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Daniel Inchaneh, Richard Adu Poku

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## Assessing the Operational Challenges of Private Senior High Schools in Ghana: The Case of Action Senior High School

Daniel Inchaneh

Seoul Hanyoung University South Korea

Email: Inchaneh134@yahoo.com

Richard Adu Poku

Yemyung Graduate University South Korea

Email: richardadupoku2045@gmail.com

### Abstract

The number of public Senior High Schools (SHSs) in Ghana take about 68% of the Junior High School graduates leaving the rest to their fate. Private Senior High Schools therefore become relevant in absorbing the difference. Yet, these private SHSs are without operational challenges. This paper looked at some of the operational challenges of private Senior High Schools in Ghana using Action Senior High School as a case study.

Using a descriptive research approach to gather data primarily from the management staff of Action Senior High School through questionnaires, and secondly from magazines and other sources such as quotes by researches on related topics, challenges including funding, lack of working capital, poor staff motivation and remuneration, lack of facilities and equipment, increasing staff turnover, lack of conducive environment for learning and poor conditions of service, were gathered as some of the operational challenges confronting private senior schools in Ghana.

These challenges greatly impact academic performance of students and smooth teaching and learning in privates SHSs in Ghana.

**Keywords:** Ghana Senior High Schools, Operational Challenges, Quality Education, Education in Ghana, Private High Schools

### Introduction

The development of education in Ghana is closely tied to the socio-political changes that have taken place from colonial times to the present day. The transformation processes have seen the education system expand from the first castle schools (which only targeted populations linked with the social, economic and religious interests of the early missionaries, colonialists and adventurers) to the spread of formal education across the country, including access to free schooling, the inclusion of technical and vocational education, and improved teacher training.

It is identified that one of the factors that contributed to the high level of poverty in developing countries is lack of quality adjusted education (Hanushek & Kimko, 2000; Barro & Lee, 2001; Hanushek & Wobmann, 2006). It therefore became one of the millennium goals that the world at large plans to attain in order to decrease the poverty level in the society. As a matter of fact it is this illiteracy that lead to the introduction of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) that was introduced in Ghana. It is envisaged that every child in Ghana should have a formal education up to at least senior high school. In this regard the government has put in so many measures to help achieved this goal.

However the number of Senior High Schools that exist in Ghana takes 68% of the Junior High School graduates leaving the rest to their fate. It is at this juncture that the relevance of private SHS is felt. The current Ghana has seen a lot of private senior high schools being established. It is undeniable fact that this private SHS has contributed positively to the development of education in the Ghanaian economy. Thousands of JHS graduates who have no hope of attaining Senior High education have become SHS graduates through the operations of the private SHS in Ghana. After 15 years of educational reforms approximately 61% of Ghanaian children enter JHS. The output of the JHS is about 230,000. About 70,000 gain admission into SHS 1 and about 14,000 enter formal technical and vocational institutes. Others are in the job market, world of work, or are enrolled in various private sector secondary and technical and vocational training institutes.

### **Profile of the Action Senior High School**

#### *Brief History*

Action Progressive Institute started initially as “ACTION CLASSES” in the year 1993. It was initially in the form of vacation classes in rented premises. In the year 1996, the institute started organizing University Entrance Examination for Senior Secondary Schools (S.S.Ss) – now Senior High Schools (S. H. Ss.) – candidates who opted to enter the various universities. During the same period, the Institute was running Remedial Classes for S. H. S. re-sitters. After the cancellation of the University Entrance Examination, much attention was given to the Remedial classes. Later on, the classes grew to the extent that authorities decided to register the school as a Full Time Remedial School. In the year 2000, the school started the full time Senior Secondary School with two main courses – Business and General Arts.

As of now, the school has really progressed to the extent that it runs almost all courses in the Senior Secondary School Programme. The School started its Technical section nine years ago. The Basic section is now up to Junior High School (J. H. S. 3). Action Progressive Institute now has as many as 10 Remedial Schools in Accra, Kumasi and almost all the Regional Capitals and some selected towns in the country. Action Progressive Institute registered almost Two Thousand Five Hundred students throughout the country.

#### *Regular School Population*

The school is currently having One Thousand and Twenty Nine (1029) students in the regular Secondary Section. Besides, the school runs other classes for J. H. S. graduates – Pre – S. H. S., Computer training and Evening school for workers. In the Basic School section, the population is around Four Hundred and Fifty (450) students. The Institute has been graded as grade ‘A’ school by the Ghana Education Service (G.E.S.)

### *Infrastructure and Other Facilities*

The School is blessed with vast land of about Five (5) acres. The school is having a four (4) Storey girls Hostel at the remedial. There is also boys' hostel and about three different structures for classes. The main school premises has complex storey buildings with a great number of classrooms. The school has computers, typewriters and other office equipment. The school is having two separate properties at Kwame Nkrumah Circle – Accra and similar properties at different locations in the country.

### *Tuition*

Action Progressive Institute is blessed with graduate tutors, some of them are second degree holders. Other well experience tutors are always employed from various Institutions to strengthen the staff position of the Institute on part-time bases.

### *Performance and sports*

The Institute has been performing very well in the West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) final examinations. This has really made the Institute popular in the eyes of all Ghanaians. Many people come from all locations in the country and beyond to school in the Institute. The school has been doing very well in football and athletics. The school has won many trophies in both football and athletics. It is now the current athletics and football champions of Greater Accra Private Senior High Schools.

### *The Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives*

To be recognized as the centre of excellence in the provision of prompt service in the area of education, transport and general services. The school's objective include

1. To create employment for not less than one thousand five hundred (1,500) personnel's.
2. To promote computer literacy, especially to office workers and students.
3. To help complete illiterates and drop-outs to read and write and also to help S.H.S re-sitters to better their grades.
4. To provide a sound working environment where staff can maximize their potentials in the company.

### **Problem Statement**

Education has the tendency to transform society, families and their generations and the nation as a whole. One important level of education that provides direction to children upon which they build up their career is the Senior High School. In this perspective, one cannot ignore the importance of SHS in the educational curriculum. The effort of the government in providing SHS education have not really helped so much since most of the schools lack equipment and logistics needed in providing quality education in exception of few public schools that are fully equipped but found in the urban areas only. The existence of private senior high schools cannot be underestimated in supplementing the effort of the government. Most people only look at the private SHS from business point of view without evaluating their role in the socio economic development of the nation. Private senior high schools for the past 15years have proven their superiority in terms of academic performance. The fact of these SHS being private institutions have denied them access to some resources and facilities that public SHS enjoy, these include textbooks, ICT facilities, capitation grant etc. Lack of these facilities and other benefits that public schools are opened to have left the private SHS to

encounter challenges in their operations. The study therefore seeks to find out the operational challenges that confront Action Senior High School as a second cycle institution in Ghana and determine the extent to which the operational challenges hinder smooth running and academic performance of Action Senior High school?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study has been conducted to determine the challenges that private Senior High Schools are exposed to and how the challenges impede successful running and academic performance delivery of these schools. The study has been conducted under these specific objectives;

1. To determine the challenges that confront the operations of private senior high schools.
2. To examine how the challenges affect the performance of the private senior high schools.
3. To determine measures that can be adopted to curb the challenges.

### **Significance of the Study**

The challenges assessed have impact on all private senior high schools hence the findings may be applicable to the following categories of people;

The proprietors or the shareholders and board of Directors of senior high schools may understand the challenges that are encountered, the cause and the influence on running the school successfully.

Parents whose wards are in private Senior High Schools may also found the study to be significant since they may get to understand from the management point of view what goes into running private SHSs and the effort that management put in place to provide secondary education to their wards. Also in terms of management seeking for prompt payment of school fees and other financial obligations parents would appreciate their concern and respond rapidly.

The government would find the study to be significant in that assistance could be extended to the private institutions to boost their operations. This assistance could be in form of allowing the private institutions to benefit from Ghana Education Trust (GET) Fund to a certain level, district and municipal assemblies being given mandate to offer financial assistance on quarterly basis and so on.

The study would also be relevant to students and the general public in the sense that it would serve as a reference to anyone that wish to conduct further research on the topic.

### **Outline and Duties of the Researchers**

The researchers started with collection of data on the study as the first duty from journals, internet and textbooks on the topic and then drew plan on how to carry out the study. The researchers then wrote the chapter one which involves the background of the study, the profile of the study, the problem statement and the expected output of the study. The researchers wrote the chapter two which involves literature review of the study. They then designed a questionnaire which covered the objectives of the study and wrote the chapter three. The next duty was collection of data from the respondent and that was scheduled for

a week. From the collection of data the researchers analysed the data and drew conclusions coupled with recommendations.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Theory of Structuration**

The theory basically considers education in terms of theoretical knowledge gaining or in terms of practical and how that influences organisations and an individual. Anthony Giddens (1976) theory of structuration has been very influential in education and the social sciences for the analysis of the relationship between educational structure and agency, in which concepts such as power, identities, contexts, and social systems are discussed. The theory of structuration is a response to the two poles of social theories on education at the time of Giddens writing in the 1970s and 80s: the structuralist and functionalist, on the one hand, and the hermeneutic and interpretive, on the other. For Giddens, the structuralist and functionalist view of societal totality neglects the importance of human actions in the constitution of society and human actions are learnt which education is.

On the other extreme, hermeneutic and interpretive sociologies view actions and meanings only in terms of human conduct and experience and thus neglect external factors such as contexts and constraints. The concept of society and the study of the social sciences, for Giddens, however, is “neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time. Central to the theory of structuration is the concept of “structure. For Giddens, structure is a virtual order, that is, structure does not have a physical existence. Rather, it is manifested in and through routinized activities involving the applications of rules and the manipulations of resources which are for a period of time and that period depends on education.

### **Structuration Theory and Education**

The everyday work of information professionals is culturally, socially, and organizationally structured. The education of information professionals should not be limited to the teachings of practical skills and should include theoretical knowledge such as the concepts of structuration theory. This is not to say that practical skills are not important, but that they should be complemented with theoretical knowledge. It is because theoretical knowledge provides the necessary tool for critical and information professionals, though usually escape explicit awareness, are the medium as well as the outcome of the social practices enacted within specific cultural and social milieus. These routinized activities continue and reproduce the authority, legitimacy and acceptability of certain professional practices, standards and policies. The realization of the duality of structure not only makes possible a deeper understanding of existing rules and practices, but also enables critical and reflective thinking about the possible intended and unintended consequences of the act of following these rules and practices, and as such, their ethical, cultural, and social implications.

Education is recognized internationally as key to human, social and economic development. The Jomtien Declaration on Education for All 1990 (UNESCO, 1990) and The Dakar Framework for Action, 2000 (UNESCO, 2000), are some international efforts and commitments indicating the significance of education to national and international development. In Ghana, education is instrument for excellence and for effective national development. The importance of education reflects huge expenditures made by government at various levels on provision and



services and the persistent cry by the public for Government to implement 26% UNESCO recommendation. Education has moved from the era of representing in a classroom to more sophisticated era of providing quality education at all sector of educational institutions.

### **Need for Quality Education**

Quality is at the heart of education and what takes place in the classrooms and other learning environments are fundamentally important to the future well-being of children, young people and adults. A quality education is one that satisfies basic learning needs and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living.

According to a Ministerial Round Table on Quality Education by UNESCO (2003), quality has become a dynamic concept that has constantly being adapted to a world whose societies are undergoing profound social and economic transformation. Quality education should therefore equip all people, women and men, to be fully participating members of their own communities and also citizens of the world. Quality education, according to UNESCO has now become a universal goal, which is a prerequisite for education for sustainable development. This is a goal, which all countries have to strife to attain in order to fit into the global village.

Ka-HoMok et. al (2002) are also of the opinion that, quality education is the character of the set of elements in the input, process and output of the school that provides services that completely satisfy both internal and external strategic school constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations.

Quality education according to the above definition is a multidimensional concept and cannot be easily assessed by one indicator. Quality education is key to overcoming poverty in a single generation. Quality education is fundamental in creating a future for human security, community development and national progress. It is an enormous challenge. It is also an immense opportunity.

Quality education is very necessary in every sphere of life, for, it enables one to acquire the skills, knowledge and good behaviour required by society. Looking at Ghana's quality education programme in terms of literature supply, will enable both the government and policy makers to break new grounds in terms of teaching/learning materials used, methods employed and above all pinpoint potentials in the education process.

### **Essential Characteristics of Quality Education**

UNESCO has outlined a number of essential characteristics of quality education that can be implemented in many culturally appropriate forms to ensure the attainment of quality education for all. Quality education;

- is locally relevant and culturally appropriate.
- is informed by the past (e.g. indigenous and traditional knowledge)
- is relevant to the present, and prepares individuals for the future
- builds knowledge, life skills, perspectives, attitudes and values
- provides the tools to transform current societies to more sustainable societies
- is measurable.

Quality Education, from the perspective of UNESCO is a fundamental right for every individual and this include all that happens in a culturally tailored school environment and in the society at large to shape an individual to become a useful member of society. As a member country

of the UN, Ghanaians are entitled to quality education, which all stakeholders in the educational process need to come together to achieve through the adoption of these essential characteristics of quality education.

These essential characteristics of quality education as outlined by UNESCO are seen as a way of having a broad idea about the successes and failures of quality education in Ghana on the students as well as the implementers of the programme, thus, Ghana's education, is worth examining.

### **Elements of Quality Education**

What learners bring is environments, content, processes, and outcomes. Quality education begins with an adequate number of schools, books, pencils and trained teachers. It looks at the number of children who finish school. It moves beyond this to consider what goes on inside and outside of school, noting that good programming, whether in education or any other sectors, is gender sensitive. It is therefore essential to ensure the improvement of all aspects of education to ensure excellence. So that recognized and measurable outcomes are achieved by all, especially, in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

A recent report on the standard of education by the Education for All (EFA) committee in 2006 revealed that, scarce resources have frequently been used for expanding systems with insufficient attention to quality improvement in areas such as teacher training and material development.

Furthermore, an assessment of learning achievement in some countries (including Ghana) have shown that a sizeable percentage of children are acquiring only a fraction of the knowledge and skills they are expected to master. The committee therefore called on member countries and Governments and all other EFA partners to work together to ensure basic education of quality for all, regardless of gender, wealth, location, language or ethnic origin. This implies that Ghana's quality education needs to be examined from time to time to ascertain its impact, in terms of the targets, progress and development required. The need has therefore arisen for an assessment of the quality education programme.

According to the 2004 Education Sector Report, central to the Government of Ghana's poverty Strategy Reduction (GPRS) is the provision of quality education. Quality education is one of the four thematic areas outlined in the Ministry of Education and Sports strategic plan. One of the policy goals under quality of education is to improve the quality of teaching and learning for enhanced pupil/ teacher achievement. The percentage of the trained teaching force which is an enabling factor in the provision of quality education has increased marginally at the primary and JHS level and fallen at the SHS level.

The expectation is that the targets set for 2005 were not met. Whilst it appears the Ministries broad policies and strategies over this period have been effective in promoting positive trends in access and reducing the barriers to access for Ghana's students, quality improvement education is yet to show positive trends. It is therefore important to re-examine the quality education process for possible solutions to problems that are affecting its positive impact.



### **Impact of Quality Education on National Development**

In the words of Eyiah (2006), “The world over, crucial changes, quite unprecedented are taking place. Countries are more integrated in a global village affecting each other’s environment, economy and culture”. The world is getting smaller and at the same time the gap between the rich and the poor countries keeps widening. Undeniably, underlying all these tremendous changes is education-good education with relevance.”

In his opinion, Education has been the major facilitator and catalyst in the astonishing changes and transformation sweeping through the world today. The role of formal (school) education in the liberation of the individual mind as well as economic dependence and in national development is therefore quite obvious.

Thus, education pays off not only in literacy but also in income (Ma et. al, 2019). Pragmatic measures need to be enforced by the Ministry of education to ensure the success of the quality education programme in Ghana. This research will unearth some of the problems associated with quality education. Since the Government of Ghana is committed to the improvement of quality in education, it will be appropriate to consider every single factor that matters in the quality education process to ensure great success and the rapid development of the nation. Quality education is seen as a joint effort of both government and private individuals.

### **Evolution of Private Sector Participation in the Provision of Education**

The history of education and private participation in Ghana cannot begin or end without a glowing mention of the contribution of the missionaries who came to Ghana in mid eighteenth century. These missionaries brought about what is referred to today as private schools to Ghana. Then, wherever these missionaries landed they tried putting up an educational institution to help educate the children of such societies and over the years private individuals have adopted the idea to establish schools which became a complement to government efforts.

### **Education Policy in Ghana**

Education policy in Ghana is directly derived from the national policy on education. Curricula, structure, programmes and administration of education in the country are similar to what happens everywhere. Variation may only be noticed in the peculiar emphasis placed on vision, values and principles of provision. The Ghana vision of education is to produce globally competitive, functionally literate and self-sustaining scholars and citizens. Again, the enduring values of education in Ghana remain people, knowledge, integrity, excellence, peace and commitment. The principle of education emphasizes effective policy implementation and productive delivery. Massive expansion to facilities, provision of free books and uniform, free laptops and recent allocation of high budgets of total state budget to education is a clear manifestation of the vision, values and principles of education in Ghana.

### **Education in Ghana and the Law**

By law, the entire education system is under the authority of the state represented by the director general for education. The director general is empowered to take all steps that may be desirable to secure the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of people of

ghana. To accomplish the task of developing manpower and efficient human capacity for the nation, the education law further empowers the director general for education with the authority to:

1. Establish or oversee the establishment of new schools
2. Regulate the educational process in the Ghana
3. Withhold or withdraw approval given to establish school
4. Close down schools and institution

It is obvious that both Public and Private schools in the Ghana are subject to direct control, regulation and supervision of the Director General for Education. The implication is that education venture in Ghana must conform to national policy on Education in terms of structure, learning programmes, activities, administration, provision, access and delivery.

### **School System in Ghana**

The school system in the republic of Ghana, is co-operated and bi-sector. It is both public and private. The school system in State comprises of Public and Private schools.

### **Public Schools**

These are schools owned and founded by the State Government on behalf of the public. Apparently as policy initiator, education in the public schools is bound to conform to the principles and spirit of the education policy. Public schools have remained largely;

- Tuition free
- Centrally run by Boards and overseen by the Ministry of Education
- Responding to change/innovations, improved school provision
- Responding to demographics
- Adjusting managerial styles for improved service delivery, incorporating key values of people, integrity and excellence
- Imbibing the need for universality in the approach in raising generation next
- Subject to public debates and controversy
- Conforming to set standards and dynamic.

### **Challenges Facing Public Education in Ghana**

- Improvement of the system corresponding to funding
- Teachers' commitment / motivation
- Equipment / facilities
- Examination malpractice / cultism indiscipline

### **Private Schools**

For more than four decades now Private schools have run as profit oriented enterprises, often owned by an individual, cooperating individuals, voluntary agencies or faith based organizations. Private ownership of schools as earlier noted, dominated the education landscape of the country during the mid-eighteenth Century leading up to the all part of that Century. The missionaries were predominantly responsible for those schools. Private schools have persisted since then. Private schools can be categorized according to fee regimes, as Low Fee Paying (LFP) and High Fee Pay (HFP). The fee regimes are directly determined by owner's defined standards and characteristics and not subject to government regulation. Fee payment

determines access and sometimes quality of programmes available in each school. Private schools are run on the basis of cash for provision mostly. Private schools are;

- Financed privately
- Managed and run privately
- Operate in environment less the standard of Public Schools
- Process of Personnel recruitment / quantity /quality of personnel strictly restricted
- Conditions of service strictly restricted
- Monitoring/evaluation system largely unknown
- Admission criteria/process determined by school
- Teacher development/Training largely unknown
- Quality assurance measure largely undisclosed
- Government recognition largely unknown for many private schools
- All year round admission
- Indiscriminate registration of candidates for certificate examinations
- Ready platforms as miracle workers.
- Limited/Non availability of facilities e.g. laboratories, libraries, demonstration farms, play grounds, etc. Irregular school attendance by pupils

It is pertinent to note that while some private schools in the Ghana such as Action Senior High are rate highly in terms of academic performance, good facilities, discipline, and good school climate, others are usually poorly rated and scarcely sought after, because they exhibit those characteristics that neither promote excellence in learning nor make contribution to education delivery. Here lie the challenges that confront not only the Private schools alone but also education delivery management in Ghana in general.

### **Challenges of Managing Private Schools**

The Nature of ownership of Private schools and the purpose for which the owners have set them up present a herculean task in having Private schools lend themselves to inquiries and administrative cooperation from external bodies. For these reasons the major challenges in managing Private schools

#### **(a)Facilities / Equipment**

In accomplishing teaching and learning, facilities/equipment are central to any learner centred education. Most Private schools especially Low Fee Payment (LFP) may not be able to afford facilities/equipment necessary for offering certain subjects in the curriculum especially in the sciences, technical and vocational areas. This also causes most of these schools to focus more on social sciences and art subjects to the detriment of a balanced curriculum as required by the educational system. The nation's education policy weighs in on sciences, technical and vocational education and has encouraged this over the years. Therefore Private schools needing to operate should have equipment and facilities regarding such areas.

#### **(b)Environment**

School environment is a critical factor in school operations and success. Over 70% of Private schools in Ghana are sited in either private homes or make shift buildings and do not have capacity for further expansion in the nearest future. The provisions of sporting facilities, library, convenience, dispensary, etc. are functions of space.

**(c)Funding**

Availability of funds to Private school owners is important. Most Private Schools are small in size, lacking teaching equipment and facilities and trapped in makeshifts house or rented accommodation. Little Patronages, astronomical costs of accommodation retard their ability to acquire education specific environment, equipment, quality teachers, all necessary to meet set standards for the operation of schools in the nation and all over. Banks hardly do business with small size schools compounding their problem in accessing loans facility. Government of Ghana should perhaps make possession of a given sum of funds and facility guarantee from a commercial bank, pre-conditions for licensing a school.

**(d)Condition of service/motivation**

The Private School System should evolve a platform for harmonized conditions of service that mirrors what is obtainable in the Public Secondary School. This will enable teachers in Private Schools who see their job as ad-hoc arrangement settle down to develop careers in such school and contribute meaningfully well to education delivery. It should also be a pre-condition for licensing a school because for now there is no motivation for staff of private schools and the teachers use it as a place of raising capital or money for future career.

**(e) Manpower development/capacity building programme**

The teaching force of any school makes a statement about the quality of the school. Teachers who are technically equipped would work towards achieving set goals of education. It is imperative that deliberate effort to offer capacity building programmes must be part of the Private Schools plans in ensuring quality teaching and learning.

**(f) Creating board of governors**

Private school owners should be compelled to create Board of Governors, when requesting for Licence to operate. The functions of the Board, number of meeting for a year and reporting process clearly identified and specified before Licensing is done. Policy should also be put in place to ensure effective functioning of the board.

**(g)Merger plans**

Private schools owners would need to look at the trend in the industrial Sector to see how most firms are surviving. A number of school owners can come together to discuss merging their schools in order to develop mega school, by bringing their resources together.

**Prospects of private**

Private school system in Ghana really can be improved to succeed and contribute more to realizing the goal of Education for All. Despite the avalanche of challenges facing the system, collaboration efforts between operators of Private School System and Government can open new vistas. This is even so as Private education providers are accepted as partners in national development. Opportunities for improvement of Private education providers abound. They come in the following ways:

The population trend shows that a large market exist for Private Schools providers. As they remain active players in the education industry, parents and guardians are making informed choices of schools to send their wards or children.

More financial institutions are available to assist with facilities and instrument.

Private education providers in Ghana stand to benefit from the technical and professional expertise available in Government.

There are International Agencies e.g. UNSECO, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) ready to collaborate with Private and Public education providers ready to lend themselves to best practices.

Private education providers can capitalize on available National and State policies on education as well as the Ghana Roadmap for education sector to strengthen their programme base.

Private sectors stand to benefit from state regulation of education that will in turn enhance their performance necessary for attracting large clients.

### **Role of Private Schools in the Ghanaian Economy**

Over the last quarter-century, much research has been conducted on the relative effects of school organizational type on academic achievement. This line of inquiry was coloured by theories of the relative merits of public and private sectors in education and other endeavours, and had obvious implications for the allocation of government resources that is, if the private sector can educate children more effectively (and for less money), then it is difficult to justify the exclusive hold that public schools have on public funding for education (Lubienski, 2001, 2003). Indeed, the private sector is known to offer advantages over the public sector in the production and distribution of a range of goods and services (Friedman, 1955). So the question becomes, why is it necessary that the government operate schools for the public if the private sector can better serve that function?

In this line of thinking based in neoclassical economic analyses as applied to institutions like public educational schools' institutional environment, or sector, shapes its organizational structure and the external incentives that drive its internal productive processes. Public schools are input-oriented organizations, accountable to bureaucracies, not to consumers, so they lack structural incentives to innovate, improve, or respond to demands for quality from the groups that they serve (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Coleman, 1993). Thus, it is believed, students stuck in the public sector should be given the opportunity to switch to the higher performing schools in the private sector. Indeed, not only are private schools free of much of the bureaucracy and regulation that inhibit performance in the public sector, but they are not shielded from competition as public schools are. They must demonstrate greater effectiveness in terms of their outputs in order to attract families willing to pay tuition. So, while private schools tend to draw more advantaged families that can afford the added costs, if such schools can be shown to achieve superior results with the same types of students who attend public schools, then there is a stronger argument for policies that encourage students to leave government-run schools for schools in the private sector.

Indeed, not only would this be a more efficient and effective use of public resources in educating the public, but there is a serious equity concern about trapping poorer families in the underperforming public sector.

While initially a hypothetical argument emerging out of economic theory applied to public schooling, this issue assumed a more immediate tone when researchers began to collect

actual evidence on the relative performance of schools in public and private sectors. This research goes back almost three decades, but has become more pointed in recent years in its implications for education reform.

In addition to the seminal work on achievement in public and private schools, two recent debates on charter schools and voucher programs have highlighted the question of the role of school organizational type in promoting academic achievement. These research literatures on public and independent schools point to the presumed importance of public and private sectors for understanding the organizational behaviour of schools and, ultimately, the propensity of different models of schooling to effect superior academic performance.

### **Education Delivery by Private Providers**

The first and most common avenue for private participation in education is through the delivery of education by private providers. These can include "formal" private schools and higher education institutions, so-called tutorial colleges that prepare students for national exams, the supply of individual tutoring services or the provision of tuition through education internet portals, and training colleges (e.g., secretarial, languages and computer learning).

### **Size**

While it is true that the provision of education in most countries is predominantly public, private sector participation in education is significant and growing in many countries. At some education levels, the private sector dominates the education market. This is especially true at the secondary and higher education levels.

### **Nature**

The private education sectors in developing countries are diverse. Private institutions can differ along a number of dimensions – including the client groups they serve (e.g., rich or poor), whether they are registered or unregistered, whether they are religious or secular, whether they are aided or unaided, whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit, and the quality of tuition and infrastructure. Because of the diverse nature of the private sector, it is difficult to provide a general description of the private sector in individual countries.

Private schools and higher education institutions may be either aided or unaided. Aided schools are government subsidised. Unaided schools are not. The latter must finance their operations entirely out of fee and other non-government revenues. Private schools in many countries, including Ghana, do not receive assistance from government. However, a number of other countries, in both the developed and developing world, do provide some assistance to private education institutions. Often this assistance is less than that provided to public institutions.

The education market in developing countries is characterised by a wide range of types of education providers. Traditionally, not-for-profit NGOs and churches have played a significant and pioneering role in the delivery of education. Religious-affiliated institutions are the driving force behind the rapidly expanding higher education sector in Ghana.

Concluding the literature review, Ackumey et al (2001) came out with a study on private schools and their contribution in the economy of Ghana. In their conclusion, they expressed



that private schools perform better in terms of academic performance than most of the public schools which are supported by the government. The study only focused on only the performance without considering the challenges that private secondary schools go through. Also Ayerterey (2002) considered private education and environment and concluded that environment counts in education and whenever students have good environment their performance proves it. Here again the focus was on environment but not on the challenges. In this regard this study critically considered the challenges that private senior high schools experienced.

### **Explanation of the Problem and how it has Been Solved**

The contribution of private schools to human capacity and economic development in terms of education has been overwhelmingly effective over the years. However these schools are confronted with different level of challenges which sometimes affect quality of the education and academic performance of the institution. Hardly have any assessment being conducted to determine the challenges that confront the private schools and measures to curb these challenges. This study has been conducted to assess the operational challenges of Action Senior High School. To successfully achieve the expected output the study has been arranged as follows.

The study adopted descriptive research which describes phenomena as they exist. Descriptive research is used to identify and obtain information on the characteristics of a particular problem or issue. Under the descriptive research, data collected is often qualitative and statistical techniques are used to summarize the information. This approach was adopted to gather the data because it helps to get opinions, attitudes and description. Also the researchers collected data on one occasion with the same respondents rather than on the same subject at different times.

Welman & Kruger (1999) contend that “a population encompasses the entire collection of cases (or units) about which we wish to make conclusions”. The above definition is supported by Huysamen (1994), who described a population as the total collection of individuals who are potentially available for observation and who have the attributes common to those which the research questions refer. The target population of this study was management staff of Action Senior High School.

Saunders *et al.* (2007) indicated that the size of the sample and the way in which it is selected will definitely have implication for the confidence you can have in your data and the extent to which you can generalize. Owing to the fact that the population considered has been the management and entire staff, sample size has been 30 of the respondents and selection was based on the reliability of the response.

Sekaran (2020) wrote that sampling is the process of selecting a sufficient number of elements from a population so that by studying the sample and understanding the properties or characteristics of the sample, researchers will be able to generalize the properties of the sample to the population. Convenience sampling was used to select the respondents. With this, sampling is chosen for ease or convenience rather through random sampling. This is often used at least in pilot studies or short term projects where insufficient time to construct a probability sample. This is ensured that all categories of employees and customers have the

chance of being selected as respondent. It was used to ensure greater representation thus, avoiding any significant bias on the part of the researchers.

### **Methodology and Data Collection**

The researchers collected data for the study from two main sources. These sources are primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data were those collected by the researchers through the administration of questionnaires and interviews granted. They are first-hand information collected by the researchers. The secondary data were data collected by the researchers from magazines and other sources like quotes by researchers on this topic. They were already in existence.

In this study, questionnaires were used as the primary research instrument. The questionnaires respondents' confidentiality of any information provided was also assured. Respondents were provided with detailed instructions as to how the questionnaires will be completed and returned. The rationale behind providing clear instructions and assuring confidentiality of information was based on the fact that, this significantly reduces the likelihood of obtaining biased responses (Sekaran, 2020).

The questionnaire included mostly closed- ended type of questions (pre-coded) that make it simpler for the respondents and also for easy analysis. The nature of the study was explained to respondents, and respondents.

The data so collected was analysed using percentages, tables and bar charts. Tables were used to make reading very easy. Explanations were given to throw light on some of the tables to promote further understanding of the results of the presentation Finally, the analyses of data was summarized in subsequent chapters.

### **Analysis of Data, Results and Discussions**

The study has highly contributed to changes in the operations of Action Senior High School. The management has developed new remuneration scheme for the staff which has changed the trend of staff turnover for the current academic year. One of the recommendations put across suggested to the management to develop a plan that will curb students' truancy and that has also been sorted out by teachers and parents informing each other on the movement of the students for holidays and mid-term breaks. Another contribution of the research has been the improvement in revenue generation of Action Senior High School through school fees payment. Parents have come to terms with the need to help build private education in Ghana through payment of school fees. Parents now understand the role of private schools through the meeting between parents and teachers.

### **Lessons Learnt**

Lessons learnt from the study have been discussed below. The data fetched provided the lessons as responded to by the respondents. The lessons have been discussed based on the objectives of the study. The lessons pertain to how the study has been analysed and information gathered eventually from the study. It commenced with the demographic information.

The demographic data provided information on those that took part in responding to the study.

Table 1

*Position of Respondent*

Position	Frequency	Percentage	Relative frequency
Management	8	27%	0.27
Staff	22	73%	0.73
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1</b>

This depicts the proportion of the respondent that data have been solicited from and out of the thirty (30) respondents eight (8) were at management position whiles twenty two (22) were staff of the school. To understand the operational challenges these two categories of people provided the requisite information solicited for in the most efficient manner.

**Level of Education**

The level of education matters in the sense that it helps to determine if all the respondents understand the topic thoroughly and whether they can provide the needed information.

Table 2

*Level of Education*

Level of education	Frequency	Percentage
HND	3	10%
Degree	20	67%
Masters	5	17%
Others	2	6%

Most of the respondents hold degree and that constituted sixty seven (67) percent of the respondents, those with postgraduate degree constituted seventeen (17) percent of the respondents, the next happens to be HND holders who occupied ten (10) percent of the respondents and the others represented those with other qualifications such as diploma, professional certificates etc. constituted six (6) percent of the respondents with frequency of two.

The next item touched on the number of years served in the institution. With experience and number of years one has an exposure to situations that prevails at a place so the number of years worked with the institution understudied provides direction on how well the respondent has been aware of the challenges. The next table revealed the number of years served.

Table 3

*Years Served in the Institution*

Number of years	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 years	21	70%
6-10 years	9	30%
11years above	0	0

The table revealed that twenty one (21) respondents have worked at Action Senior High for five years and below that signified seventy (70) percent of the respondents while nine (9) of the respondents worked between six(6) to ten (10) years which signified thirty percent. The respondents therefore had the experience needed to provide the data as seen from the table.

**Objective One:** *To determine the challenges that confronts private senior high schools in their operations*

The studies asked the respondents on their take – in order of preference – what could be considered as a challenge in operating a private senior high school and rank them in terms of magnitude. The result is shown on the table below.

Table 4

*Operational challenges of Action Senior High School.*

CHALLENGES	Frequency	Percent	Ranking
Lack of funding	27	15.7%	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Motivation of staff and remuneration	30	17.4%	1 <sup>st</sup>
Keeping of staff/ staff turnover	18	10.4%	6 <sup>th</sup>
Facilities and equipment	21	12.2%	5 <sup>th</sup>
Environmental issues	15	8.7%	7 <sup>th</sup>
Working capital	24	14%	4 <sup>th</sup>
Non-payment of school fees	25	14.5%	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Poor condition of service	12	7%	8 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>100%</b>	-

The table 4 identified the challenges that face private senior high school operations in Ghana as prevailing in Action Senior High School and it has been discussed in terms of total challenges expressed in numerical terms and the percentage value of each of the challenge. The table revealed that lack of funds with a value of 27(15.7%) has been identified to be one of the main challenges – this corroborates the work of Atuahene (2014) when he studied on the challenges of higher education in Ghana. The next has to do with motivation of staff and all the respondents' concord to the fact that staff motivation has been a challenge in operating private senior high school with responses of 30(17.4%). Staff keeping was identified as the next challenge and this is due to the motivation that management are not able to fulfil to its labour force and the responses was 18 (10.4%) that considered keeping of staff as a challenge. The next challenge has to do with equipment, facilities and logistics needed to provide effective teaching and 21(12.2%) expressed their consent on the challenge. Environmental issues with a value of 15(8.7%) was also identified as challenge. This has to do with getting enough space and a noiseless area for studies and school curricula activities. Having working capital for day to day running of the institution has been identified as a challenge with a score of 24(14%). Furthermore non-payment of school fees has been identified as another challenge with a score of 24(14.5%) and finally poor conditions of service to the staff also served as a challenge that confronts senior high school and it was with a score of 12(6.9%).

In all the study identified eight (8) major challenges that confronts Private Senior High Schools and in this context Action Senior High School and ranking them in terms of magnitude, lack of

motivation of staff has been identified as the most pressing challenge which affects the operations and following closely has to do with funding of the activities of Action Senior High. Mostly the management depends on only the internally generated fund which is the school fees and it comes with its own difficulty, hence lack of funds has been a challenge to the smooth operations of the institution. The next challenge which is closely related to the last-mentioned has to do with non-payment of school fees. As discussed above, the main source of funds available to Action Senior High for that matter all private senior high schools is the school fees that is collected from the students that are admitted in the school. Some parents of these wards fail to pay the school fees and sometimes some delay so much in paying the fees and it posts so much challenge to the operations of the school. Poor conditions of service, lack of equipment and problem of working capital for day to day running of the school are all challenges facing private SHSs in Ghana.

**Objective Two:** *To Examine the Effect of the Challenges on Academic Performance.*

The second purpose considered was to examine the effect of the challenges on academic performance considering the challenges that bother the operations. The academic performance of private senior high schools always suffers adversely due to the challenges identified above and the objective two concentrated on identifying the factors that derail the academic performance.

Table 5

*Factors that Contribute to Poor Academic Performance.*

Poor academic factors	Frequency	percentage	Ranking
Ineffective teaching	21	18%	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Irregular attendance by students	18	15.4%	4 <sup>th</sup>
Full coverage of syllabus.	27	23%	1 <sup>st</sup>
Lack of commitment by staff	24	20.5%	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Student truancy	15	12.8%	5 <sup>th</sup>
Poor terminal examination conduction	12	10.3%	6 <sup>th</sup>

Some of the factors that influence academic performance have been identified to be ineffective teaching, irregular school attendance by students, inability to cover the entire syllabus, lack of commitment by staff, student truancy, and poor terminal examinations. Full coverage of syllabus has been considered as number one factor that affect academic performance with a score of 27(23%) and the next has to do with lack of commitment by staff to teaching with a score of 24(20.5%) . In addition, ineffective teaching and learning also affects academic performance and it had a score of 21(18%). Another factor identified has to do with irregular school attendance by the students and that had a score of 18(15.4%) which has been the fourth factor influence on academic performance. The fifth factor happened to be student truancy with a score of 15(12.8%) and the last factor identified by the study has to do with poor conduction of end of terms examinations.

There has been an open question on how the challenges influence the academic performance and the common responds by the respondents has been that once challenges exist in an organisation it distracts the mission and the objectives or the ultimate goals of the

organisation. The challenges that affect the operations including staff motivation, non-payment of school fees may cause the staff not to be committed to their duty and that also affects successful coverage of the syllabus on which final examinations are set and the academic performance of the school falls a prey to the challenge. Also when there is non-payment of school fees, students would be driven to go for school fees and in some cases almost a whole class has to be sacked and that again affects effective teaching and learning which eventually affects the academic performance of the students and the school in general. The problem of maintaining staff for a long time also affects academic performance. This is in the sense that there are times that a particular subject may not have a tutor simply because the tutor has left the school. This sometimes prevail for weeks and even a term whiles management keep searching for another tutor, no doubt the incidence again affects the overall academic performance of the school. Lack of working capital which is needed for day-to-day running of the school may halt teaching since there is no money for marker and other petty teaching and learning materials. Student truancy arises as a result of sacking them for school fees. Some of the student only loiter in town without going home, some end up going to stay with friends whereby they go out to misbehave in town, drinking, smoking and committing such vices and that again affects their academic performance.

Poor examination occurs when students have to be driven out of exams hall for school fees and in some cases when there is no money for organising exams so student have to wait for hours before starting their exams. All this affects student's dedication to studies and high academic standard of performance envisaged by the management. It is indeed undeniable fact that these challenges and factors which affect academic performance in Action Senior High School prevail not only in Action but almost all private senior high schools in Ghana. Once the challenges exist then academic performance may seem to be high but does not reflect the true picture of individual performance since most students may only pass with weak grades that cannot help them to further their education.

**Objective Three:** *To identify pragmatic measures of dealing with the challenges.*

Once a challenge has been identified it needs solution and the questionnaire solicited with an open ended question on how they think the challenges can be solved. Below are the measures suggested by respondents on how to solve the challenges identified.

To begin with, most of the respondents suggested that government have to equally support private schools with a loan or credit facility on long term basis to serve as funding for private senior high schools since their contribution to education in the economy is very high. According to the respondent the government need to critically assess the performance and effective of the private schools before advancing the loan to the schools. This would prevent mismanagement of the funds. This they said is very prudent since government is encouraging public private partnership.

Another measure suggested by the respondents has to do with Board of Directors of private schools fully commit their resources in managing the institution and for that matter should always ensure staff motivation since the success or failure of the institution depends on the staff and their commitment. There should be some funds set aside specifically for staff remuneration and motivation and not depending on school fees for such important issue. Once the staffs are poorly motivated it affects their output and one cannot keep out the role of the staff in provision of quality education and effective teaching and learning.



The next measure suggested by the respondent has to do with a supportive business for funding and running a private senior high school. According to their argument Action Senior High School and most private senior high schools after establishing the schools depends on only the school fees as the main and only source of income for running the school and that greatly affects smooth operations of the school. This is because the school fees payment is not reliable and cash management and disbursement based on the school fees slows down operational activities. The management hence needed a consistent source of income that can support the operations when there is problem with the main source of income.

The management must devise a strategy to involve parents in operations of the school and to expose them to the challenges that the school encounters if school fees are not paid and how it affects academic performance amidst their demand for quality education for their wards.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

From the theories, empirical review and the data solicited from the respondent the suggestions below have been gathered as the conclusion of the study.

Provision of quality education to citizens of Ghana is very necessary for human resource capacity development and government alone cannot provide the quality of education needed hence there is the need for government to recognise the contribution of private schools in education and then critically search for means of supporting them to alleviate the numerous challenges that confront these schools. This is seen to be in line with the public private partnership that government has been encouraging for economic development.

From the study it has been assessed that operational challenges which confront Action Senior High range from funding, frequent lack of working capital, poor staff motivation and remuneration, lack of facilities and equipment, increasing staff turnover, difficulty in mobilization of school fees, lack of conducive environment for learning and poor conditions of service. Though the management keep trying to maintain the academic performance standard of the Action Senior High School, it is not without the above listed challenges.

In addition, it has been realised that the challenges directly influence the academic performance of Action Senior High School. The challenges causes the following poor academic performance factors to evolve and these include; ineffective teaching and learning due to continuous sacking of students for school fees, student truancy due to the same challenge, non-completion of syllabus due to poor staff remuneration and lack of teaching materials. Also the challenge of purchasing some facilities and equipment due to lack of funds again affects teaching and learning in private schools.

Measures suggested for curbing the operational challenge span from government providing credit facilities to private senior high schools, like Action Senior High school and few that are examined to be credit worthy to support their operations on long term basis and for funding. This is seen as one means of government helping as well as promoting the public private partnership that the government has been envisaging.

Also another measure proposed has to do with the management of private senior high schools engaging in an extra business venture that would serve as alternative source income

for running the operations of the school. Running a school on only school fees as a main source of income would not really be sufficient for the operations of the school. Therefore, alternative source of income needs to be found to help salvage financial issues that confronts the schools.

To curb student truancy, parent-teacher relationship should be taken to the level whereby management of the private schools should have access to contact numbers of the parents so that any student leaving school hostels to the house management can inform their parents about the decisions of the students. In the same manner parents should get in touch with management when their children are returning from home to school. This would go a long way to solve the challenge of truancy in private senior high schools.

### **Recommendations**

The first recommendation has to do with government intervention in the operations of private schools by establishing a private school fund that can be accessed by the management of private senior high schools. The government should form a committee that must come out with modalities, rules and criteria for which such funds can be assessed. With good criteria it will be difficult for private school management to misuse and abuse the funds. That would go a long way to help provide readily available funding to private senior high schools.

Also it is recommended that private senior high schools establishers should set up the institutions as limited liability companies to allow other good willing citizens to invest in the schools through purchase of shares. When that happens the challenge of working capital unavailability and staff remuneration would not occur. It has been considered that capital accumulation through share funds is the best method of raising funds and it is a proposed option for the owners and management of private senior high schools.

It is recommended that to ensure effective teaching and learning management should liaise with parents on how school fees payment would be carried out and avoid sending students away to go for school fees. It is undeniable fact that the school fees is needed to run the school, but the school exist to train students so if continuous driving of student out of classroom to chase school fees happens then student performance and effective learning goes down which is in contrast to what the school stands for and also promotes.

Also it is recommended that management of private senior high schools should formulate policies that will help maintain staff for a longer period. One major factor that affects academic performance has to do with staff turnover. Whenever tutors decide abruptly to leave a school it takes time to get a replacement and such time that is wasted affects students' performance.

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