

An Investigation of Provision of Quality Basic Education in Ghana

A Case Study of Selected Schools in the Central Region

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Abstract

This study investigated teaching and learning in six private and public (rural and urban) basic schools in two districts in the Central Region of Ghana. Six headteachers and 26 teachers whose classes or lessons were observed participated in the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw 144 pupils from primary 3, 4, 6 and junior secondary school form one. Four research instruments were used for data gathering. The results showed that the quality of education offered by the private, public (rural and urban) schools was hampered by many shortcomings such as lack of textbooks and teaching and learning materials; inappropriate teaching methods, and the extensive use of English as the language of instruction. The major differences between private and public schools were the superior language facility of pupils; greater availability and use of textbooks; and more access to extra tuition for pupils in private schools.

1. Introduction

The Government of Ghana has shown enormous commitment to the achievement of “Education for All” (EFA) through its poverty reduction strategy. Central to the Government of Ghana’s (GoG) Poverty Strategy Reduction (GPRS) is the provision of quality education. Also, through the GPRS, the GoG has affirmed its commitment to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports (MoESS) has four thematic areas outlined in its Education Strategic Plan (ESP) to achieve the MDGs. These are equitable access, quality of education, educational management, and science and technology. One of the policy goals under quality of education is to improve the quality of teaching and learning for enhanced pupil/student achievement. According to the Education Sector Report (2004), the comprehensive nature of Ghana’s education strategy has been acknowledged by the international community.

A major achievement in the Ghanaian education system is that 18 months after the inception of the ESP in 2003, good progress has been made in terms of access across many areas of the sector (Education Sector Report, 2004). In particular, enrolment rates have risen in primary, JSS and post basic sub-sectors (Primary Education Sub-sector Report, 2004). These have, in general, led to improved Gender Parity Indicators (GPI), Gross Enrolment Rates (GER), and survival and completion rates at the national level. Primary school enrolment growth has been sustained at 3.5% in 2003-04, with an overall growth of 8.6% between 2001-02 and 2003-04. This has resulted in a significant increase in students enrolled from 2.96 million to 3.24 million over the period from 2003-04 to-2005-06. Primary enrolment growth for girls has been particularly positive with increases of 3.24% in 2003-04 and 9.32% over the period 2001-02 to 2003-04. The significant increases in enrolment have outstripped the projected population growth, estimated at 2.7% per year, and as a result the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has increased from 86.5% to 92.1% (female increase from 83.1% to 88.8%, male increase from 89.5% to 99.3%) from 2003-04 to-2005-06 (MoESS, 2006).

In spite of these achievements, the percentage of trained teaching force which is an enabling factor in the provision of quality education has increased marginally at the primary level and fallen at the JSS level. The expectation is that it is unlikely that the targets set for 2005 will be met (Education Sector Performance Report, 2004).

The only outcome indicator for assessing education quality at the basic education level is the Basic Education Certificate Education (BECE) taken by students upon completion of JSS. However, the BECE is structured so as to ensure that approximately 60.0% each year gain between aggregate 6 to 30 and so little variation is to be expected. Apart from this, there are many primary schools which do not have attached JSS. Pupils from such schools have to continue their JSS education in other schools. The BECE results at the JSS level in those schools will therefore not necessarily reflect the quality of education

pupils had received at the primary level. The BECE is therefore not a good indicator of quality of education nationally. To overcome this, input indicators, such as Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) and Pupil Core Textbook Ratio (PCTBR) have been used to provide proxy measures of quality of education. The Education Sector Report (2004) indicates that PTR have not substantially increased for the primary level and in fact has been decreasing at the JSS level. On PCTBR, the GES textbook policy states that each pupil in basic education should have access on an individual basis to a textbook in each of the following core subjects: English, Mathematics and Science. This represents a target PCTBR ratio of 1.3.0 – that is each pupil should have access to three core textbooks. Between 2002-03 and 2003-04 the PCTBR at the primary level has fallen from 1:1.7 to 1:1. At the JSS level, the PCTBR is a little nearer the target but it was still the case that all areas experienced a decline between 2002 and 2004, due to there being no distribution of books. Nationally, the JSS PCTBR fell from 1:2.7 to 1:2.3. Whilst it appears the Ministry's broad policies and strategies since 1996 have been effective in promoting positive trends in access and reducing the barriers to access for Ghana's students, quality improvement in education is yet to show positive trends.

It can be seen that measurement of the quality of education in Ghana has focused principally on resource inputs and outcomes (i.e. PTR, PCTBR and BECE results). Research has shown that "in many parts of the world, an enormous gap prevails between the numbers graduating from schools and those among them who can master a minimum set of cognitive skills" (Education For All: The quality imperative, p. 23). There is a general perception in Ghana that educational standards are low in public schools in both urban and rural areas compared to private schools. This is because compared to public school private schools have generally been performing well at the BECE. Many parents therefore continue to patronise private schools as means of getting quality education for their wards. In 2005/06 private school enrolment stood at 24% of the total national.

However, simple quantifiable outcomes such as PTR, PCTBR and BECE results do not help us to understand the dynamics of classroom level interactions and other factors associated with good quality education and their effect on student achievement. Since Coleman and his colleagues' report on school effectiveness in 1966, debate on education quality has been dominated by two schools of thought, namely, the effective schools approach and schools improvement approach. Whereas the effective schools approach has relied on quantitative and analytic techniques to determine the relative effects on different inputs on achievement, school quality uses ethnographic instruments to study school and classroom-level processes and their interactions, and impact on achievement (Jansen, 1995). It is very clear that even though PTR, PCTBR and BECE results are essential, they are not sufficient indicators in assessing the quality of education. What seems to be equally important is how input resources into schools and classrooms are utilised to promote quality education. This brings into focus classroom level teaching and learning as educational processes apart from outcomes which have a lot to do with the quality of education children receive in schools. In fact, one of the critiques of effective schools research is the failure to locate conceptions and measures of school quality and effectiveness within everyday classroom processes of teaching, learning and assessment (Jansen, 1995).

In Ghana, very limited attempts have been made through Improving Education Quality (IEQ) and Quality Improvements in Primary Schools/Improving Learning through Partnerships (QUIPS/ILP) projects to look at classroom practices. For example, the IEQ study was skewed towards the study of the availability and use of textbooks in the classroom, and the language of instruction, whilst QUIPS/ILP project looked at the use of teaching and learning materials and community participation in education. The scope of these two projects was therefore too small to give a comprehensive picture of classroom interactions. Classroom settings in different schools are complex and unique and therefore utilisation of inputs into education may not easily be predictable (Sato, 1990; Hannaway & Talbert, 1993). Hence "education quality should be concerned with processes of teaching, learning, testing, managing and resourcing through in-depth qualitative investigations of such processes" (Jansen, 1995, p. 195).

The investigation of how input factors are utilised as teachers and children engage each other in the classroom learning environment in Ghanaian schools in different contexts (rural, urban, public, private, deprived and non-deprived) is needed to better understand how to improve quality of education. As Jansen (1995) observed, there is an emerging paradigm of quality as school- and classroom-level processes. Since there is a dedication by the GoG to the improvement in the quality of education especially in public schools, the need to study quality of education as delivered at the classroom level in Ghanaian basic schools is of paramount importance.

2. Objectives of the Study

There is a commitment of the Government of Ghana to an improvement in the quality of education in Ghana. However, as the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) puts it "any policy aimed at

pushing net enrolments towards 100% must also assure decent learning conditions and opportunities” (p. 2). Although a great deal has been said and written about the problems and shortcomings of Ghanaian education, what is lacking is good qualitative research at the local level based on empirical data on utilisation of input factors by teachers and pupils at the classroom level. It is against this background that this study was conducted. This study investigated education quality at the classroom level with the hope that it will lead to improving classroom practice and policy direction of the MoESS.

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- (1) investigate how schools in different contexts (rural, urban, public, private) provide quality education in the classroom;
- (2) identify good practices that promote quality of education in the classrooms of basic schools;
- (3) identify areas of weaknesses in classroom practice that may be contributing to unacceptable quality of education in basic schools.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used a micro-approach to study the quality of education in some classrooms in some selected Ghanaian basic schools. As this was an exploratory study, it was restricted to six private and public basic schools from two districts in the Central Region of Ghana. Private basic schools were included in the study because there is a general public perception that they offer better quality education to pupils. However, since the inception of the 1987 educational reforms, private school teachers have generally not been involved in most of the INSET activities organised for basic school teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Yet, the national BECE results over the years show better performance of students in private schools compared to public schools. Public schools were selected from both rural and urban schools to reflect the different contexts in rural and urban settings. Rural settings are generally characterised by poverty, high levels of parent illiteracy, low school enrolments and lack of qualified teachers.

Researchers from the University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba conducted interviews with pupils and made classroom observations of the day-to-day teaching and learning in the selected schools. The major steps involved in the study were the gathering of data from classroom observations, pupils, headteachers and teachers during visits to schools, and analysis and synthesis of the data. Even though pupils’ participation in school learning is within and outside classroom contexts, this study focused more on classroom interactions involving pupils, teachers and input resources such as textbooks, TLMs etc. The study focused on quality of education by looking at resource inputs and teaching and learning practices at the classroom level. A diagrammatic representation which captures how this study was conceptualised is shown in Appendix A. The role played by parents, school management etc. was not considered in this study because they were considered to be an indirect influence on actual classroom-level interactions (See Appendix B).

Questionnaires were given to all teachers, whose lessons were observed, as well as headteachers, and pupils in the six selected basic schools. Data collected on classroom teaching and learning from headteachers, teachers and pupils enabled triangulation of data in interpreting observation of classroom lessons by the researchers.

The focus on six case study schools out of a total of over 200 schools places a limitation on the study. The purpose was to collect data that will provide case study insights within the context of the six schools on the key factors which influence the quality of instructional delivery in the classroom. The study was not meant to generalise the findings to all basic schools in Ghana or even in the districts where data were collected. The study however, gives information on the typology and trend of classroom teaching and learning in the three school-types. The key issues raised in this study are therefore relevant for the vast majority of basic schools.

3.2 Participants

Two districts in which the two participating institutions (University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba) were sited were selected from 12 districts in the Central Region of Ghana by convenience. These districts were the Cape Coast and Awutu-Afutu-Senya Districts. With the help of the District Directors of Education, two schools were selected from each district in the following categories:

- One private school doing very well
- One urban public school doing very well
- One rural public school doing very well

The criterion for selection of these schools was the trend of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results in the past five years. The basis for the selection of good performing schools was to find

schools, which were doing well, so that their good practices could be spread to other schools to emulate. In each school, lessons in primary 3, primary 4, primary 6 and JSS1 were observed. The reason for selecting these grades was that primary 3 is the end of lower primary school and pupils are to be instructed in the local language; primary 4 is the beginning of upper primary and the grade when curriculum delivery is by the use of the English language; primary 6 is the end of primary school; and JSS 1 is the beginning of junior secondary school and it was felt that pupils will still be going through normal teaching and learning and not coaching for the BECE examination.

In each class, six pupils made up of three boys and three girls (above average, average and below average based on general performance as assessed by teachers) were selected with the help of the class teachers for structured interview. Out of 144 pupils the interview protocols of 128 were complete with no missing data. This was made up of 60 males and 68 females from private (41), urban (44) and rural (20) basic schools from the Cape Coast municipality and Winneba district. Out of this number 43 comprising 48.8% males and 51.2% females were selected from private schools, 41 comprising 26.6% males and 63.4% females from urban schools and 44 comprising of 54.5% males and 45.5% females from rural schools.

The six headteachers from the schools studied and 26 teachers whose classes or lessons were observed participated in the study. Data collection commenced in December 2005 and were completed were collected in January, 2006 and February, 2006 for Awutu-Afutu-Senya and Cape Coast Districts respectively.

3.3 Instruments

This exploratory case study gathered data primarily using four instruments (Appendix C-F): The items in the instruments were chosen based on the principles of quality teaching and learning as well as acceptable classroom practices. The instruments were developed and validated by the research team through a pilot study of a basic school in the Cape Coast District. The instruments were:

- (1) Headteachers' questionnaire
- (2) Teachers' questionnaire
- (3) Pupils' Interview schedule
- (4) Observations (of teaching and classroom settings)

3.4 Procedure

Data collection in schools started in December 2005 in both districts. Twenty-five researchers from University of Cape Coast and University of Education, Winneba took part in the study. The researchers from University of Cape Coast visited three schools in the Cape Coast District whilst those from the University of Education went to schools in the Awutu-Afutu-Senya District. In each school, the headteachers and teachers were assured that the purpose of the research was to understand how teaching and learning activities were being conducted in the classroom and that the researchers were not in the schools to monitor or supervise teachers' work.

In each class (P3, P4, P6 and JSS1), two researchers observed teaching and learning in a period of 2-3 weeks. Each observed lesson was synchronised between the two observers to produce one observation data. A total of 265 observations were made in private (94), urban (111) and rural basic schools (60). In all school types, science/environmental studies, English language, mathematics, social studies and Ghanaian language were observed in P3, P4, P6 and JSS1.

Apart from the observations, six selected pupils in each class were interviewed by the researchers. Class teachers were asked to give the list of pupils belonging to the three strata: above average, average and below average and the researchers selected the pupils (one boy and one girl) from each stratum. The researchers used the class register to ensure that pupils who were selected were those who were regular at school.

In each school, questionnaires were administered to the headteacher and the teachers whose lessons/classes were observed. Teachers' lesson plans as well as pupils' exercise books were also examined.

3.5 Data Analysis

Questionnaires to pupils, teachers and headteachers were analysed using frequencies and percentages and grouped under themes. The classroom observation data were analysed by using percentages and those items which were open-ended were reduced to patterns and themes and interpreted to provide insights into classroom-level teaching and learning. The proportion of lesson notes which were marked was determined and their quality was judged by the researchers.

3.6 Significance of the study

The results of this study are envisioned to be constructive in the following ways:

1. Better understanding of quality of education at the classroom level in Ghanaian schools, which hopefully will enable the MOES to plan appropriate INSET to address shortcomings in schools.
2. Findings add to the literature on quality of education as processes and not only quantifiable outcomes
3. Findings will generate interest on quality of education in Ghanaian schools and hopefully lead to further funded qualitative studies of classroom- and school-level processes.

3.7 Results and Discussion

This section presents findings of the study with respect to responses to questionnaires by headteachers and teachers; structured interviews with pupils and data collected from classroom observations by the researchers. General discussions of issues emanating from results are discussed under various headings reflecting the objectives of the study.

4. Provision of Quality Education at the Classroom Level by Schools in Different Contexts

4.1 Staff enrolment and teaching experience

Table 1 shows the staff enrolment in the private, urban and rural schools. The table shows that the staff enrolment in the two private schools was higher than that of the urban and rural schools. This was mainly due to the fact one of the private schools practices subject teaching right from P4 to JSS3. In the private schools French was taught by specialist teachers instead of class teachers. The table also shows almost equal number of teachers at the primary and JSS levels in the urban and rural schools while there were more teachers in the primary than the JSS in private schools. The results also show that there were more male teachers both at the primary and the JSS levels in the private schools. In the urban schools, female teachers were more than the males both at the primary school level and the JSS level. The situation in the rural school was quite different with more female teachers at the primary school level and more male teachers at the JSS level.

4.2 Qualification of teachers

Teachers' qualification does influence the quality of teaching. Thus a good mix of subject matter knowledge and pedagogic content knowledge is essential for effective lesson delivery (Parker, 2004). The qualifications of teachers in the classes in which lessons were observed are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the qualification of primary school teachers' by school type.

Table 1: Primary school teachers' qualification by school type

	School type and qualification		
	Private	Urban	Rural
Primary three	City & Guilds Diploma (Basic Education)	3-Year Teachers Cert "A" 3-Year Teachers Cert "A"	B.Ed 3-Year Teachers Cert "A"
Primary four	SSSCE First degree	3-Year Teachers Cert "A" B.Ed	3-Year Teachers Cert "A" 3-Year Teachers Cert "A"
Primary six	SSSCE B.Ed	3-Year Teachers Cert "A" Higher National Diploma	3-Year Teachers Cert "A" 3-Year Teachers Cert "A"

The data show that majority (9 out of 12) of the primary school teachers in the urban and rural schools were certificate "A" holders. Two of them were B.Ed degree holders with one higher national diploma holder who was therefore untrained. All the teachers in the rural schools were trained but one of the teachers in the urban schools was untrained. A look at the qualification of teachers in the private schools shows that four of the six teachers were untrained.

Table 2 shows the qualification of JSS teachers by school type. It can be seen from the table that generally the urban and the rural schools were staffed with more qualified teachers compared to the private schools. Even though two of the teachers in the private schools were master of philosophy (MPhil) holders, there were more untrained teachers in the private schools with only Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) qualifications. Majority of the urban and rural teachers were B.Ed degree holders (17 out of 27 and 7 out of 13 respectively). This is an indication that more qualified teachers were employed to teach at the JSS level than the primary school level.

Table 2: Qualification of JSS teachers by school type

Qualification	School type		
	Private	Urban	Rural
MPhil	2	0	0
B.Ed	0	17	7
Diploma Basic Education	0	2	0
3-Year Teachers Cert "A"	0	6	5
Higher National Diploma	1	0	0
SSSCE	11	0	0
Others	0	2	1

Note; others include teachers holding technician certificates and those with advanced fashion certificates

4.3 Staff enrolment and teaching experience

Table 3 shows the staff enrolment in the private, urban and rural schools. The table shows that the staff enrolment in the two private schools was higher than that in the urban schools.

Table 3

Staff enrolment by sex and school type

School type	District	Number of teachers					
		Primary	JSS	Males primary	Males JSS	Female primary	Females JSS
Private	Cape Coast*	34	21	26	14	8	7
	Winneba	6	12	5	8	1	4
Urban	Cape Coast**	12	12	3	5	9	7
	Winneba	12	12	2	6	10	6
Rural	Cape Coast	6	5	2	4	4	1
	Winneba	6	11	1	2	5	4

* School has four streams. ** School has two streams

This was due to the fact one of the private schools practiced subject teaching right from P4 to JSS3. At the lower primary school, French was taught by specialist teachers instead of class teachers. There were almost an equal number of teachers at the primary and JSS levels in the urban and rural schools while there were more teachers at the primary than the JSS in private schools. The results also show that there were more male teachers at both the primary and the JSS levels in the private schools. In the urban schools, female teachers were more than the males both at the primary school level and the JSS level. The situation in the rural school was quite different as there were more female teachers at the primary school level and more male teachers at the JSS level.

4.4 Teaching experience

It is a generally accepted fact that the years spent in teaching do influence the quality of instruction in the classroom. There is also a popular belief that private schools usually have young and inexperienced teachers. This study therefore looked at the teaching experience of teachers. Table 4 shows the average teaching experience of teachers in primary three, four, six and JSS1 in the different school types. The average teaching experience ranges between 3 to 23 years in private schools, 4 to 19 in the urban schools and 2 to 14 in the rural schools. The teaching experience of the urban schoolteachers was generally higher than those in the private and rural schools. There seems to be no general pattern in the teaching experience of teachers but a look at the average teaching experience of the primary school teachers in the urban school shows that the average teaching experience reduces as one moves up (12years, 8 years, and 4 years for primary three, primary four and JSS1 respectively). This suggests that more experienced teachers were employed to teach the lower levels in the urban schools.

Table 4: Range of years of teaching experience of teachers by school type

School type	P3	P4	P6	JSS1*
Private 1	20	5	5	19
Private 2	8	4	28	7
Public urban 1	16	5	2	18
Public urban 2	16	15	18	15
Public rural 1	10	2	8	7
Public rural 2	1	1	1	13

* Average number of years

4.5 Class sizes and pupil-teacher ratio

The PTR is one of the key input indicators used as a proxy for education quality within the ESP. It is also used to reflect access and efficiency within the education sector. The MoESS and GES policy is to have a PTR of 35:1 at the primary level and 25:1 at the JSS level. Class sizes in P3, P4, P6 and JSS1 in the private, rural and urban primary and JSS schools observed were higher than the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of 35:1 as shown in Table 5. None of the schools observed therefore operated within the PTR stipulated by the MoESS. Generally, the class sizes in the private schools were comparable to that in the rural schools. The class sizes in the urban schools were however, slightly higher. The general trend in Ghana is that of higher class sizes in urban schools and lower class sizes in rural schools. One class in the rural school had a total of 69 pupils, the minimum class size being 36 in a private school. In all the 24 classes observed only six came close to the PTR of 35:1.

Table 5: Class sizes observed in private, rural and urban primary and JSS schools

	School type	P3	P4	P6	JSS
Private 1	Private	47	51	52	51
Private 2		39	40	38	36
Public urban 1	Public	57	57	57	56
Public urban 2	Urban	57	56	46	51
Public rural 1	Public	69	56	37	49
Public rural 2	Rural	37	49	37	42

There were 12 classes with class sizes above 50 and it was observed that individual pupil-teacher interactions were minimal in those classes due to the large class sizes. All the classes at the JSS level irrespective of the school type were far higher (in some cases double) the stipulated PTR of 25:1. Class management and individual pupil-teacher interactions were observed to be more manageable in the classes with PTR close to 35:1.

4.6 Teachers' lesson notes

In both public and private schools teachers were required to write lesson notes. These lesson notes were expected to be vetted by headteachers and used by the teachers in teaching. In all the schools visited teachers were expected to submit their lesson notes by Monday or Tuesday morning. According to the headteachers, teachers are either appealed to or queried as a means of forcing them to meet deadlines. Even though all the headteachers indicated that their teachers knew how to prepare lesson notes, some of the lesson notes were not well written.

Also, it was observed that not all of them were marked by headteachers. The proportion of teachers' lesson notes that had been marked by headteachers during the period of the school visits was not encouraging in the rural and private schools. For example, in the private schools out of 51 lesson notes seen, only 6 (11.8%) had been marked by headteachers. That of the rural schools was 11 (31.4%) out of 35. The case of the urban schools was far better with 68 (71.6%) out of the 95 lesson notes marked. Some of the unmarked lesson notes were with the headteachers at the time teachers were expected to be using them as a guide to teach in class. This happened in all the school types.

Lesson notes were absent in most of the lessons observed especially in the private and public rural schools. Some lesson notes were poorly written with some essential features missing. It was observed that some teachers taught with lesson notes which had uncorrected errors after they had been marked or seen by the headteacher. In one private school for example, lesson notes were prepared by teachers but not used to teach the lessons they were intended. This was because they had been marked or seen by the headteacher and kept in the headteacher's office. There were however, many errors in the lesson notes that were not indicated as errors by the headteacher.

5. Lesson presentation

5.1 Instructional time

Table 6 shows the amount of time officially allocated to each of the subjects studied at the primary and JSS levels in the three school types. The table shows that a lot of time is expected to be devoted to the study of English language and mathematics at both primary and the junior secondary school levels in all school types. However, more time was spent on the teaching of mathematics and English at the primary school level compared to the junior secondary school level.

Table 6: Average number of periods allocated to subjects by school type

Subject	Periods per week					
	Private		Public urban		Public rural	
	Primary	JSS	Primary	JSS	Primary	JSS
English language	10	6	10	6	10	6
Mathematics	10	6	10	6	10	6
Science	5	4	5	4	5	4
Social Studies	0	4	0	4	0	4
Environmental studies	5	0	5	0	5	0
Religious and Moral Education	5	4	5	4	5	4
Agriculture	0	4	0	4	0	4
Ghanaian language	5	4	5	4	5	4

Note: One period at the primary school is 30 minutes and 35 minutes at the JSS

Even though headteachers from the private and public urban schools indicated that teachers adhered to the approved periods allocated to each subject, it was observed in all school types that school time-tables were not rigidly followed contrary to what was observed in the classrooms. This was confirmed by all the teachers whose lessons were observed. Lesson duration at the primary school level is 30 minutes for a single period and 60 minutes for a double period. At the JSS level it is 35 minutes and 70 minutes respectively. However, some lessons took more time than stipulated on the time table whilst others took a lesser time. The situation was worse at the primary school level where class teachers teach almost all subjects and did not need to leave the class for another teacher to come and take over. The situation was better at the JSS level as there was subject teaching at this level and so lessons had to end so that another teacher could take over the class.

This practice seemed to be acceptable in all the schools. In the private schools, subject teaching was done for some subjects at the primary school and this sometimes prevented teachers from unnecessarily prolonging some lessons. Even then in one private school pupils were taught English language and mathematics in the first four hours each morning. Also, in one of the public schools, teachers taught a maximum of three subjects but on the average only two subjects were taught during the period in which lessons were observed in the school. Also, in one of the private schools one subject was taught in all classes for three continuous periods.

The disadvantage of such practice is that the relative emphasis on school subjects as stipulated by the various syllabuses and official school time-table was distorted especially as the time spent on some subjects did not follow any discernable patterns. Headteachers teachers from all the school types mentioned sporting activities and official errands as major activities that also affected instructional time.

5.2 Language of instruction

English language is the medium through which the school curriculum is expected to be delivered to the pupils from primary 4. At the lower primary school (P1-P3), the position of the MoESS is currently unclear but the policy stipulates that the local language should be used as the medium of instruction. The language of instruction can be a barrier to pupils' understanding of lessons taught if they have a weak mastery of the language. The study therefore looked at three main issues under language use namely, language used by pupils within class and outside class, medium of instruction and the level of pupils' comprehension of lessons taught using the English language.

Responses from headteachers' and teachers' questionnaires show that the medium of instruction in the private schools was mostly in the English language whilst the public rural and urban schools used mostly a combination of both English language and Ghanaian language to instruct pupils. Table 7 shows the results of interviews with pupils on the language used in the classroom by school type. The table shows that majority (69.8%) of the pupils in the private schools indicated that they speak only English language in the classroom compared to 43.2% of pupils in the urban schools and only 19.0% in the rural schools. Table 7 also shows that in the rural schools, majority of pupils (61.9%) said they speak the local language in class. Also, majority of the pupils (over 90.0%) irrespective of the school type spoke mostly the local language at home.

Table 7: Language use in the classroom by school type

School Type	Place	Language use		
		Local	English	Both Local & English
Private	Within classroom	3(7.1%)	30(69.8%)	9(20.9%)
Public urban	Within classroom	16(43.2%)	13(35.1%)	7(18.9%)
Public rural	Within classroom	2(61.9%)	8(19%)	8(19%)

It was observed that English language only, Ghanaian language only and a mixture of English language and Ghanaian language were used to varying degrees in the schools. At the primary school level between 85.0% -89.5% of the lessons observed in the private schools were conducted in English language only compared to 37.1%-85.7% in the urban schools and 33.3%-36.8% in the rural schools. At the JSS level, it was observed that English language only was used most of the time in all school types.

A mixture of English language and Ghanaian language was used more for classroom instruction by teachers in the rural schools (43.5%-66.7% of observations) compared to 11.4-37.1% in urban schools and 3.4%-7.7% in private schools. This trend is to be expected as the environmental conditions in urban areas give children more exposure to the use of the English language compared to children in the rural areas. It is therefore not surprising that the rural schools used the local language more than the urban and private schools. In fact, two teachers in one of the rural schools indicated that they used a mixture of English and the local language to teach English language lessons. However, the practice in all school types was that even at the lower primary school level, the use of Ghanaian language only was not the preferred medium of communication by teachers in the schools contrary to policy on the medium of instruction. For example, in the teaching of mathematics, science/environmental studies, the use of Ghanaian language only is difficult due to the limited vocabulary in these subjects. Teachers in all school types were judged to be proficient (excellent or satisfactory) by the researchers in the use of English language in teaching. Also, the level of their language was appropriate to the level they were teaching.

It was observed that the language pupils used to interact with their teachers was predominately English in the case of the private schools (79.6%-100% of observations). This was followed by the urban schools (54.3%-91.7%) and the rural schools (15.8%-91.7%). The lower percentages were recorded in primary 3. When pupils talked to other pupils in the classroom, it was observed that the use of the English language was even lesser. For example, in the rural schools, primary school pupils were observed to be conversing using the English language only in 5.3%-13.0% of the 48 lessons observed. The use of a mixture of English language and Ghanaian language among pupils dominated their interaction ranging from 39.1%-66.7% of lessons observed in the rural schools. The use of English language only among pupils in the classroom was dominant among pupils in the private schools. In the urban schools, the use of English only by pupils was observed in 11.4%-60.0% of the total number of lessons. Generally, English language facility of pupils in the rural schools was lower than their counterparts in the urban and private schools in that order.

The use of Ghanaian language only was almost non-existent in all the classes observed in the private schools. However, the use of Ghanaian language only among pupils dominated the interaction especially among primary 3 pupils in the rural schools (68.4%) and urban schools (37.1%) of the lessons observed. At the JSS level, a mixture of English language and Ghanaian language was dominant in the urban and rural schools whilst English language only was dominant among pupils in the private schools.

On the other hand, teachers used more of English language as a medium of instruction than either Ghanaian language only or a mixture of the two. This has implication for understanding of lessons taught solely in English as primary school pupils especially in the rural schools were more comfortable with the use of Ghanaian language or a mixture of English language and Ghanaian language than the use of English only.

5.3 Methods used in teaching

The ability of a teacher to identify appropriate teaching strategies in teaching the various concepts and the type of learning tasks targeted constitute a very important component in the delivery of quality instruction. Contrary to what the basic school curricula stipulates, the structure of the syllabuses emphasises largely learning tasks that depend on memory. The use of a highly ordered and consistent approach to teaching is more favourable for such learning tasks (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005). The main method of teaching in all the school types as shown in Table 8 was predominantly the “chalk and talk” method followed by question and answer sessions, demonstration and lecture method in that order. When school types are considered it is seen from Table 8 that the

“Chalk and talk” was dominant (81.0% of lessons observed) in the private primary schools at the primary school level. Across the primary school classes (P3-P6). In the “talk and chalk” method pupils’ participation in lessons was mainly in the form of answering questions posed by the teacher.

Table 8: Main method of medium of instruction

School type	Method of instruction	P3		P4		P6		JSS1	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Private	Chalk and talk	21	81.0	24	72.4	14	65.0	9	47.3
	Question and answer	3	12.0	5	17.3	3	20.0	10	52.7
	Demonstration	2	8.0	3	10.3	2	10.0	0	0
	Lecture	0	0	0	0	1	5.0	0	0
Public rural	Chalk and talk	12	63.2	15	65.2	6	100	10	83.4
	Question and answer	4	21.0	4	17.4	0	0	1	8.3
	Demonstration	2	10.5	4	17.4	0	0	1	8.3
	Lecture	1	5.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Public urban	Chalk and talk	16	45.8	13	50.0	13	38.1	11	73.4
	Question and answer	13	17.1	2	15.4	14	40.0	2	13.3
	Demonstration	6	37.1	7	26.9	7	20.0	2	13.3
	Lecture	0	0	4	7.7	1	2.9	0	0

The emphasis on the “chalk and talk” method of teaching in the schools consistently reduced from primary 3 to primary 6. However, this method of teaching was still more dominant across primary 3 to primary 6 in the rural schools. The case of the urban schools did not follow any discernable pattern. At the JSS level the “chalk and talk” method was observed to be more dominant in the rural schools (83.4%) followed by the urban schools (73.4%) and the private schools (47.3%). The use of demonstration method was higher in the urban schools compared to the rural and private schools in that order.

5.4 Use of questions in teaching

In each school type, irrespective of the type of teaching method used by teachers, pupils were required to respond to questions in class. The distribution of the questions was generally rated only satisfactory by the researchers. This means that questions were sometimes targeted to a few capable pupils who could answer. The appropriateness of the questions asked by teachers in all school types was rated mostly as good or satisfactory by the researchers. However, it was observed that it was the teachers who asked most of the questions. In most cases as Tables 9 and 10 show, teachers did not invite questions from the pupils nor did pupils ask questions.

Table 9: Proportion of observed lessons in which teachers invited questions from pupils

School type	Private		Rural		Urban	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
P3	8	30.8	10	52.6	4	11.4
P4	7	24.1	11	47.8	4	15.4
P6	14	70.0	5	83.3	14	40.0
JSS1	7	36.8	11	91.7	9	60.0

It can be seen from Table 9 that in each class the proportion of observed lessons in which teachers invited questions from pupils was more in the rural schools than the urban and private in that order. This could be attributed to the use of a mixture of English language and Ghanaian language as the medium of communication during classroom instruction in the rural schools. There was an increasing trend from primary 3 to JSS1 in the proportion of lessons where teachers invited from pupils in the urban schools. Generally, there were many lessons in which teachers did not invite questions from the pupils at all. Table 10 shows the proportion of observed lessons in which pupils asked questions. The trend shows that in all school types and in all classes, pupils asked questions in less than one half of lessons observed. This means that teachers taught most of the lessons without pupils asking any questions at all. The situation was slightly better in the private schools than the urban and rural schools in that order. The “chalk and talk” method of teaching with teachers assuming that pupils understand what was being taught could explain in part this situation. However, communication in the English language with the teacher and among the pupils was generally not a problem in the private schools.

Table 10: Frequency distribution of observed lessons in which pupils asked questions

School type	Private		Rural		Urban	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
P3	7	26.9	2	10.5	3	8.6
P4	4	13.8	2	8.7	3	11.5
P6	8	40.0	1	16.7	11	31.4
JSS1	8	42.1	3	25.0	1	6.7

Yet pupils in private schools did not usually ask questions in class. Teachers' inability to invite questions from pupils could also be a factor inhibiting pupils from taking the initiative to ask questions. Pupils were also not motivated to ask questions. Teachers rather asked most of the questions in class for pupils to answer as shown in Figure 1. The figure shows that there were only a few cases where pupils asked more questions than the teacher during the lessons observed. In the rural schools, teachers were the ones who asked the most questions in all the 60 lessons observed. The situation was only slightly better in the private and urban schools.

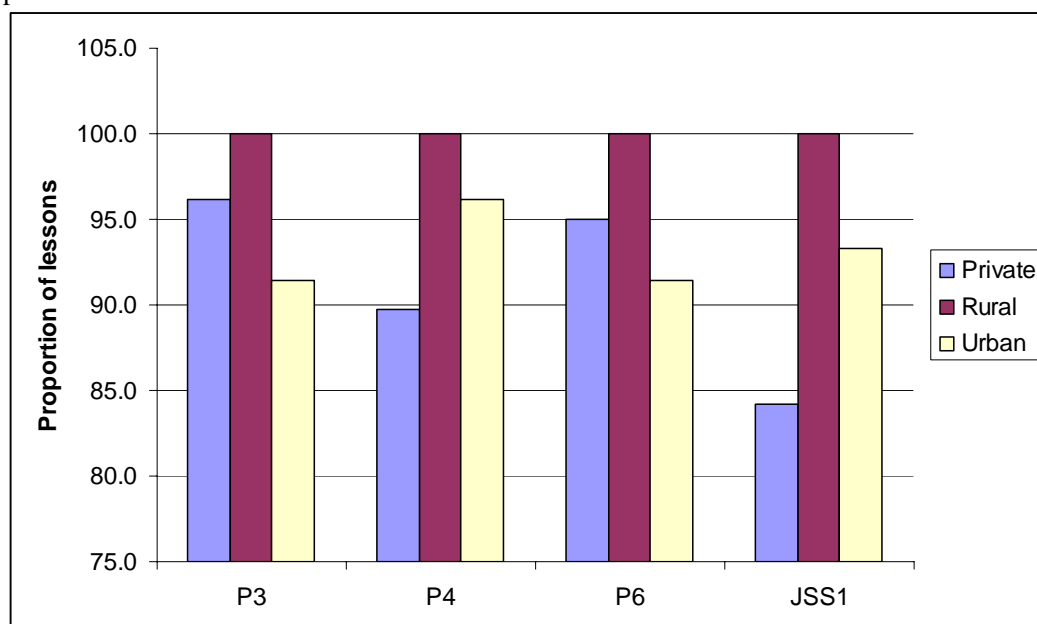


Figure 1: Proportion of lessons observed in which teachers asked more questions than pupils by school type

In the private schools it was observed that in 86 out of the 94 lessons (91.5%), teachers asked more questions than their pupils. In the case of the urban schools, it was 103 out of 111 (92.8%) lessons observed. In all school types, pupils were the ones who responded to most of the questions asked by the teachers. Pupils were also given enough time to respond to the questions in most cases.

5.5 Writing of notes

Table 11 shows the situation of the writing of notes in private, urban and rural schools. The results in Table 11 shows that majority of pupils in private, urban and rural schools indicated that their teachers copied notes on the chalkboard for them to copy into their notes books (95.3%, 85.4% and 93.1% respectively). The results reveal further that majority of pupils in private, urban and rural schools said that their teachers dictated notes for them to copy (41.9%, 36.6% and 22.9% respectively).

Table 11: Note taking in class by school type

Question	Private		Urban		Rural	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Does your teacher write notes on the board for you to copy?	41 (95.3%)	2 (4.7%)	35 (85.4%)	6 (14.6%)	41 (93.1%)	3 (6.7%)
Does your teacher dictate notes for you to write during lessons?	18 (41.9%)	25 (58.1%)	15 (36.6%)	26 (63.4%)	10 (22.7%)	34 (77.3%)
Does your teacher give you notes to copy after school?	20 (46.6%)	23 (53.4%)	15 (36.6%)	26 (63.4%)	17 (36.8%)	27 (61.4%)
Do you write your own notes?	25 (58.1%)	18 (41.9%)	20 (48.8%)	21 (51.2%)	15 (24.1%)	29 (65.9%)

This practice takes a lot of time which could have been used to engage pupils in more meaningful teaching and learning. Even when there were textbooks, teachers still dictated or wrote notes on the chalkboard for children to copy. Such lessons were therefore predominantly information- giving lessons. Quite a number (46.6%) of pupils in the private schools indicated during interview sessions that their teachers gave them notes to copy after school. Also, majority (58.1%) of the pupils interviewed in the private schools indicated that they wrote their own notes whereas majority of the pupils in the urban (51.2%) and rural (65.9%) schools did not write their own notes.

5.6 Practical activities

The use of practical activities (hands on activities) was not the norm in all the school types where lessons were observed as Figure 2 shows. This is understandably since the main method of teaching was the “chalk and talk”. However, Figure 2 shows there were more practical activities in the urban schools compared to the private and rural schools in that order. In the urban schools it was observed that in 48 out of the 111 lessons (43.2%), pupils were engaged in practical activities during lessons. In the case of the private schools it was 12 out of 94 (12.8%) and 10 out of 60 (16.7%) of lessons observed in the rural schools.

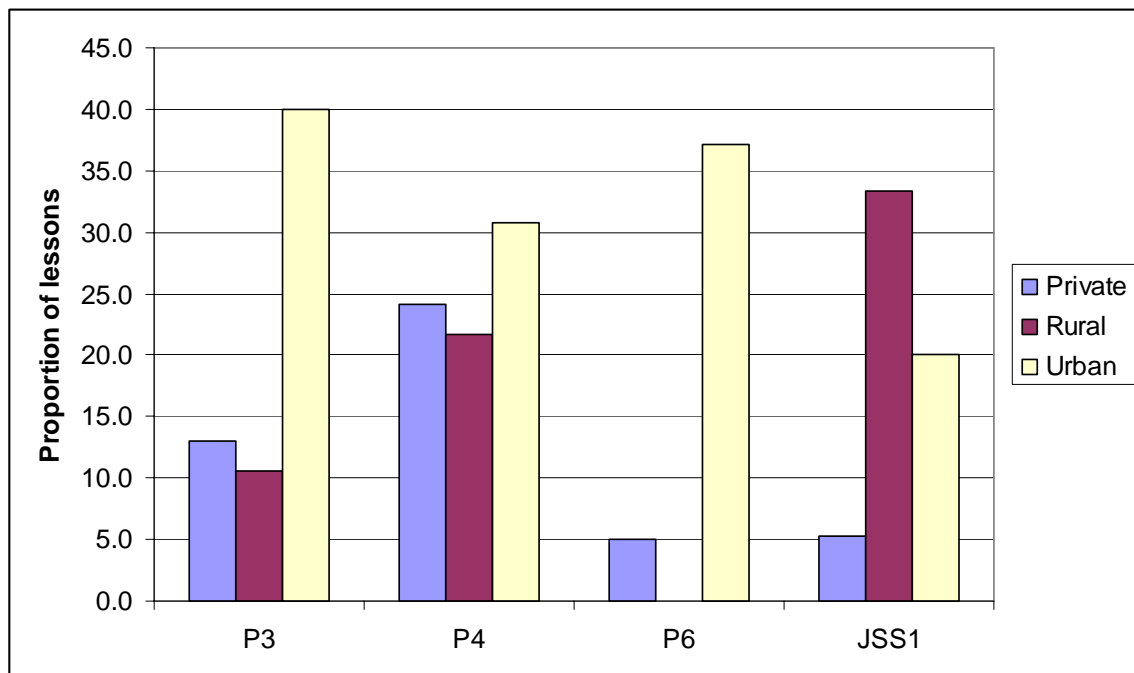


Figure 2: Proportion of lessons observed in which there were practical activities by school type and by class

5.7 Use of Textbooks by Teachers and Pupils

According to Howson, Keital and Kilpatrick (1982) “the textbook continues to be a major influence on classroom: in many cases it still effectively determines the curriculum” (p. 61). The use of textbooks was therefore investigated in the private, urban and rural schools. Table 12 shows the proportion of pupils who had access to textbooks in the various subjects that are studied at the basic schools. The results from Table 12 show that majority of pupils in the urban and rural schools had access to textbooks in English language and mathematics. Majority of pupils in the private schools said they had access to textbooks in six out of eight subject areas. These included English language (100%), mathematics (88.4%), science (76.6%), and environmental studies (81.4%). Majority of pupils had their own textbooks in English (83.7%), science (74.5%), and environmental studies (76.7%) in the private schools. Pupils in the private schools therefore had their own textbooks in most of the subjects studied at the basic school level.

Majority of pupils in urban schools said they had access to textbooks in three out of the eight subject areas. These included English language (78.2%), mathematics (73.2%) and religious and moral education (56.1%). Like the urban school, majority of pupils in rural schools also said they had access to textbooks in three out of eight subject areas namely, English language (75%), mathematics (79.5%) and science (70.4%). Majority of pupils in rural schools had textbooks in English language (50%), mathematics (68.1%) and science (65.9%) supplied by the schools. This is an indication that compared

to the private and urban schools, the rural schools supplied more textbooks to pupils. Unlike pupils in private schools, majority of pupils in both urban and rural schools did not have their own textbooks in most of the subject.

Table 12: Number/percentage of pupils who have access to textbooks by school type

Question	Response	Private	Urban	Rural
Do you have your own textbook in English language	Yes my own	36 (83.7%)	23 (56.0%)	11 (25.0%)
	Yes schools'	7(16.3%)	9(22.0%)	22 (50.0%)
	No	0 (0%)	9 (22.0%)	11 (25%)
Do you have your own textbook in mathematics	Yes my own	29 (67.5%)	13 (31.7%)	5 (11.4%)
	Yes schools'	9 (20.9%)	17 (41.5%)	30 (68.1%)
	No	5 (11.6%)	11 (26.8%)	9 (20.5%)
Do you have your own textbook in science	Yes my own	32 (74.8%)	5 (12.2%)	2 (4.5%)
	Yes schools'	1 (2.3%)	14 (34.1%)	29 (66.0%)
	No	10 (23.3%)	22 (53.7%)	13 (29.5%)
Do you have your own textbook in environmental studies	Yes my own	33 (76.7%)	8 (19.5%)	6 (13.6%)
	Yes schools'	2 (4.7%)	6 (14.6%)	12 (27.3%)
	No	8 (18.6%)	27 (65.9%)	26 (59.1%)

In the private schools, the headteachers indicated that the schools had textbooks in all the subjects except environmental studies and physical education. The textbook situation in the urban school was generally poor. All primary school headteachers and teachers in urban schools indicated the availability of textbooks in only three subjects (mathematics, English language and integrated science). The headteacher in one of the urban schools indicated the availability of mathematics and English textbooks at all levels in the primary school while the other indicated the availability of textbooks only at the upper primary level. At the JSS level however, all the headteachers indicated the availability of adequate textbooks for all subjects with the exception of Ghanaian language, environmental studies and physical education.

Like the urban primary schools, the textbook situation in the rural primary schools was also not good. One of the headteachers indicated the availability of textbooks in four subject areas namely English language, mathematics, environmental studies and integrated science at all levels in the primary school. The other indicated the availability of textbooks in mathematics at all levels in the primary school and English language only at the lower primary level. At the JSS level the situation was a bit better. All the headteachers and teachers indicated the availability of textbooks in English, mathematics, religious and moral education, integrated science, agriculture, social studies and pre-technical skills. Both also indicated the availability of Ghanaian language textbooks, environmental studies textbooks and French.

Textbooks were used by teachers in the classroom in 40 out of 94 lessons (53.2%) observed in the private schools. In the case of the rural schools it was 35 out of 60 lessons (43.3%) and 47 out of 111 lessons (42.3%) in the urban schools. This means there were slightly more textbooks used in the private schools than the rural and urban schools. However, Figure 3 does not show any discernable pattern across the school types and classes observed except that there was less textbook usage in JSS1 in all the school types. The school curricula at the basic school level depend heavily on textbooks. This means both pupils and teachers must have access to and use textbooks. Yet textbooks were not used in class by teachers in more than half of the lessons observed in rural and urban schools. There were however, no discernable trends across school types. It was however, surprising that in the JSS classes in all the school types, the proportion of lessons in which textbooks used by teachers in class was far less than at the class primary school level.

The use of textbooks in class by pupils was however, less regular in all the classes in all school types observed. Textbooks were used by pupils in the classroom in 25 out of 94 lessons (26.6%) observed in the private schools. In the case of the rural schools it was 15 out of 60 lessons (25.0%) and 39 out of 111 lessons (35.1%) in the urban schools. The use of textbooks by JSS pupils was the least in all the school types ranging from 15.8% in the private schools to 20.0% in the urban schools and 8.3% in the rural schools.

The pupil to textbook ratio in private schools was however, far better than in the rural and urban schools. Pupil to textbook ratio of 1:1 was more common in private schools than the other school-types.

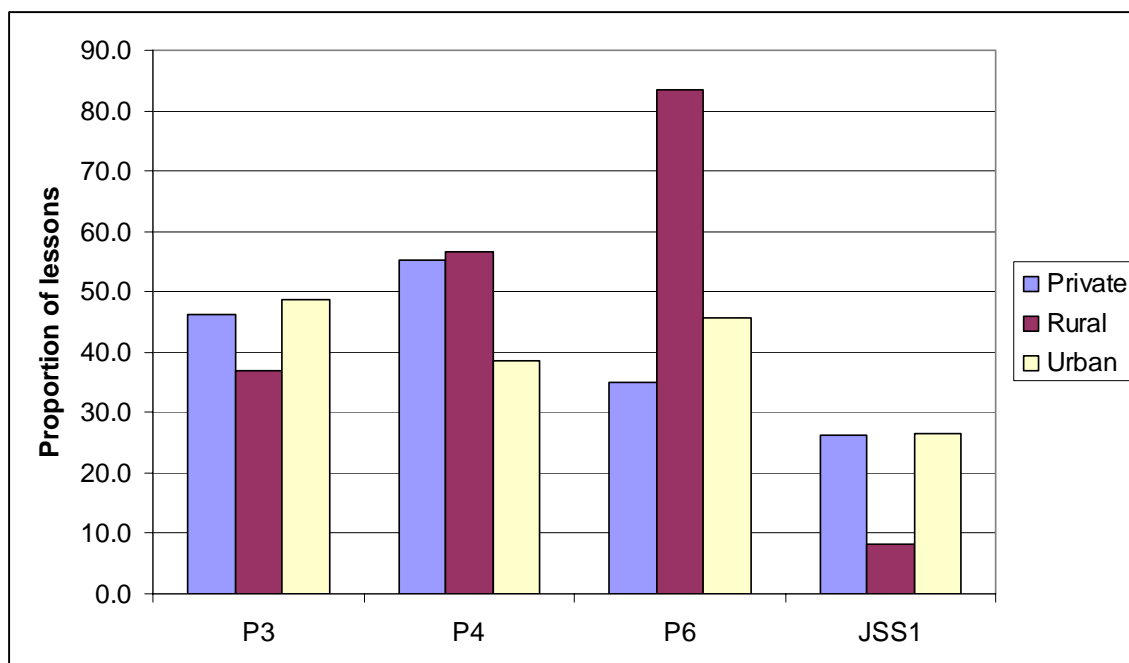


Figure 3: Proportion of lessons observed in which there were textbooks in class by school type and by class

5.8 TLMs other than textbooks and blackboard

All the headteachers from private schools, urban schools, and rural schools indicated that they supplied items to teachers to prepare teaching and learning materials for use in their lessons. They also indicated that teachers made use of teaching and learning materials in their lesson presentations and their lesson notes show the use of such materials. The observations made in the various schools portrayed quite a different picture.

There was a dearth in the use of TLMs in the private and rural schools observed compared to the urban schools. In only seven lessons out of 94 (7.4%) were TLMs usage observed in the private schools. In the case of the rural schools it was 4 out of 60 lessons (15.0%), and 36 out of 111 lessons (32.4%) in the urban schools. In the few cases TLMs were used by both teachers and pupils. In the few cases TLMs were used, they were used at the right time and were appropriate for the lessons observed. TLMs were also observed on the walls of a few of the classrooms. They were mostly found in the urban and rural schools than the private schools. As expected, primary 3 had more TLMs on the walls compared to the other classes.

5.9 Class exercises

All the headteachers indicated that their teachers gave class exercises more often than not. According to the headteachers, teachers usually used one day to mark class exercises and another day to discuss them with pupils. However, exercises were given to pupils in some but not all the lessons observed. The frequency with which exercises were given in the various school types in the classes observed is shown in Figure 4. The figure shows that the frequency with which teachers in public schools (rural and urban) gave exercises was more than that of the private schools. The frequency with which exercises were given in the urban and rural schools was also comparable. This frequency was however, lower at the JSS level in all school types.

Most of the exercises were from textbooks and were therefore related to the lessons observed. The practice in the public schools where circuit supervisors monitor the frequency of exercises given to pupils makes the public school teachers give more exercises to pupils. However, some of these exercises

were very trivial and unchallenging.

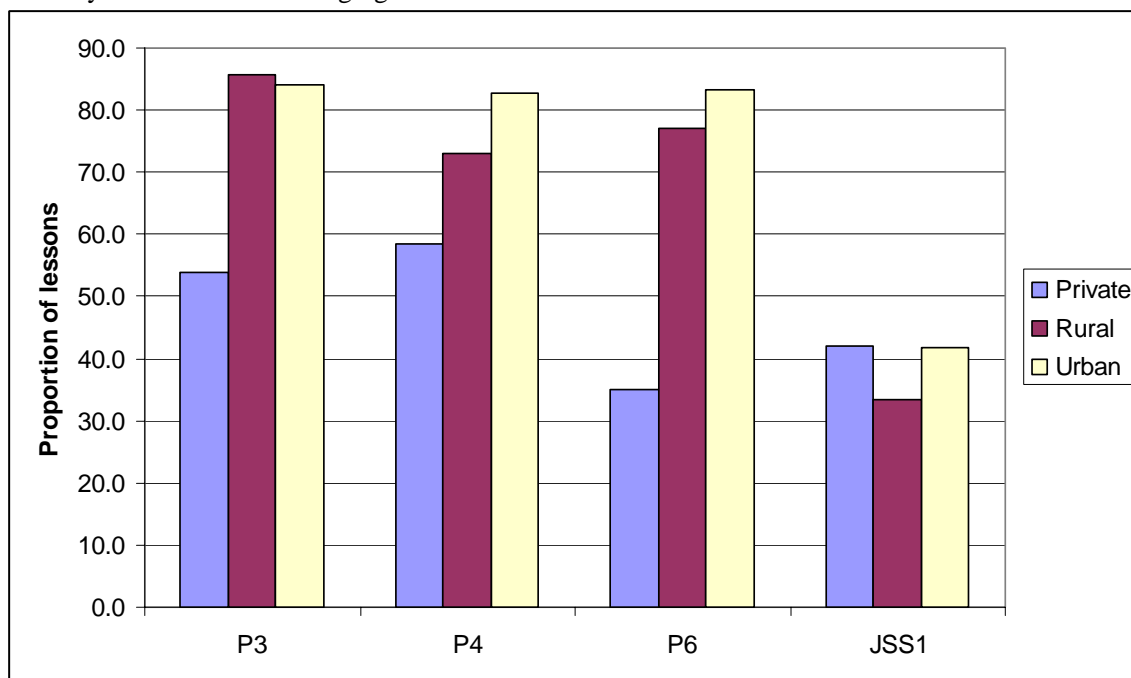


Figure 4: The frequency with which exercises were given in the various school types

6. Good practices that promote quality of education in the classrooms of basic schools Look at Quality Imperative 2005 and see how good practices have been written

6.1 Teaching and learning in the classroom

Observation of lessons in the classrooms in the three school types showed that in spite of the shortcomings in teachers' lessons some good practices were observed in the classrooms:

- In the private schools children were made to read from texts during English language lessons as each child had a textbook.
- Some teachers were very confident and exhibited mastery over the subject matter in all school types.
- There was a lot of interaction between the teachers and pupils in some classrooms of all school types.
- Teacher led pupils to do corrections in class. They involved pupils in the feedback/correction activity.
- Teachers use a mixture of English language and Ghanaian language in the rural schools was helpful in helping pupils in the rural schools to understand the lessons taught.
- Teachers used the chalkboard extensively to teach and summarise the main points of lessons.
- Some teachers made effective use of textbooks and TLMs.
- Some lessons were systematically developed and taught with the appropriate TLMs. Teachers involved pupils in lessons and gave immediate feedback to them. The use of TLMs made pupils participate in the lesson. Key concepts in the lesson were explained before the main lesson.

6.2 Extra Classes

The incidence of extra classes in basic schools in Ghana has become a common phenomenon. Extra classes are used mainly to supplement official classroom teaching in schools. Some schools organised extra classes after school as part of the schools official academic programme. This is useful as it enables pupils to complete school syllabuses or have their weaknesses addressed. Table 13 shows the proportion of pupils in private, urban and rural schools who attended extra classes or had special teachers at home. The results show that a little more than half (55.8%) of the pupils interviewed in private schools had special teachers who taught them on individual basis at home whereas the remaining 44.2% went for whole-class extra classes. A little more than half (56.1%) of the pupils in the urban schools interviewed went for extra classes whereas less than a third (31.7%) had special teachers who taught them at home. Only a few pupils did not go for either whole-class extra classes or did not have special teachers to teach them at home. However, majority of pupils interviewed in the rural schools indicated that they did not go for extra classes or have special teachers at home (75% and 61.4%

respectively). This means that majority of pupils in the rural schools depended heavily on official classroom teaching during the regular school sessions and did not have the benefit of remediation or extra tuition to cover the syllabuses.

Table 13: Number/percentage of pupils who attend extra classes/have special teachers by school type

Question	Private		Urban		Rural	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you go for extra classes	19 (44.2%)	24 (55.8%)	23 (56.1%)	18 (43.9%)	11 (25.0%)	33 (75.0%)
Do you have a special teacher who teaches you at home	24 (55.8%)	19 (44.2%)	13 (31.7%)	28 (68.3%)	17 (38.6%)	27 (61.4%)

6.3 Support for Teachers

According to headteachers in the private schools, they visit teachers in the classrooms to observe their lessons once every month. Headteachers from the urban and rural schools indicated that they visit their teachers in their classrooms to observe their lesson once every fortnight. The headteachers mentioned the following as some of the benefits teachers derived from their visits:

- a) Teachers get the chance to discuss what they do in class with the headteacher.
- b) Visits help them to know the strengths and weaknesses of teachers.
- c) The visits ensure that teachers correct previous shortcomings which were identified in the last visit.
- d) The visits make teachers take their classroom work seriously.
- e) It enables the headteachers to discuss teachers' problems with them.
- f) The visits enable headteachers to give them in-service training to teachers.

Other support offered to teachers by all heads of the three different school types included vetting of teachers' lesson notes and inspection of pupils' work in their exercise books. One of the private school heads said inspection of pupils' work in their exercise books was done once every month while the other indicated once a term. In the urban schools the frequency of inspection was once every fortnight for one of the schools and once every month for the other school. The frequency of inspection in the rural schools was once every term in one of the schools and once every month in the other. The headteachers and teachers in the urban and rural schools also mentioned visits from circuit supervisors as additional support to teachers,

7. Areas of Weaknesses that may be Contributing to Unacceptable

7.1 Quality of Education in Basic Schools.

The following were some of the weaknesses identified in the lessons observed in schools:

- a) In some classrooms better lessons could have been taught and pupils could have understood the lessons better if TLMs were used.
- b) Teachers did not keep to their lesson notes. Some lesson notes were not well written and some teachers did not use lesson notes to teach resulting in unsystematic teaching.
- c) There was a lot of whole-class teaching with very little attention paid to individual pupils. Teachers could therefore not address individual concerns of their pupils. Given the magnitude of some of the class sizes this in part was understandable.
- d) A lot of time was wasted by teachers in copying materials on the chalkboard for students to copy into their notebooks instead of using the textbooks.
- e) Usually pupils who could respond to questions were the once who received the most attention and allowed to answer questions. Hence a section of the pupils were always left out during questioning and answer sessions.
- f) Not all pupils had textbooks and this affected negatively the effectiveness of some lessons. Such children depended very heavily on what teachers wrote on the chalkboard some of which were quite scanty.
- g) Most lessons were characterized by information-giving and teachers used the "chalk and talk" method to deliver such lessons.
- h) In some lessons there were no lesson closure and so the main points of the lessons were not highlighted as a guide to enable the pupils know what had been done in the lesson.

- i) The language of communication between pupils and teachers was mostly English and this prevented some pupils in the public urban and more especially the public rural schools from asking questions in class.
- j) Most lessons relapsed into other lessons as school time tables were not usually followed. Lessons planned for 30 or 35 minutes sometimes took one hour or more and others took less time.

7.2 Key findings

1. In all the 24 classes observed the size of only six of them came close to the PTR of 35:1. In 12 of the classes, class sizes were above 50 making individual pupil-teacher interactions difficult. The PTR of 25:1 was not met by any of the school types at the JSS level.
2. In all the school types, headteachers did not readily mark lesson notes. In the private schools out of 51 lesson notes seen, only 6 (11.8%) had been marked by headteachers. That of the rural schools was 11 (31.4%) out of 35. The case of the urban schools was far better with 68 (71.6%) out of the 95 lesson notes marked. There were however many errors in the lesson notes that were not indicated as errors by the headteacher.
3. Official school time tables showed that a lot of time was expected to be devoted to the study of English language and mathematics at both primary and the junior secondary school levels in all school types. In practice teachers used even far more time than indicated on the time tables for these two subjects. Also, some lessons took more time than stipulated on the time table whilst others took lesser time. The situation was worse at the primary school level but this practice seemed acceptable in all the schools studied
4. (a) A mixture of English language and Ghanaian language was used more often during classroom instruction by teachers in the rural schools (43.5%-66.7% of lessons observed) compared to 11.4-37.1% in urban schools and 3.4%-7.7% in private schools.
(b) The use of English language only among pupils in the classroom was dominant in the private schools. In the urban schools, the use of English only by pupils was observed in 11.4%-60.0% of the total number of lessons. Generally, English language facility of pupils in the rural schools was lower than their counterparts in the urban and private schools.
5. (a) The use of the “chalk and talk” method of teaching was observed in all school types but was more dominant across primary 3 to primary 6 in the rural schools.
(b) At the JSS level “chalk and talk” method was observed to be more dominant in the rural schools (83.4%) followed by the urban schools (73.4%) and the private schools (47.3%). The use of demonstration method was higher in the urban schools compared to the rural and private schools in that order.
6. In the rural schools, teachers were the ones who asked the most questions in all the 60 lessons observed. In the private schools it was observed that in 86 out of the 94 lessons (91.5%), teachers asked more questions than their pupils. In the case of the urban schools, it was 103 out of 111 (92.8%) and in the rural schools in all the 60 lessons observed.
7. Majority of pupils in private (95.3%), urban (85.4%) and rural schools (93.1%) interviewed said that their teachers copied notes on the chalkboard for them to copy into their notebooks. Teachers also dictated notes for pupils to copy in all school types.
8. The use of practical activities (hands on activities) was not the norm in all the school types where lessons were observed. In the urban schools it was observed that in 48 out of the 111 lessons (43.2%), pupils were engaged in practical activities during the lesson. In the case of the private schools it was 12 out of 94 (12.8%) and 10 out of 60 (16.7%) of lessons observed in the rural schools.
9. Textbook situation in the private schools was far better than that in the public rural and urban schools. Majority of pupils in the private schools had access to textbooks in six out of eight subjects; in the public urban and rural schools pupils had textbooks in only three out of eight subjects. Most pupils in the private schools had their own textbooks whilst most textbooks in the public schools were for the schools.

10. There was a dearth in the use of TLMs in the private and rural schools observed compared to the urban schools. In only 7 lessons out of 94 (7.4%) were TLMs usage observed in the private schools. In the case of the rural schools it was 4 out of 60 lessons (15.0%) and 36 out of 111 lessons (32.4%) in the urban schools.
11. Exercises were given to pupils in all school types but not in all the lessons observed. The frequency with which public schools (rural and urban) gave exercises was more than that of the private schools. The frequency with which exercises were given in the urban and rural schools was however, comparable. The frequency with which exercises were given was lower at the JSS level in all school types.
12. A number of good practices were observed or reported by headteachers in all the schools. These included good lesson presentation, involvement of pupils in lessons, extra classes for pupils and headteachers support for teachers at the classroom level.
13. A number of weaknesses were observed in all the schools. These included the extensive use of the 'chalk and talk' method of teaching; poorly written and unmarked teachers' lesson notes; low frequency in the use of TLMs to facilitate pupils' understanding of lessons; official school time-tables not being adhered to resulting in more time being given to some subjects than stipulated; and communication problems between teachers and pupils due to poor language facility of the pupils.

8. Conclusion

The quality of education offered by the private, public (urban and rural) schools studied were hampered by many problems and shortcomings such as lack of textbooks, inappropriate teaching methods, lack of TLMs and the extensive use of English as the language of instruction. The major differences between private and public schools are the superior language facility of the pupils; greater availability and use of textbooks by pupils; and more access to whole-class extra classes as well as special tuition for pupils in private schools. Aside these factors, there was not much to choose between the public and private schools. The public urban and rural schools studied had similar characteristics apart from the language facility which was a little better in the urban schools than the rural schools.

The strategy of using well-prepared lesson notes to teach adopted by the GES was not effective in all the school types in this study as lesson notes were either ill-prepared or not used to teach. The "chalk and talk" method, which dominated teachers' instructional delivery, seems to resonate well with the structure of the syllabuses at the basic school level. The use of "chalk and talk" method observed in the schools, however, lacked some of the important elements of the structured method of teaching it seems to be imitating. Important elements such as clearly formulated goals shared with pupils; ample time for pupils to practice what has been taught; regular questioning by teachers to gauge pupils' progress and regular testing and feedback to pupils were missing in some lessons observed. If the use of structured method of teaching is what seems to resonate well with the school curriculum, then it must be done well.

Teaching and learning methods which emphasise the inquiry method and social constructivism—that learners construct their own knowledge and understandings based on what they already know and the socio-cultural context in which they find themselves (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005) were not very popular with the teachers. This approach to teaching has been claimed by some education analysts to be very suitable for helping pupils develop positive attitudes and process skills through hands-on and minds-on activities ((EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005) which the Ghanaian basic school curricula appears to encourage. These methods do not seem to resonate well with the Ghanaian basic school curricula (Ampiah, 2006). No wonder teachers in the six schools studied did not develop most of their lessons along some of these teaching methods. This means that the many teaching strategies that are being emphasised and promoted in the basic schools by NGOs and multi-lateral agencies, whether learner centred; activity-oriented, or teacher-dominated must take into account the learning tasks demanded by the school curricula.

The length of time required to achieve the objectives in the nine or ten subjects at the basic school level is clearly delineated by the official school table-tables. The official time-table undoubtedly places more emphasis on English language and mathematics. However, the re-organisation of the official time-table by headteachers and teachers to place further emphasis on subjects such as mathematics and English language tends to distort the relative emphasis that must be given to the other subjects. So even if the schools are able to use the maximum total amount of instructional time required by the official

time-table, the time allocated to the individual subjects will not be met. This is likely to affect negatively the quality of teaching and learning in those subjects given lesser time.

Finally, the lack of textbooks in the public rural and urban schools places such schools behind the private schools where pupils had their own textbooks and therefore had access to them in and outside the classroom. This coupled with language of instruction problems especially in the public urban and rural schools seems place pupils in those schools at a disadvantage. Pupils in the private schools on the other hand seems to have better English language facility which tends to make communication between them and their teachers much more meaningful.

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