Journal of Education Management and Leadership

[ISSN 2958-1109]
Volume: 05 Issue: 01 | November-2026

JEML

Negotiating Home-School Partnerships: Teachers' Perspectives on Parental Engagement Challenges in Birim Central Municipality, Ghana

Author
Wasila Yakubu
Author's email: silayakubu@gmail.com

Methodist College of Education, Ghana.

Cite this article in APA
Yakubu, W. (2026). Negotiating home-school partnerships: Teachers' perspectives on parental engagement challenges in Birim Central Municipality, Ghana. *Journal of education management and leadership, 5*(1), 447-462. https://doi.org/10.51317/pg9y0418

OPEN ACCESS
A publication of Editon Consortium Publishing (online)

Article history
Received: 2026-09-16
Accepted: 2026-10-10
Published: 2026-11-16

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Abstract
This study examined teachers' perspectives on the challenges affecting parental engagement in home-school partnerships in Birim Central Municipality, Ghana. Effective partnerships between home and school can significantly contribute to learners' development. However, establishing and maintaining such partnerships is often hindered by contradictory expectations, cultural barriers, communication challenges, and limited resources. Since teachers play a central role in engaging parents and fostering productive home-school relationships, understanding their experiences provides insights into the challenges and contextual factors influencing these partnerships. The study adopted a case study design grounded in the interpretivist paradigm. Maximum variation sampling was used to select thirteen teachers from different schools, considering variations in school location and academic performance. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide and analysed thematically. The findings revealed that teachers recognised the importance of home-school partnerships in supporting learners' academic development. However, they encountered several challenges, including parents' failure to respond to teachers' invitations, poor communication, and misuse of school facilities by community members. The study recommends that the Municipal Education Office, headteachers, teachers, parents, students, and opinion leaders collaboratively develop policies and programmes to address these challenges. It also recommends fencing school premises to prevent the misuse of school facilities. The findings could inform educational policies, school leadership practices, and stakeholder interventions aimed at strengthening home-school partnerships in Birim Central Municipality.

Key terms: Academic performance, challenges, home-school partnership, junior high schools, parents, teachers' experiences.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The increased interest in the relationship between home and school is one of the most positive educational developments in the twenty-first century. Following reforms in formal schooling, homes and schools have become two of the most important environments shaping children's development (Epstein, 2011). Most interventions at the junior high school level aimed at strengthening home-school partnership in Birim Central Municipality are not achieving the expected outcomes because they do not seem to incorporate teachers' perspectives, who are very significant in learners' development. The basis for a good relationship lies in communication and the gatekeepers (teachers). The teacher initiates, coordinates, and evaluates this partnership (Lukk & Veisson, 2007). Recently, a blame game has emerged over learners' low academic performance; some blame schools, while others blame inadequate support from parents and community members (Ampofo et al., 2022). Most parents want their children to be successful at school, but many do not know how to support their children in ways that improve school performance (Hill & Craft, 2003). Handling these tasks requires a different type of knowledge than traditional parents possess.

Home-school partnership is defined as a multidimensional construct that includes contributions from parents, teachers, and schools, as well as the quality of parent-teacher communication and relationships that promote learners' learning and wellbeing (Bierman & Sheridan, 2022). Effective home-school partnerships are operationalised as developments occurring at home and at school to support students' learning. Donkor (2023) argues that without family support for their children's learning, teachers struggle to design academic experiences that help students learn meaningful content. Teachers also agree that they cannot be responsible for students' learning alone, and that effective classroom learning requires parental partnership. To learn at high levels, students need guidance and support from their teachers, families, and community members (Donkor, 2023).

Appiah-Kubi and Amoako (2020) conducted a study in Accra, Ghana, on parental participation in children's education at the primary school level. The study approach was qualitative. The sample consisted of 16 participants: eight parents and eight teachers. The findings revealed that barriers to parental participation in their children's education include the high cost of living, which keeps parents preoccupied with economic ventures, and low self-esteem among some parents due to illiteracy, which makes them feel they cannot offer much beyond paying their children's school fees. However, the study focused primarily on parents' perspectives, with comparatively little insight into teachers' experiences and views. An earlier qualitative study by Donkor (2023) explored parental involvement in education at the private elementary level in Ghana's Weija Community. It employed a case study design involving 50 participants, including community elders, parents, teachers, and school administrators. The findings identified parental education, family structure, cultural beliefs, and economic circumstances as important determinants of parental involvement. While these findings reinforce the complex, multifaceted nature of parental engagement, Donkor's research, like that of Appiah-Kubi and Amoako (2020), primarily emphasises parents' and community members' perspectives, with limited direct input from teachers. While this research underscores the importance of parental engagement, it also reveals a critical gap: limited understanding of the specific challenges teachers face in creating effective parental involvement, especially within the Birim Central Municipality context.

Hence, this study addresses these interrelated conceptual and contextual gaps by exploring teachers' experiences of challenges in home-school partnership in Birim Central Municipality through a qualitative

case study design, with the overarching objective of gaining insight into teachers' conceptualisations and perceptions of home-school partnership challenges and the broader relationship between families, schools, and communities. Accordingly, the study was guided by the following research questions: How do teachers conceptualise home-school partnerships in supporting students' learning in Birim Central Municipality? How do teachers perceive parental involvement in their students' academic development in Birim Central Municipality? What factors do teachers identify as hindering effective home-school partnerships in Birim Central Municipality? Although challenges such as time constraints and language barriers may exist, research suggests that proactive strategies can address them. Jeynes (2012) argues that the benefits of family engagement far outweigh these challenges, especially when schools intentionally involve all families. Hence, the study's findings could inform educational policy, school leadership practices, and stakeholder interventions aimed at strengthening home-school partnerships in Birim Central Municipality.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Systems Theory and Joyce L. Epstein's (2010) Theory of School, Family, and Community Partnerships. Bronfenbrenner's theory provides a contextual lens for understanding home-school interactions, while Epstein's theory offers a framework for examining the nature and quality of home-school partnerships. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Epstein's Theory of School, Family and Community Partnerships are two quite different but complementary theories of home-school partnership. Bronfenbrenner's is a broad systems theory that sees the home-school relationship as part of a series of interlocking systems. The mesosystem is particularly important because it's the interface between the various systems. Epstein's theory is more focused, examining the specific elements and processes that make up effective school-family partnerships.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory posits that human development occurs within interconnected systems of relationships and environments. This systems approach helps explain the wider context in which teacher-parent relationships operate. The mesosystem is essential, as it shows how interactions between key systems (in this case, home and school) are shaped by wider socio-economic and cultural contexts. Complementing this perspective, Epstein's Theory of School, Family, and Community Partnerships emphasises the shared responsibility of schools, families, and communities in supporting learners. The model sets out the key dimensions of parental engagement (communication, involvement, and participation in decision-making). This study is designed to describe and understand the full range of problems teachers face in negotiating the home-school relationship and to use that understanding to inform the design of interventions to strengthen partnerships in JHSs in Birim Central Municipality.

The Role of Teachers in Junior High Schools

Teachers are at the heart of the educational process and are widely regarded as the most important factor in the school environment for student learning and development. Kolhe and Pawar (2011) see the teacher as a facilitator, a counsellor, a motivator, a reformer and an agent of social change. Despite the general agreement that teachers matter, there is a huge difference of opinion as to just how much they actually impact student achievement. The traditional view is that teacher effectiveness is the key factor. The current view is that student achievement results from the combined efforts of the school, the family, and the community. Epstein (2010) describes effective education as the outcome of teachers building real partnerships with parents and the wider community, with the various spheres of influence overlapping.

Home-School Partnerships

Lezotte and Snyder (2011) define home-school partnerships as a broad range of activities that bring together the school, parents, the community, and other stakeholders to support the child's learning. There is also a significant body of literature on the positive impact of home-school partnerships on student achievement (Epstein, 2010; Chowa et al., 2013; Kwarteng et al., 2022; Yakubu et al., 2026). According to Eaford (2018) and Talluri and Suneela (2017), teachers value parental engagement and believe it benefits the educational process. Despite this consensus, some disagreement remains about which forms of involvement are most effective. Epstein's model embraces a broad range of involvement, but Hill and Tyson (2009) found that academic socialisation was more strongly correlated with achievement than involvement in school activities. They therefore suggest that schools may be placing too much emphasis on parents attending meetings and events and not enough on the subtler forms of involvement that take place at home. More evidence from Ghana adds another layer of complexity to the debate.

The Relationship Between Parental Support and Students' Academic Success

The Chowa et al. (2013) study from Ghana found that home-based involvement was positively related to achievement, whereas school-based involvement was negatively related. That's the opposite of what the majority of the literature would have us believe. In addition, Donkor et al. (2024) found a very strong positive relationship between parental involvement and achievement in Sekyere South District. Quansah (2024), on the other hand, found that parental involvement was not a significant predictor of achievement for junior high students in Gomoa East. Research to date has largely focused on whether parental involvement affects achievement rather than which specific forms of involvement are most effective. All of this points to the need for further research.

Factors Hindering Effective Home-School Partnerships

The benefits of school-home partnerships are well established in the literature, yet several factors continue to constrain their effectiveness. The literature points to a range of these, including socio-economic disadvantage, low levels of parental education, cultural beliefs, communication issues and institutional constraints. The argument about the roots of these barriers is squarely on the parental side. The standard view is that parents themselves (limited education and awareness) limit their involvement. This is supported by the work of Kwarteng et al. (2022), who found that parental education, occupation and income all had a significant bearing on both levels of parental involvement and on learners' achievement in Ghana. The more affluent the parents, the more likely they were to be involved in school activities and attend PTA meetings. Epstein (2018) contends that schools can be barriers to parental involvement through poor communication, inflexible meeting times, and an overall exclusionary culture. Low levels of parental involvement are therefore not simply a function of the family situation but also of institutional failure. The conclusion is that barriers to effective partnership exist in both the family and the school (Quansah, 2024).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The interpretivist paradigm underpinned this case study. Specifically, the study adopted an intrinsic case study design. The study examined teachers' perspectives on parental engagement challenges at the JHS level in the Birim Central Municipality, driven by the researcher's genuine interest in exploring a unique phenomenon (Kusi, 2012).

The study employed a maximum variation sampling strategy, a type of purposive sampling procedure (Teddlie & Yu, 2007), to capture unique cases and identify patterns that differentiate them (Gender, school academic achievement, school location). The target population was all Junior High School (JHS) teachers in the Eastern Region of Ghana, and the accessible population was all 224 public teachers in Birim Central Municipality in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study purposively selected thirteen JHS teachers because they were 'information rich'. Table 1 presents a summary of participants involved in the study.

Table 1: Profile of Sample

School	Location	Performance	Circuit	Teacher (Pseudo)	Gender	% Failed 2020	% Failed 2021	% Failed 2022
S1	Urban	HPS	C	MT1	M	18.2	28.1	10.0
S2	Urban	HPS	C	MT2	M	3.6	9.7	3.5
S3	Urban	ULS	A	MT3	M	66.7	70.0	58.8
S4	Rural	RIS	D	MT4	M	67.7	2.6	34.6
S5	Urban	UIS	A	MT5	M	40.3	50.7	6.0
S6	Urban	UIS	B	MT6	M	40.0	10.0	44.1
S7	Urban	UIS	B	MT7	M	58.9	51.2	40.8
S8	Rural	RLS	A	MT8	M	71.0	56.1	66.7
S9	Urban	ULS	B	FT1	F	92.6	45.5	70.4
S10	Rural	RLS	D	MT9	M	60.0	53.3	78.6
S11	Rural	RLS	D	MT10	M	100	21.7	60.6
S12	Urban	ULS	C	MT11	M	83.3	100	91.7
S13	Urban	ULS	C	FT2	F	65.0	87.2	88.6

Source: Field Data, 2023

S = School, U = Urban, R = Rural, M = Male, F = Female, T = Teacher, HPS = High-Performing Schools, UIS = Urban Improving schools, RIS = Rural Improving Schools, ULS = Urban Least-performing Schools, RLS = Rural Least-performing Schools

While previous studies indicate that major themes in qualitative research typically emerge within the first 12 to 15 interviews (Guest et al., 2006), sample adequacy in this study was established through empirical evidence derived from iterative analysis of the collected data. By the thirteenth interview, no additional themes relevant to the phenomenon under investigation were identified. The instrument adopted for the study was a semi-structured interview guide. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data that emerged from the study. Guided by the research questions, the researcher organised the data, immersed themselves in it by reading it several times, transcribed it, generated themes, coded it, and described them.

The study applied credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability to ensure the quality, or trustworthiness, of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Specifically, the researcher used expert review, peer review, an audit trail, detailed field notes, a thick description of the study area, and direct quotes from participants to support the themes generated; the findings were discussed in relation to existing literature.

The researcher lived and worked in the study context and, guided by Cohen et al. (2018) and Kusi (2012) on power relations associated with identity challenges in interviews, the researcher took a neutral stance

on the issues studied, constantly reflected on findings, and clearly and accurately reported participants' views to minimise the researcher's biases. The researcher also strove not to impose ideas on participants and carefully differentiated personal feelings and thoughts from those of the participants.

Official approval was obtained from the Birim Central Municipal Director of Education. The researcher obtained consent from all participants before data collection. All participants received written consent to read and sign; they retained a copy, and the researcher retained one as well. This also ensured that participation was voluntary, without coercion, and respected participants' dignity. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher used only pseudonyms in the findings and discussion sections. All recordings have been kept in a safe place that nobody else can access.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative data were presented under three themes: teachers' conceptualisation of home-school partnerships, teachers' perception of parental involvement in their students' academic development, and factors that hindered effective home-school partnerships.

Teachers' Conceptualisation of Home-school Partnerships

Home-school relations refer to the partnership between parents/guardians and schools in creating a fruitful learning experience for students. This relationship entails open communication, active participation, and cooperation. The participants knew that a strong home-school relationship creates a supportive learning environment for students. This is exemplified in the excerpts that follow:

> *This is where the community and school have a cordial relationship. So, when there is a problem between teachers and parents, the teachers, students, and community come together to solve that particular problem* (FT1- ULS).

> *The cordial relationship that exists between the school and the home. The school can fall on the home for some needs, and it will be welcomed, and when the home also falls on the school, things are not difficult for them* (MT3-ULS).

From the responses, teachers often view the home-school relationship as a collaborative partnership in which they work with parents and the community to support student success. They understand the importance of including the community in school operations and decision-making to create a welcoming and encouraging learning environment. This finding aligns particularly with Epstein's (2010) collaboration with the community dimension and Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological systems theory, which highlights the interconnected roles of families, schools, and communities in child development.

The teachers saw these partnerships as essential and collaborative, with schools, families, and the community working together to support one another and solve problems. However, this understanding reflects only a section of Epstein's six-dimensional framework. Although relationship-building and cooperation were emphasised, dimensions such as parenting, learning at home, and volunteering were largely overlooked. This indicates that teachers tend to conceptualise partnerships as harmonious relationships rather than as structured practices that directly support students' academic achievement.

Parents were seen as a source of support when needed rather than as active co-educators in the learning process. The emphasis on home-based learning contrasts sharply with Epstein's view of parents as involved in homework monitoring and academic guidance. That rather narrow conception of parental involvement may well limit the scope for genuine parental involvement in teaching and learning. Consequently, while teachers perceive relationships as collaborative, the extent to which parents participate as equal partners remains unclear. This underscores the importance of professional development that encourages teachers to see parents as equal partners in education rather than mere assistants to the school.

Teachers' Perception of Parental Involvement in their Students' Academic Development

The participants understood and appreciated the role of some parents in supporting their students' academic development. However, most participants felt that many parents were not involving themselves in their wards' academic development as expected. The teacher responses cluster into two primary perceptual categories: school-based involvement and home-based involvement. The teachers' responses are as follows:

One teacher mentioned:

> *The time that you came, you saw some of them [students] coming to school, almost 9 o'clock. You call parents; they will come, but they will never do anything about it. If you call them today, they will come, and tomorrow they will not come. There is a particular student in Form 1; throughout this term, he has been here once* (MT11- ULS).

One teacher explained:

> *During PTA, we encourage them to visit the school, and if there is any peculiar problem regarding their wards, they have the chance to discuss it with us. Then we see how best to solve the whole thing, and yet the majority of the parents will not come* (MT3-ULS).

Another teacher added:

> *Sometimes we try to reach out to the parents, but we don't get them. When you invite them, they don't come. Some of them, when they come here, use words like, "If you don't control your temper, you will fight with them* (MT4-RIS).

Supporting this view, a teacher mentioned:

> *The parents lack a channel of communication. For a parent to come to the school to find out or address an issue, they will never do that. They will rather go to the education office to report* (MT1-UHS).

The home-based involvement was captured in the following teachers' responses:

> *They [parents] are just not interested in the school and their ward's education. For example, you can find a JHS 1 student who has only two exercise books. He has no textbooks. For*

> *the whole of Form One, only one student has the Golden English that we are using. So, if you are teaching a class of 22 and only one student has the book, how will you be effective? You have to write everything on the board, which takes a lot of time* (MT11-ULS).

> *When it comes to low performance, I believe that some of the pupils have a lot of workloads from their various houses, and some of them sell after school, which, after selling, they get tired and then refuse to learn because they are tired* (MT1-UHS).

> *Some parents do not monitor and assist their children with homework; they have no fair idea about the children's academic performance* (MT4-RIS).

The community support for students' learning is also worth mentioning, as shown in the following comments from teachers.

> *The MP supported us with furniture, but it is not enough* (MT3-ULS). *The students were roaming in town and sleeping very late; when they come to school, you find them very tired. We discussed this with management, the SMC, and the PTA and formed a committee so that they would be moving in town at night, and pupils who are caught roaming in town would be punished. Their parents were invited to the school so that we could discuss how best they can help the children put an end to those practices* (FT2-ULS).

From the responses gathered, most of the perceptions of teachers centred around parents not responding to the invitations of teachers, communicating improperly, not attending PTA meetings, not supporting the schools financially, not providing learning resources for their wards, giving their wards extra workload at home, not monitoring their wards to study and not supporting schools in the community. Atta et al. (2012) stressed how crucial it is for parents to understand their role in their children's education. Home-school partnership involves teachers, students, parents, school community members, and the networks among them. Currently, schools struggle to get support from the home because of our mobile society (Lezotte, 2011). Studies show that parents involved in their children's education are more likely to see their children succeed academically (Chowa et al., 2013; McNeal, 2014). All the participants understood and appreciated the role of some parents in supporting their wards' academic development. However, the findings align with Avvisati, Besbas, and Guyon (2010), who noted that the glass is half full and half empty when it comes to family involvement in students' academic development. Additionally, numerous studies confirm that some parents are currently involved in their children's education and schools, while others are not regularly or productively involved (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

The findings confirm Ankomah and Hope's (2011) claim that parents of learners, especially those in public schools, are generally less motivated to take part actively in school-level management than parents in private schools in Ghana. Structured meetings for SMCs, PTAs, and other stakeholders to discuss issues confronting schools are not fully attended. Attendance at these meetings is low and rarely reaches a quorum. This does not help address schools' issues for effective school management. Concerns remain about the causes of this disengagement and the repercussions for students and their educational experience arising from limited parental participation. Parents may not attend PTA meetings because they do not understand the benefits or because of busy schedules.

Communication is an interaction within a social context that involves a sender and a receiver (Foluke, 2018). In educational institutions, effective communication between teachers and parents about student achievement and attendance is crucial (Ozmen et al., 2016). Ozmen et al. note that healthy communication between teachers and parents is not always possible because of numerous barriers. The teachers interviewed said some parents use abusive language when communicating with them and even visit the school premises to fight with them. According to Mary (2004), poor communication networks with the community will alienate the community from the school and create unhealthy school-community relations.

Additionally, parents not using the right communication channels is another issue, as parents come from diverse backgrounds and may have different expectations or approaches to communication (Ozmen et al., 2016). From the responses, some parents report issues to the Municipal Educational Office, while the heads could have addressed them more directly. Establishing a trust-based communication channel between teachers and parents is crucial for identifying issues, devising solutions, and supporting students as they progress through their education (Ozmen et al., 2016). Furthermore, a lack of communication can lead to tension and mistrust between parents and teachers, making it difficult to discuss significant problems or collaborate to support students' success. Epstein (2013) argues that effective family-school relationships require mutual trust and respect.

Research by Eaford (2018) and Talluri and Suneela (2017) shows that teachers value parental engagement and believe it benefits the educational process. Teachers believe that, for children to succeed academically, support from the family, extended family, and community in providing learning resources and supporting students' learning and school activities is crucial. Parental involvement affects students' behaviour and attitudes directly and indirectly affects their academic achievement (McNeal, 2014). Moreover, communication, access to learning facilities, proper guidance, and family stress also affect academic performance (Mushtaq & Khan, 2012).

The study findings corroborate Morgan's (2016) belief that students today spend too much time online and are exposed to a variety of resources, social media, and gadgets, to the detriment of their studies. In addition, the study's findings align with Yakubu et al.'s (2026) findings that a lack of communication between parents and children about schoolwork contributes greatly to low academic performance among junior high school students. Parents of older students also report feeling increasingly less able to help with homework (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Simon, 2000). Studies show that, regardless of parent income or formal education, when parents are involved, students tend to do better academically and show more positive school attitudes, higher aspirations, and other positive behaviours (Clark, 1983; Comer, 1980). Furthermore, the findings support Epstein's (2010) assertion that school, family, and community connections influence children's learning and development, not only parent–teacher relations (Epstein, 2010). A positive relationship among teachers, parents, and community members is required to enable them to work together and provide students with effective, efficient academic support.

Factors that Hindered Effective Home-school Partnerships

Home-school partnerships build community support and increase the probability of student success. The factors teachers mentioned as hindrances to an effective home-school partnership were interrelated. The major factors identified by participants included community negative perception of education, students living with adoptive parents, Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), and community misuse of school facilities.

FT1-ULS stated that:

> *Some parents are so ignorant about education. They [parents] come here to beat us always. They insult us. When you try to change their perception of school, they insult you.*

MT10- RLS said that:

> *The children, too, not all of them are with their biological parents; some of them are helpers. They were brought from villages. The motive is for them to help, but they promise to take them to school when they go for them; but when they come, and the child needs to help them, they sometimes don't come to school. During the farming season, they ask them to go help drive away the birds on their rice farms.*

MT5-UIS angrily expressed that:

> *As I am speaking with you, some of the pupils don't have exercise books, but we are in the fifth week. You give them work; they don't do it because they don't have a book. During the advocacy meeting, we talked about it, but some of them don't want to mind. Some will tell you they don't have money, and the government said school is free, so that means everything is free.*

MT1-UHS added that:

> *There have been a few complaints about their performance in the sense that those kinds of rules from the government, free education, and stuff are limiting the performance of the students.*

FT2-ULS highlighted that:

> *Our school is open to everybody, so people, especially drug peddlers, often use our school and they defecate in our school. They break our furniture. Every week, especially on Mondays, we spend one and a half hours cleaning our school of human excreta and wait for it to dry before we get to the classroom for academic work to start.*

The concept of home-school partnership has gained significant attention over the years, with many schools facing numerous challenges in trying to forge a positive relationship with the home. One major finding was that some parents' negative perceptions of education lead them to keep students from attending school and instead engage them in selling things for financial gain. Participants raised concerns about the limited value some parents place on education. Several studies show that parental involvement in school activities helps build a positive relationship between parents and teachers and creates a more supportive school environment for children (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). These findings align with Moroni et al. (2015), who found that parents are not playing their rightful role in their children's education.

Also, Chevalier et al. (2013) found a positive relationship between parental involvement in children's schooling and parents' income and education levels. When parents are not economically secure, they may

force students to help with their jobs at the expense of school. Chohan and Khan (2013) observed that although parents are not actively involved in classroom teaching and learning, they are expected to support their child's education financially and with other resources, without expecting financial gains in return.

According to Ralte and Fanai (2023), parents are the pillars of a family; they play a pivotal role in their children's lives. They must act as providers, supporters, counsellors, and teachers. However, when the children are adopted, it becomes a challenge for some parents. Adopted students rely on their guardians for resources such as textbooks, school supplies, and educational support. Participants' responses showed that guardians do not adequately support these students. This does not align with Bronfenbrenner's (1986) mesosystem, which requires interactions between significant settings in a child's life, including home and school. Without these essential tools, these students may struggle to keep up with their peers and may feel isolated and inadequate. Schools, social services, and communities must work together to identify and support these students, provide the necessary resources, and advocate for their educational rights. That may be why Ralte and Fanai (2023) said all children deserve parents, but not all parents deserve children.

Over the years, Ghana has developed programmes and policies to promote formal education. Many people view formal education as a means of attaining a fulfilling personal life. FCUBE is one such programme. Ghana introduced it in 1995, promising universal education by 2005 (Government of Ghana, 1995; Akyeampong, 2009). The policy is essential because it guarantees all Ghanaians, regardless of gender, geography, religion, or ethnic heritage, the right to basic education (Saliful et al., 2018). While Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education is often seen as a noble goal, it has some potential drawbacks. The findings showed that schools expect parents to provide textbooks and other writing materials for their wards, and they charge levies to raise funds for some school expenses. Meanwhile, it could be deduced that some parents were unwilling to support their wards or the schools in any way, which challenges most schools. Participants said that these parents claim that the government provides textbooks and other materials for the schools.

The Ghana Education Service highlights that FCUBE entails the government providing free tuition, textbooks, and teaching and learning materials, and subsidising the cost of exercise books. It also supplements Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) fees for both public and private candidates ...[but] parents ...are expected to send all their children of school-going age to school, feed them and provide them with school uniforms, school bags, stationery, and transport where necessary. (Ekundayo, 2018, as cited in Akyeampong,2010). Despite these highlights, parents must understand that almost all schools do not have adequate textbooks for the current curriculum.

In another vein, all participants mentioned community members misusing school facilities, from unauthorised use of classrooms for personal activities such as smoking to the destruction of school property such as furniture. These incidents disrupt the learning environment and drain valuable resources that could be better utilised for educational purposes. Furthermore, misuse of school facilities can lead to lost instructional hours in some schools. For instance, when unauthorised individuals access school premises to defecate, students must spend extra time cleaning their classrooms. This finding reflects the literature on such circumstances. A study conducted by Opoku-Asare et al. (2015) found that the causal factors for school-community conflict were encroachment of school land, theft of school property, and misuse of school premises.

The participants' accounts reveal a tension between the idealised vision of home-school partnership and the reality of how it is put into practice. Participants consistently spoke of the need for open communication, mutual co-operation, and active parental involvement as fundamental to an effective home-school partnership. However, the evidence suggests this is not always the case, and there is a clear gap between the ideal and reality. The findings suggest that partnership is constrained by several institutional, socio-economic, and relational factors, which in turn limit the extent of parental engagement. It is possible, therefore, that the notion of partnership may mask power imbalances, with schools defining the terms of the partnership and parents having to work within a range of constraints (time, other commitments, resources, etc.). Additionally, the fact that home-school relationships are deemed important does not, in itself, lead to effective partnership, and the findings point to the need to be mindful of the structural and contextual factors that can inhibit genuine partnership.

Families, schools, and communities can better help children reach important educational goals when they work together, combine resources, communicate effectively, and keep students informed about their collaborations. The need for cooperation is forcing educators and community leaders to shift from criticising families and trying to make parents meet school demands to changing schools and communities to meet the needs, interests, and goals of families and children (Epstein & Sanders, 2002).

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: Teachers viewed home-school partnerships as collaborative relationships based on communication, shared responsibility, and mutual support for the child's learning. Parental involvement was seen as a key factor in improving outcomes. However, participants identified several problems: low levels of parental engagement, communication difficulties, differing views on what the school and the parent should be doing, disagreements on discipline and other school-related issues, and a range of negative community practices that have a damaging effect on the school. The findings point to a gap between the ideal of a home-school partnership and the reality of how it is achieved in practice, with the nature of the partnership being determined by institutional, relational and community factors. The study concludes that school leadership is critical to developing effective home-school partnerships. School leaders need to move away from the notion that parental involvement is an individual responsibility and instead create structures for inclusive engagement, improve communication, build trust between school and family, clarify roles and expectations and promote a sense of community ownership of the school's purpose. This kind of leadership is essential if home-school partnerships are to move from a shared aspiration to a real and effective practice that contributes to student academic performance.

Recommendations: The Municipal Education Office, headteachers, teachers, students, parents, and opinion leaders should meet to openly discuss concerns, issues, and fears, and collaboratively develop appropriate discipline methods that create a conducive learning environment for students, teachers, and headteachers. They should also design a comprehensive partnership policy and programme that reaches out to and involves all parents and other partners in a productive way to support students' academic development. Furthermore, these educational stakeholders should pool resources to fence the school buildings to prevent some community members from exploiting the school’s property. Schools could consider the following when scheduling meetings with parents or community members: involve the assemblyman; engage the unit committee members; select a non-market day; and choose a time that is not peak for most businesses.

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