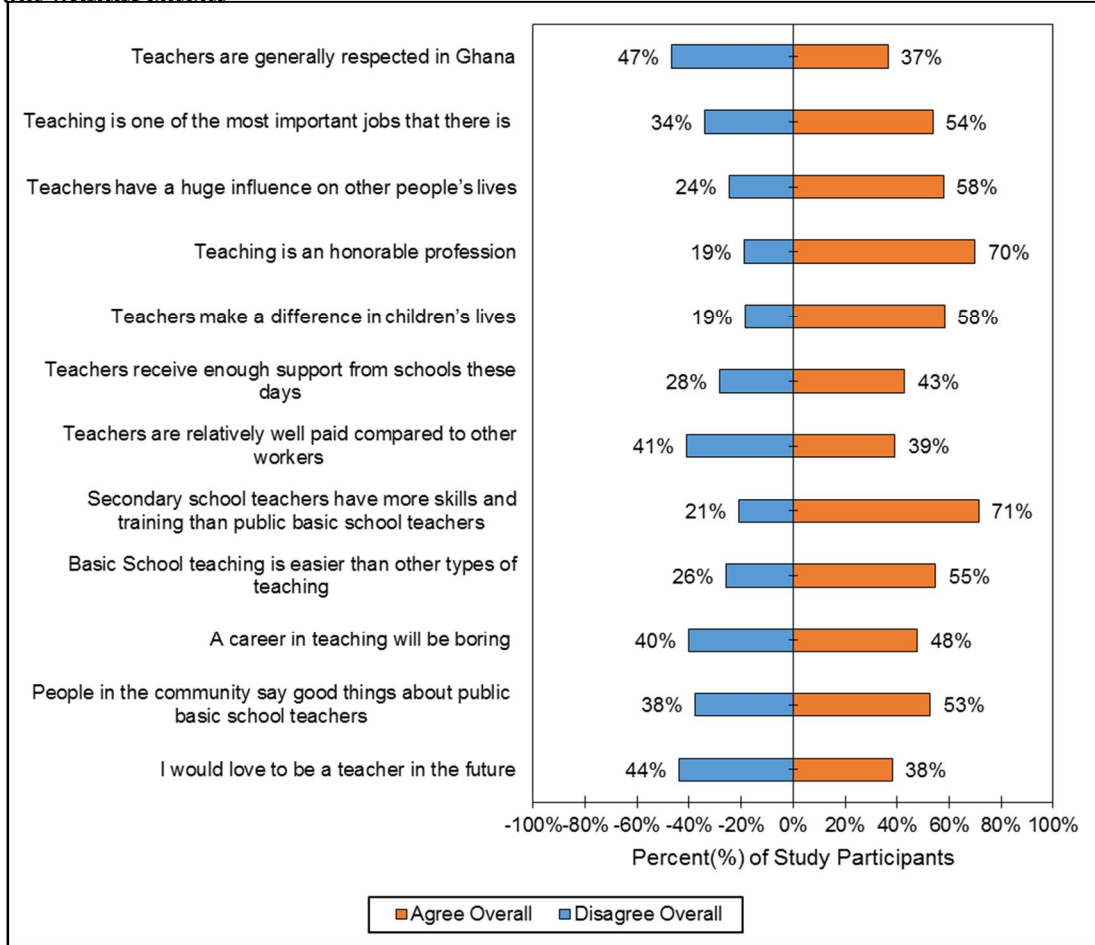
Variable	Frequency			Total	%
	Lower Primary (Grade 1-3)	Upper Primary (Grade 4-6)	JHS (Grade 7-9)		
<i>Gender of Respondent</i>					
Male	55	60	80	195	51.72
Female	51	77	54	182	48.28
<i>Age of Respondent(Years)</i>					
Younger than 6	3	0	0	3	0.80
6-9	92	8	0	100	26.53
10-12	11	117	1	129	34.22
13-15	0	12	131	143	37.93
More than 15	0	0	2	2	0.53
<i>Duration of stay in Current School(Years)</i>					
Less than 1 year	17	8	9	34	9.02
1-3	67	16	21	104	27.59
4-6	22	77	12	111	29.44
More than 6	0	36	92	128	33.95

Students' Perception about Teachers' Teaching methods and Classroom Management (TMCM)

Figure 1 shows the summary of students' perception on their teacher's teaching methodology and classroom management. 50% and 49% of the respondents respectively disagreed that the teachers attend to individual students' needs and are patient with slow learners in class. Although majority of the respondents agreed to the teachers' use of different teaching approaches to aid their understanding of lessons, 53% disagreed the use of pictures, real objects and videos in teaching.

Concerning classroom management, majority of the respondents agreed for all the measures. Generally, 50% of the respondents agreed that their teachers’ teaching methods and classroom management enable them to understand the lessons.

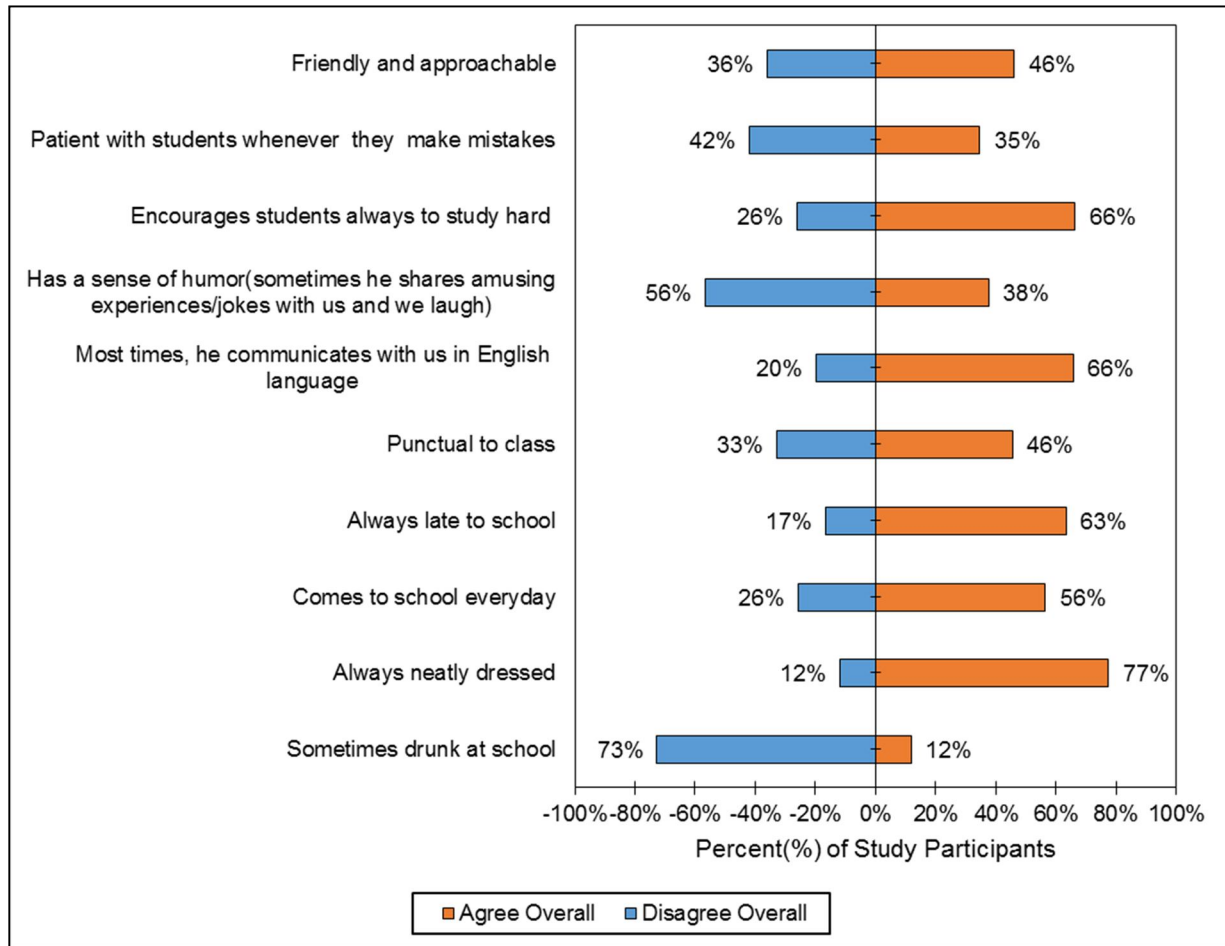
Figure 1: A Summary of Students' Perception about Teacher's Teaching Methods and Classroom Management



Students' Perception on Teachers' Attitude and Personality (TAP)

Overall, the respondents agreed to all but three of the items that measured teachers’ attitude and personality. Whereas 42% of respondents disagreed that their teachers are patient with them whenever they make mistakes, 56% disagreed that the teachers have a sense of humor. An overwhelming 73% of respondents disagreed that the teachers are sometimes drunk at school. Figure 2 shows the summary of the students’ perception on their teachers’ attitude and personality.

Figure 2: Summary of Students' Perception on Teachers' Attitude and Personality

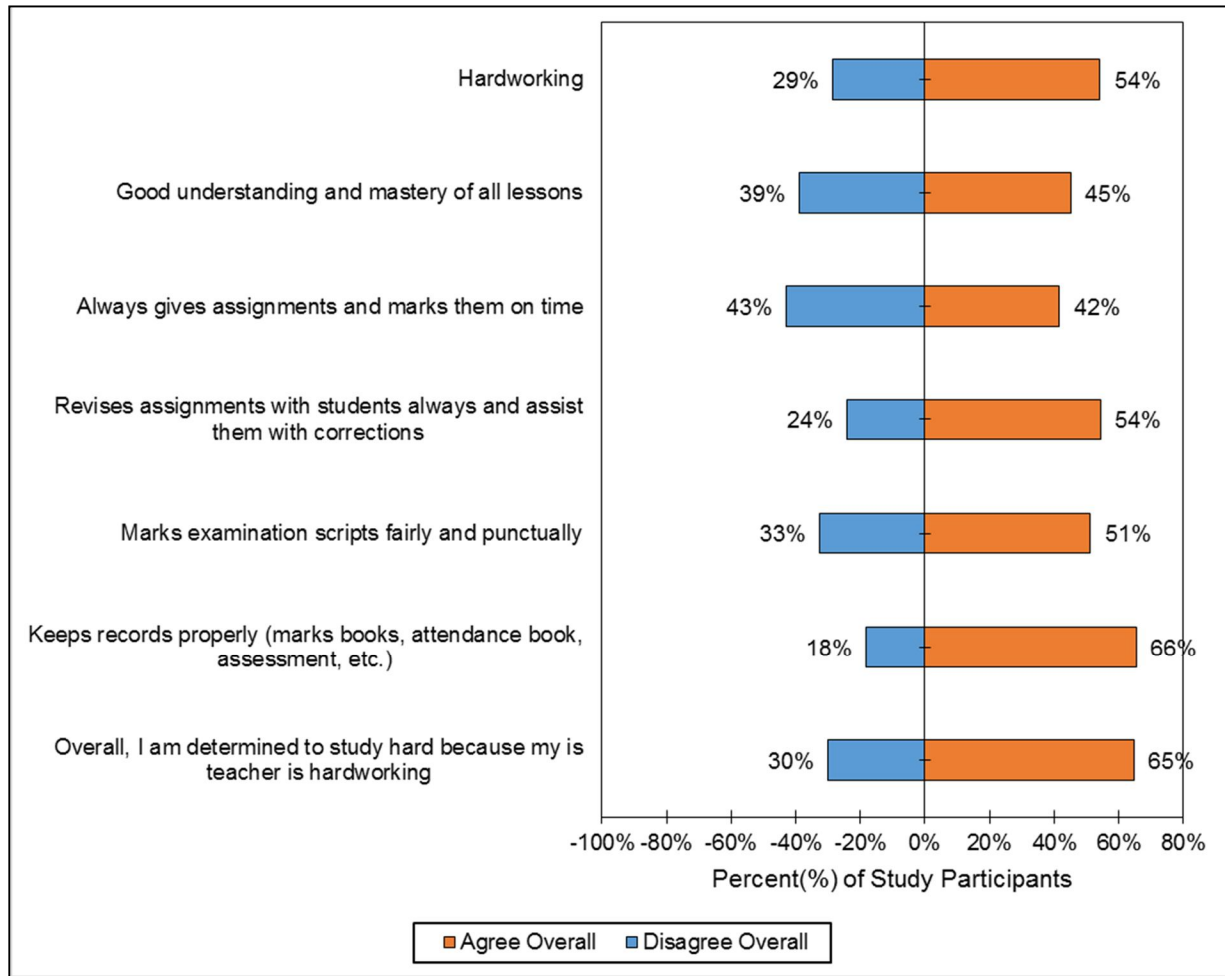


Field work carried out in 2016

Students' Perception on Teachers' Performance (TP)

The perception of the respondents about the teachers' performance swings in the direction of agreement with all the items measured but for one. The respondent disagreed that the teachers always give assignment and correct them on time (43% agreed against 42%). In terms of keeping proper records, 66% of the respondents overwhelmingly agreed. In general, though 29% of respondents disagreed that the teachers are hardworking, 65% of respondents agreed that they (students) are determined to study hard because the teachers are hardworking. Figure 3 shows the summary of responses on students' perception on teachers' Performance.

Figure 3: Summary of Students' Perception on Teacher's Performance

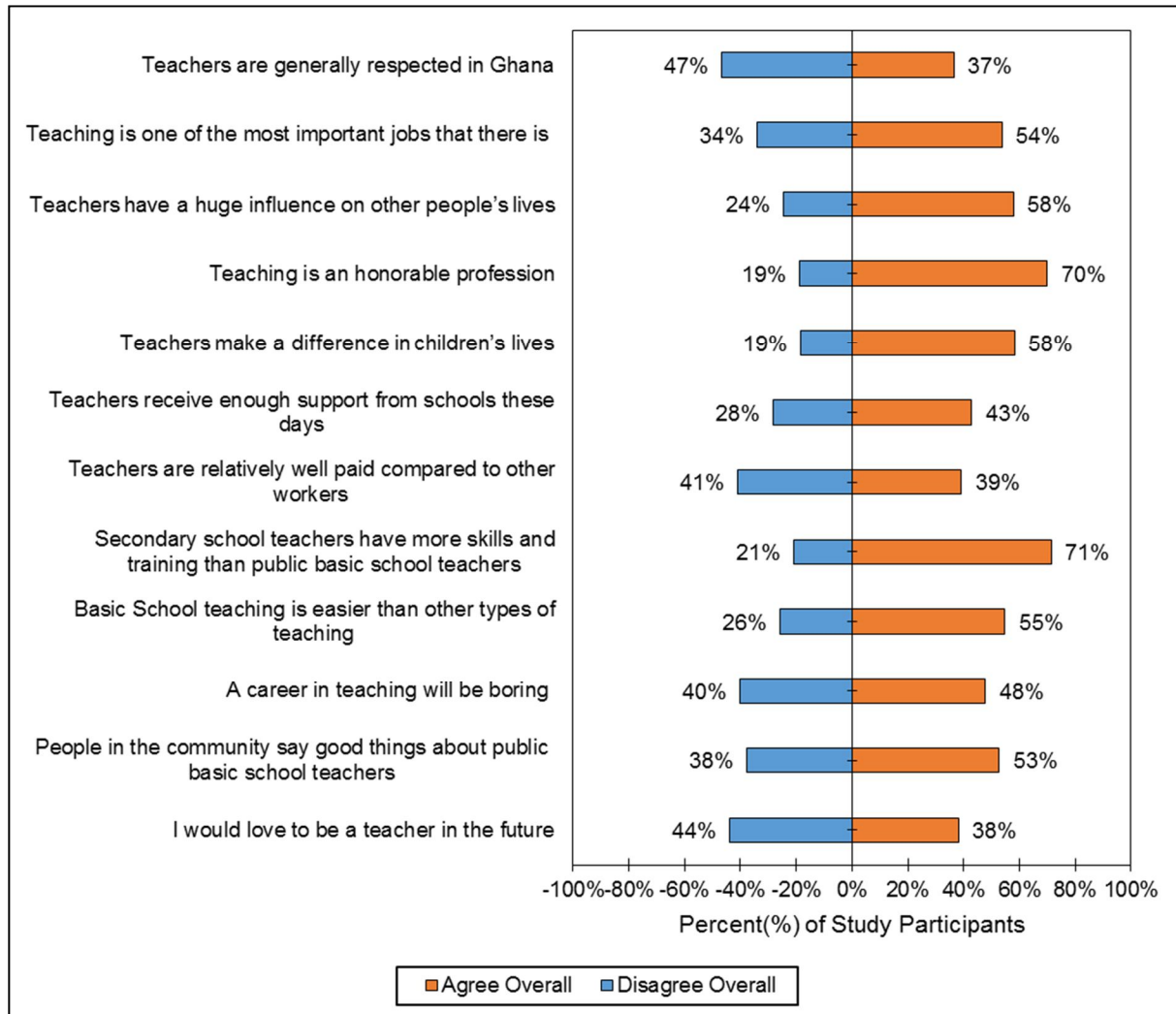


Field work carried out in 2016

Students' Perception on Teachers' Status in Society

About teachers' statuses in the Ghanaian society, 70% of the respondents significantly agreed that teaching is an honorable profession. 54% said that it is one of the most important jobs and that 58% said that teachers have a huge influence on other people's lives. Teachers receive enough support from schools these days were supported by 30% of the respondent, 41% disagreed that teachers are relatively well paid compared to other workers. Strikingly, 71% of the respondents were of the opinion that senior secondary school teachers have more training and skills than basic school teachers. Furthermore, 55% of the respondents agreed that teaching in basic schools is easier than other levels. Despite 53% of the respondents agreeing that people in the community say good things about teachers, 41% disagreed that they would love to be teachers in future. Figure 4 shows the summary of the responses on students' perception on teachers' status in the society.

Figure 4: Summary of Students' Perception on Teachers' Status in Society



Field work carried out in 2016

4.0 DISCUSSION

The perceptions of students about their teachers eventually affect their learning outcomes. Students do not only consider their teachers as role models and authorities but also repository of knowledge and information especially in the formal classroom environment. Drawing from the teachers' dispositions, students formulated attitudes and perceptions to place on them (the teachers).

Several themes emerged when examining the results of this study. Generally, the students seem to have an overall positive perception about their teachers. That notwithstanding, the results portray some kinks in the students' perception about their teachers' reputation measured by (1) Teachers' Teaching Methods and Classroom Management(TMCM); (2) Teachers' Attitudes and Personalities (TAP); (3) Teachers' Performances (TP) and Teachers' Statuses in Society(TSS). For instance, the teachers are said to be impatient with slow learners and pay no attention to the individual needs of the students. Moreover, while the students agreed that the teachers use different approaches to

enable understanding of lessons, they also significantly disagreed on the use of certain key teaching and learning materials. In particular, the inadequate use of appropriate teaching and learning materials or lack of them. These have been cited by other studies as a major cause of poor academic performance among students especially in public basic schools in Ghana (Etsey, 2005; Ghanney & Aniagyei). Similarly, other studies have found a significantly positive acknowledgement from students about the teaching methodology and classroom management skills, and the students' attitudes towards studies (Etuk et al., 2013).

Concerning the teachers' attitudes and Personalities, the study has interesting results. 10% of students disagreed that the teachers are friendly and approachable, 7% disagreed that the teachers are lenient on them when they make mistakes in their studies and 18% disagreed that their teachers have a sense of humor. The attitude of teachers towards their students has been found in several studies to impact on students' performances and their attitudes towards the subject (Mensah, Okyere, & Kuranchie, 2013; Odiri, 2011; Standslause, Maito, & Ochiel, 2013). The learning of certain key subjects like mathematics depends on the teaching methods, the active or passive participation by the learners on the learning processes, and the environment (Mensah et al., 2013; Standslause et al., 2013). A teacher's and students' positive attitudes during teaching provide enough motivation for the teacher to work extra for the good of the students (Odiri, 2011; Standslause et al., 2013). Students in turn are motivated and perform better when they realize hard work and concern by the teachers (Mensah et al., 2013; Odiri, 2011; Standslause et al., 2013).

Teachers lateness to, and absenteeism from schools are key factors that have been cited as among the causes of poor performances among public basic schools in Ghana (Etsey, 2005; Ghanney & Aniagyei). Our findings show that 33% as against 46% agreed that the teachers are punctual to classes. An overwhelmingly 63% report late to schools. In a related study on the poor academic performance of students from selected public basic schools in Obuasi municipality in Ghana, irregular attendance of teachers to schools was reported to be one of the most significant contributing factors (Ghanney & Aniagyei). Teacher absenteeism and or lateness to schools in particular are cited as very prevalent in developing countries. A six country study involving Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Peru and Uganda reported a 19% absence rate by primary school teachers. Rating ranged from manageable to alarming (Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, Muralidharan, & Rogers, 2006; Rogers & Vegas, 2009). A comparative study in Zambia reported a rate of 18% (Das, Dercon, Habyarimana, & Krishnan, 2007). The results of this study are therefore consistent with extant literature.

Our findings provide an indication of the relation between teachers' and students'. There is a general agreement among the students that their resolution to learn hard is due to the hard work of the teachers'. This is in fact consistent with the findings of other studies (Mensah et al., 2013; Odiri, 2011). A study in Indonesia, for instance, found that pupils motivation for high achievement was not only dependent on the pupils but also teachers (Maulana, Helms-Lorenz, & van de Grift, 2015). Less than 7% of statements from students however revealed a high level of division on their opinions about the teachers' performance: Good understanding and mastery of all lessons, always giving assignments and correcting on time. It is an indictment from the students on the reputation, credibility and less knowledgeability of the teachers in the lessons they teach. Since students highly regard the teachers to be endowed with high level of knowledge, any adverse perception could have dire consequences on the students' motivation to learn, and subsequently on their learning outcomes.

Public basic school teachers in Ghana are largely perceived as having lower statuses despite sometimes being thought of as more important to providing the foundation for future learning. Interestingly, majority of the students in this study accorded higher statuses on the skills and training of teachers of senior secondary schools. It is important, however, to recognize that despite the low level of statuses of teachers in society, people still do value and admire teachers and what they do. For instance, majority are of the opinion that teaching is an honorable profession that highly impacts on people's lives. The society's opinion on teachers from the students' perspectives are primarily influenced by their personal experiences and by the perception of others, for example, families, friends and the media (Dalley-Trim, 2007; Kane et al., 2006). Despite the honor that the teaching profession comes with, majority of the students disagreed to take up teaching in future.

4.1 Findings

A number of findings that emerged from the study are summarized below:

- ❖ Teachers are perceived as impatient especially with slow performing students, and pay no attention to individual needs of students.
- ❖ Inadequate use of appropriate teaching and learning materials or lack of them is a point to deal with.
- ❖ Students perceive that teachers are unfriendly and unapproachable.
- ❖ Teachers lateness to schools and classes, as well as irregular attendance to schools was highly reported by the students.
- ❖ The negative perceptions that students have on teachers demean the teachers' status in the society.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess the perception of students on the reputation of public basic school teachers in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. The use of students' perceptions in assessing teachers' characteristics and teaching is a widely used measure that contributes to understanding the quality of teachers, teaching practices and behaviors. Students' perceptions are based on their experiences over time and not just an isolated occurrence. This therefore constitutes very important information. The study found an overall positive perception of the students on their teachers but revealed very critical shortfalls about the teachers' professional competences, personal and professional reputation as well as its effects on students' learning outcomes and career choices.

5.2 Recommendations

Teaching is an art which needs knowledgeable people to execute the artistic values in it to the learner. Government, regulatory bodies and so on should see teaching as a life-long process which seeks to provide adequate armory of skills to the teacher to enable him/her to teach competently and also manage his/her classroom activities. It is recommended that regulatory bodies under the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Ghana should occasionally organized in-service training to old teachers as well as newly recruit teachers to equip them with new trends of ideas in the teaching field. Ideally, these regulatory bodies under the education ministry can adopt a rotational policy system of teachers in the service. Under this policy, teachers can be transferred from one school in a

metropolis, municipal or district to another to either tap or share the experience he/she has acquired with the people that he/she meets in his/her new environment.

On the aspect of teachers' performance, attitude and personality, there should be an effective supervision and monitoring team in place. The supervision and monitoring team should be composed of experienced teacher educators. This supervision and monitoring team should be separated from the Ghana Education Service (GES) and should be autonomous but should occasionally report their activities directly to the Ministry of Education (MOE). Their main duty will be supervising and monitoring of teachers' activities before, during and even after classes if the need arises. They should always offer constructive criticism to teachers if only it is worth it. Teachers who will exhibit unwanted behaviors per the code of ethics of teachers must be advised to desist from that but if persuasion fails they must axed that person from the profession to serve as a deterrent to other colleagues in the profession. The establishment of this supervision and monitoring team must be backed by law so as to prevent the government from influencing their activities but they must however be accountable to the people whom they serve.

With regards to teachers' status in the society, much will depend on the government. Globally, education has been identified as the pivots around which countries development revolves and the key personalities behind knowledge impart are teachers. If teachers are considered to some extent as the main architect of imparting of knowledge during the teaching and learning process, then they deserve better. The government and the GES must fight the canker of low morale in the teaching sector. The ordinary Ghanaian does not respect the teaching profession as a result of the poor remuneration in it such as low salary, inadequate housing facilities and so on. The government must put measures in place to remunerate teachers with regards to their salary and other conditions of service to be at par with other professions. The government by so doing will help to restore the status and dignity of teachers and also it will eradicate the bad perception people have about the teaching profession.

Though the findings are very informative and relevant to policy, we recommend further studies with the use of a larger sample, probably, to include all the regions of Ghana. We also recommend future studies to include responses from the teachers and head teachers as well.

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