

Performance Appraisal and Institutional Effectiveness for Quality Education Delivery in Ghana: Evidence from Public-Private Partnership in the Offinso North District

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Abstract

The government of Ghana has been the leading provider of education complemented by some few private educational facilities usually located in urban areas. However, the state has not been able to deliver quality education to all its citizens. It has, therefore, become eminent that extra hands are required in the provision of education in Ghana. The private sector has constantly been cited as the best candidate to partner the government in the delivery of education. This study, therefore, looked at the effect of Public-Private Partnership on the delivery of quality education in Ghana, the study of the Offinso North District. The research was conducted using a multi-strategy approach. A case study research design was employed. Purposive and Convenient sampling techniques were used to select 34 respondents for interviews and focus group discussions. One hundred (100) households were also selected using convenient sampling technique and were administered questionnaires. The researchers used Microsoft Excel to generate quantitative data to aid analysis. The qualitative data were also analysed using grounded theory and thematic analysis. The study showed that there exists a large scale partnership between the state and the non-state actors in the provision of quality education in the Offinso North District. The support of the private partners has hugely improved the level of school amenities in the district. The support has also started yielding dividend on the performance of schools in the district. The study recommended that concerns of local community groups that are Genuine and Realistic to public-private partnership should be addressed, and again the government should augment the private sector's effort in the provision of amenities to schools under partnership.

Keywords

Performance Appraisal, Institutional Effectiveness, Quality Education; Public-Private Partnership, Offinso North District, Ghana

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1. Introduction

The term 'Public-Private Partnership' has been variously defined by different authors. In this work, however, Public-Private Partnership has been used in reference to the

combination of resources from the public and private sectors in the accomplishment of traditional state activities like education, health and sanitation [5]. The common denominator of this collaboration is the pooling of resources (technical, financial, human and intangibles like information and political support) from the state and non-state actors in

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the achievement of desired social goals [4]. This study predominantly looked at partnerships between the public and private sectors in the provision of quality education in Ghana.

Partnership between public agencies and private organisations to find answers to societal challenges has become rampant in recent years both in advanced and developing economies [12]. The economic crisis in the 1970s and 1980s coupled with the useful experience derived from the success of market-friendly economies have jointly produced what many refer to as a redefinition of the role of the state [1]. The borders between the state and the market have been withdrawn [4]. This is because some important activities that used to be performed by the state are now in the hands of private providers; either for-profit or not-for-profit. The state sector is again rearranging the allocation of responsibilities, via the decentralization of functions to local and regional governments and subcontracting specific functions to private providers.

Ironically, school enrolment rates are not encouraging in most southern (developing) countries [9]. Equitable access to education is becoming elusive to the majority of the people in these countries. They further acknowledged that marginalized groups like girls, low-income families and indigenous people have limited access to education in developing countries and a good number of African and South Asian countries have not attained universal coverage in primary education. Even though enrolment rates in all southern countries appreciated from 81% in 1991 to 86% in 2006, the quality of education, as measured by standardized tests, has not been any better and this poses a major challenge. Most students from southern countries who take part in international assessments perform abysmally and this has been one of the reasons why most low-income countries do not partake in such assessments [9].

In Ghana, the state is the major provider of educational services. However, the state has not been able to provide quality education to all its citizens. It has, therefore, become eminent that extra hands are required in the provision of quality education in the country. The private sector has increasingly been cited by development practitioners as the best candidate to complement government's effort in the provision of educational services. This is because, evidence abound to show that the private sector is equally capable of providing high-quality education at a reduced cost and hence; a marriage between the two sectors can be tailored to offer quality education to marginalized groups [9].

One district that has made great stride towards partnering with non-state actors in the provision of quality education to its populace in Ghana is the Offinso North District of Ashanti

Region. In order to make high-quality education accessible to marginalized groups and rural communities in the Offinso North District, some local groups within the communities took the initiative by starting their own schools; and later called on the Ghana Education Service to supply them with teachers and other teaching and learning materials. This study sought to find out how these forms of partnerships between the public and private/citizen-based organizations have affected the delivery of quality education in the Offinso North District. The study was guided by this research question-how does Public-Private Partnership influence the Performance of Quality Education Delivery in the Offinso North District of Ghana.

2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The Conceptual Framework of the Study indicates that social capital which represents societal networks created by associational engagements such as voluntary association, family relations, norms of reciprocity and cooperation, and attitudes of social trust and respect shared by members of a community [10] is an important precondition for the formulation of synergies between the public and the private sectors in the delivery of quality education. Flexible legal framework, enabling political system and enabling public policies are equally important factors necessary to bring about this partnership. When the Partnership is born, its sustainability is dependent on the political environment that gave rise to the partnership at the initial stages [4]. Evidence from around the world shows that there exists a positive relationship between private provision of education and the delivery of quality education. There is also evidence that non-state actors are capable of rendering top class education at a reduced cost [9]. However, the success of Public Private Partnerships faces challenges like a lack of government commitment and ownership, resistance from some stakeholders, privatization of education and hence reducing government's control.

The study believes that Public-Private Partnership can help improve school amenities and improve the quality of teaching and learning, giving rise to better academic performance and hence quality education. However, for Public Private Partnership in education to be possible, there needs to be social capital that would bring the community members (non-state actors) together, flexible legal framework, enabling political system and public policy that enables the private sector to contribute to the delivery of goods and services, as shown in figure 1.

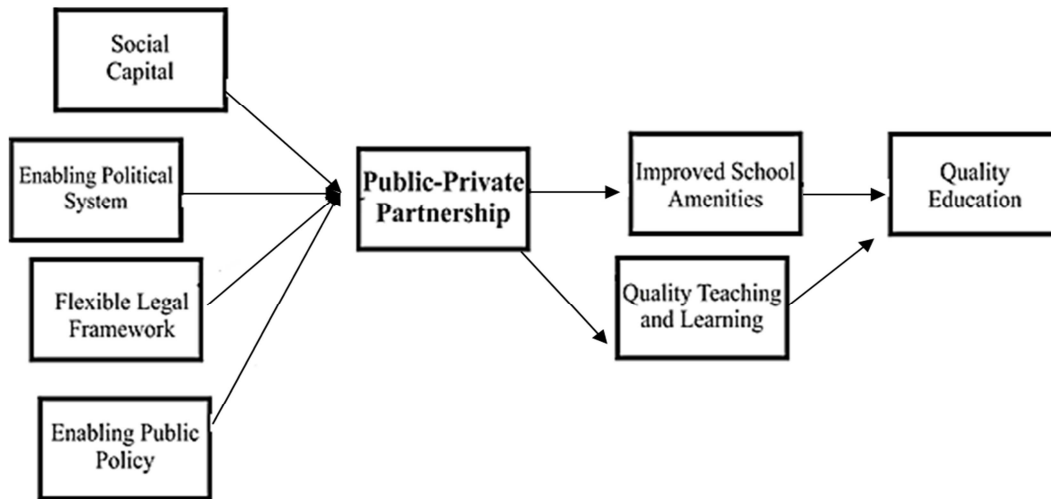


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study.

3. Methodology

This study adopted the mixed-method strategy but with more emphasis on the qualitative method. The quantitative aspect of the study was more of descriptive statistics. The reason for using the mixed-method strategy was to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon studied. The utilization of the mixed-methods in a study of this nature can enhance the strength of the research findings [13]. The qualitative research strategy was used to assess respondents' views about the effect that the private involvement has had on the quality of education in the Offinso North District while the quantitative research strategy was also used to compare the level of quality education in the district in terms of amenities and performance before the involvement of the private sector with that after the involvement of the private sector.

Using a multi-strategy approach allowed the study to cross-check the results obtained from the qualitative methods with results obtained from the quantitative method, a process often referred to as triangulation [7]. This approach enables the study to capture vital information that would otherwise be missed by relying on one research method [3]. It also helps in interpreting correlations between variables to establish causal explanations for the qualitative findings [2]. The study design employed in this study was a case study. In this study, the benefit of utilizing a case study was that it enabled a detailed and intensive examination of the effect of private sector involvement on the delivery of quality education in the Offinso North District. The population of the study was, however, drawn from Nkenkaasu and Darso (where the schools under study were located); preferably people who had their ward(s) in any of the schools selected.

Again, purposive sampling technique was used to sample the

Offinso North District Director of Education, District Coordinator of the Global Partnership for Education Grant (GPEG), the Queen Mother of Nkenkaasu, two Elders from Nkenkaasu Traditional Council, two members of staff of Nkenkaasu Town Council, the Headmaster of Nkenkaasu Senior High School, five (5) members of staff of Nkenkaasu Senior High School, five students of Nkenkaasu Senior High School; the Headteacher of DarsoIjtihadiya Islamic School, five (5) members of staff of DarsoIjtihadiya Islamic School and five (5) Students of DarsoIjtihadiya Islamic School. These people were selected because the study identified them to be the exact persons who could provide the needed information to answer the research question.

Five (5) members of the Darso Muslim Community were also selected using the Convenient sampling technique. In this, Muslims who had vital information on the subject were interviewed. The selection of this technique was spot on, in that there is a much better "fit" between convenient sampling and qualitative research strategy because it generates a non-probability and non-representative sample of the general population under perspective [2]. Further, convenient sampling technique was again employed to select hundred (100) households (50 each from Darso and Nkenkaasu) for the collection of data. Much consideration was given to households that had their relative(s) (preferably children) in the schools under study. This was born out of the researcher's belief that parents who had their wards in the schools would be better placed to share how the involvement of the private sector in education had influenced the performance of their wards. In all one hundred and thirty-four (134) respondents were selected. Table 1 shows the composition of the participants.

Table 1. The composition of Participants.

Method of Data Collection	Respondent(s)	Male	Female	Total
Semi-structured Interviews	District Director of Education	1	0	1
	GPEG Co-ordinator	1	0	1
	Queen Mother –Nkenkaasu	0	1	1
	Headmaster NKESH	1	0	1
	Head Teacher (Ijthadiya)	1	0	1
	Members of Darso Muslim Community	3	2	5
	Elders (Nkenkaasu Traditional Council)	2	0	2
Focus Group Discussion	Staff (Nkenkaasu Town Council)	2	0	2
	Staff NKESH	3	2	5
	Students NKESH	3	2	5
	Staff (DarsoIjthadiya)	3	2	5
	Students (DarsoIjthadiya)	3	2	5
Self-administered Questionnaires	Households (Nkenkaasu)	30	20	50
	Households (Darso)	30	20	50
Total		83	51	134

Source: Field Survey, 2015

The data collection exercise took place over a period of two months in the Offinso North District. According to [11], the topic of the study guides the selection of data collection methods for the research project. Case studies, qualitative interviews and participant observation are crucial data collection methods that allow for an in-depth understanding and profound investigation [2]. This study used these methods together with semi-structured interviews. Again, quantitative research makes use of methods like structured interviews and questionnaires [2]. In this study, because quantitative strategy was used as a complementary methodology, self-administered questionnaires were administered to a hundred (100) households.

This study employed both inductive and deductive approaches to research. However, it is mainly inductive in the sense that, data was collected to theorise about the effect of Public-Private Partnership on the delivery of quality education. This approach draws on the framework of grounded theory which involves the steps of sorting and categorizing data collected, place them into groups that emerge as common themes and use them to make comparisons and explore relationships that in the end generate theoretical assumptions [2]. Grounded theory is said to be an interactive approach to data analysis. Thus, there is repetitive interplay between collection and analysis of data [2]. Coding was a central process in the data analysis. In this, the researchers reviewed the data collected and labelled them according to the potential theoretical significance [2]. But, the quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics generated with the help of Microsoft Excel. The quantitative data generated from the field was coded and fed into Microsoft Excel to generate descriptive statistics. The use of Microsoft Excel enabled the information generated from the field to be presented in tables and figures to complement and enrich the qualitative data gathered. Typically, frequencies and percentages were used in interpreting the quantitative

data. The Offinso North District Assembly is one of the 27 administrative authorities in the Ashanti Region. It was carved out of the erstwhile Offinso District Assembly in 2008 as a result of the creation of more Districts and raising of some Districts to Municipal status [8]

The District lies between longitudes 1°60' W and 1°45' W and latitudes 7°20' N and 6°50' N. The district covers a land area of about 741 square kilometers. It borders Techiman Municipal Assembly to the North, Sunyani Municipal Assembly to the West, Ejura-Sekyerdumase District to the East and Offinso Municipal Assembly to the South. It also shares boundaries with Nkoranza South District to the North East, Wenchi Municipal to the North West and Tano North and South to the South West. The South-North Trans-West African Highway traverses the District, thus making it the gateway to the Ashanti Region from the Northern part of the country. The capital town of the district is Akomadan. Nkenkansu and Afrancho are the largest towns after the capital.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Extent of Public-Private Partnership in the Offinso North District

The extent of Public-Private Partnership in the Offinso North District was very high. The district could boast of 60 pre-schools. 15 of them were private and the remaining 45 that were public were all sponsored by GPEG. At the Primary school level, out of a total of 59 schools, 13 were private and the 46 public schools were all sponsored by GPEG. Some public primary schools like DarsoIjthadiya Islamic School were receiving support from both local community groups and GPEG. The story was not different from the Junior High Schools. Out of the 30 Junior High Schools in the district, 8 were private and 22 were public schools sponsored by

GPEG. At the Senior High School level, there were a total of 3 schools; out of this, 1 was a private school initiated and managed by Local Community Group. Out of the 2 public Senior High schools in the district, one (Nkenkaasu Senior High School) was initiated by a Local Community Group. These statistics show that there is massive involvement of the private sector in education at the Offinso North District.

4.2. The Effect of Private Sector Involvement on the Provision of School Amenities in the Offinso North District

At Darso, respondents noted that after the involvement of the

private sector in education, the number of primary schools in the community has increased to 3. Out of this, one was private, another was a community-initiated public school and the other was provided by the state. A private for-profit provider had also added one more Junior High School to the previously one public Junior High School in the community. A whopping majority of respondents at Darso indicated that the private sector (GPEG) had been renovating classroom blocks and providing school furniture, sanitary facilities and teaching and learning materials. The level of school amenities at Darso as assessed by respondents after the involvement of the private sector is shown in table 2.

Table 2. Level of Amenities in Schools at Darso After the Involvement of the Private Sector.

School Amenities	Freq. Yes	%	Freq. No	%
Clean & conducive environment for teaching and learning	49	98	1	2
Enough classrooms	50	100	0	0
Good condition of classroom blocks.	50	100	0	0
Enough furniture	45	90	5	10
Enough Textbooks	35	70	15	30
Enough Teaching and Learning Materials	40	80	10	20
Proper Sanitary Facilities	45	90	5	10

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 2 above shows that the involvement of the private sector in education had helped to improve the provision of amenities to schools at Darso. A whopping majority (98%) of the respondents believed that the schools had a clean and conducive environment for teaching and learning. All the respondents agreed that the schools had enough classrooms and the classroom blocks were in perfect condition. 90% of respondents as against 10% believed that the schools had enough teaching and learning materials and enough furniture. However, even though encouraging, there seemed to be a little problem with the supply of teaching and learning materials (TLM) and textbooks to schools. Ironically, these two materials have a direct effect on teaching and learning outcomes. These figures show a massive improvement on the

state of amenities in schools at Darso before the involvement of the private sector. Areas that saw massive improvement included: furniture (from 20% to 90%), TLM (from 10% to 80%) and Sanitary facilities (from 60% to 90%).

At Nkenkaasu, it came to light that after the involvement of the private sector, the number of primary schools in the community increased from 8 to 10 and that of Junior High Schools increased from 8 to 9. A Senior High School was also born. GPEG had also been contributing meaningfully to the supply of TLM, furniture, sanitary facilities among others. The level of school amenities at Nkenkaasu as assessed by respondents after the involvement of the private sector is shown in table 3.

Table 3. Level of Amenities in Schools at Nkenkaasu After the Involvement of the Private Sector.

School Amenities	Freq. Yes	%	Freq. No	%
Clean & conducive environment for teaching and learning	45	90	5	10
Enough classrooms	50	100	0	0
Good condition of classroom blocks.	45	90	5	10
Enough furniture	45	90	5	10
Enough Textbooks	46	92	4	8
Enough Teaching and Learning Materials	40	80	10	20
Proper Sanitary Facilities	45	90	5	10

Source: Field Survey, 2015

All the respondents believed that the schools had enough classrooms and 90% believed that the classroom blocks were in good condition. 90% indicated that the schools had a clean and conducive environment for teaching and learning. 90% and 80% believed that the schools had enough furniture and teaching and learning materials respectively. Contrary to the

situation at Darso, the schools at Nkenkaasu had a little more supply of textbooks. This could have been one of the reasons why schools in Nkenkaasu were performing better than those in Darso. Areas that saw massive improvement included: clean and conducive environment for teaching and learning (from 80% to 90%), enough classrooms (from 70% to

100%), Good condition of classroom blocks (from 80% to 90%), furniture (from 60% to 90%), textbooks (from 70% to 92%), teaching and learning materials (from 20% to 80%) and Sanitary facilities (from 70% to 90%).

4.3 Amenities Provided by the Private Sector

However, 100% of respondents from both Darso and Nkenkaasu indicated that the private sector (GPEG) has been providing furniture and teaching and learning materials. 95% and 85% noted that the private sector has been renovating classrooms and providing sanitary facilities respectively. This is shown in figure 2.

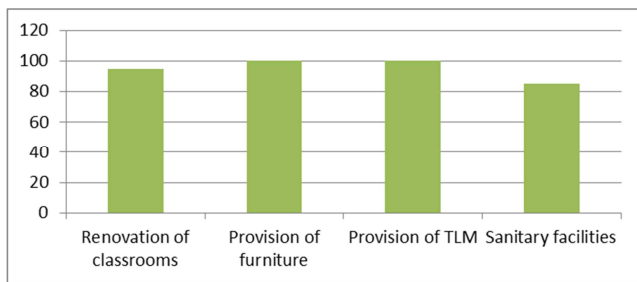


Figure 2. School Amenities Provided by the Private Sector.

Source: Field Survey, 2015

In a personal interview with the District Director of Education, he acknowledged that:

“GPEG has really contributed meaningfully to the provision of school amenities in the district. They make funds available to schools in trenches (once per term) which are used in the provision of teaching and learning materials, furniture, gender friendly sanitary facilities, rehabilitation of school buildings among others” (Personal Interview, 2015)

When the District Coordinator of GPEG was asked why his outfit gives money to the schools instead of the direct provision of amenities to the schools, this was what he had to say:

“Different schools have different problems with regards to amenities. And the schools have a fair idea as to which ones affect them the most. We, therefore, give schools the luxury of selecting and satisfying their most pressing needs. However,

we have a list of projects that the schools have to select from. They don't have the liberty to go outside the list” (Personal Interview, 2015).

The study, therefore, believes that the intention of GPEG is to avoid the provision of amenities which may turn out to be white elephants at the end of the day. However, there is the fear of misappropriation of funds and corruption on the part of school authorities.

4.4. The Effect of Public Sector Involvement on the Provision of Amenities in Community Initiated Schools

A student at Nkenkaasu Senior High School noted that: *“The public sector has helped in the provision of furniture, textbooks, teaching and learning materials and classroom blocks for the school” (FGD, 2015).*

A student at DarsoIjtihadiya Islamic School also acknowledged that:

“Before the involvement of the government, our school had only three classrooms. The government has helped us to build two additional classrooms. The government has also given us furniture, textbooks and toilet” (FGD, 2015)

4.5. The Effect of Private Sector Involvement on the Academic Performance of Schools in the Offinso North District

GPEG started operation in the Offinso North District in 2013. That year, the total percentage pass in BECE fell from 60% in 2012 to 49% in 2013 [6]. Maybe it was early days yet for a programme that started for barely a year to have a leaning effect on the performance of students. Before the participation of the Public-Private Partnership in education delivery in the Offinso North District BECE results in 2011 indicates that, 10 pupils had aggregates 7 – 15, 125 pupils had aggregates 16 – 24, and 278 also had aggregates 25 – 30, and 520 pupils also obtained aggregates 31-40.

In 2014, the percentage pass in BECE rose to as high as 80%. Perhaps the interventions had started taking effect. Table 4 is a detailed analysis of the 2014 BECE results in the District.

Table 4. No. of Candidates Obtaining Aggregates as Indicated (2014 BECE Results).

	6	7-15	16-24	25-30	31-40	Total	OVERALL % PASS
Boys	0	11	98	168	266	543	80%
Girls	0	9	61	113	205	388	
Total	0	20	159	281	471	931	

Source: Ghana Education Service, 2014

Comparing this with the results of 2011, it can be seen that the number of students who obtained aggregates 7 - 15

doubled from 10 in 2011 to 20 in 2014. The number of students who obtained aggregates 16 - 24 also increased

from 125 in 2011 to 159 in 2014. Those that obtained aggregates 25 - 30 also increased from 278 in 2011 to 281 in 2014 and notably those obtained aggregate 31-40 decreased from 520 to 471 in 2014. However, the huge difference in percentage pass from 45.9% in 2011 to 80% in 2014 was due to the fact that in 2011, only grades 1 to 5 were considered passes and students were required to obtain aggregate 30 or better to qualify for Senior High School. But in 2012, the grading system was reviewed, allowing students with aggregate 40 to qualify for Senior High Schools. The study, therefore, is of the view that the partnership is too young to allow a meaningful assessment of its effect on the performance of students. This notwithstanding, the study believes that the involvement of the private sector has started showing positive signs on the performance of students.

4.6. The Effect of Public Sector Involvement on the Academic Performance of Community-Initiated School

At Nkenkaasu Senior High School, the Assistant Headmaster emphasized that:

“Before the involvement of the public sector, there were no enough trained teachers in the school. The school relied on the services of National Service Personnel and community volunteers but when the school became public, the government supplied the school with enough professional teachers, furniture and text books and this affected students’ performance positively. The school has been chalking 100% in WAEC exams ever since” (Personal Interview, 2015)

At Darsoljihadiya Islamic School, the Head Teacher held that:

“Before the involvement of the public sector, the school had no professional teachers and enough teaching and learning materials. The public sector came in and improved the quality of amenities in the school and also posted enough professional teachers to the school. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school” (Personal Interview, 2015)

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, public-private partnership increased school enrolment, the involvement of the private sector in education in the district has also had a positive

effect on the performance of students. It is recommended that the concerns of local community groups that are Genuine and Realistic to public-private partnership should be addressed, and again the government ought to set aside some funds to augment the private sector's effort in the provision of amenities to schools under partnership.

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