

Enhancing Academic Performance: Exploring Effective Aid Intervention for Ghanaian Students

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Abstract

The goal of this project is to find efficient aid initiatives that could improve educational outcomes by examining the academic performance of Ghanaian students. The study looks at the various issues facing the education system, such as poor infrastructure, a lack of trained teachers, and restricted access to resources, especially in rural regions, amid increasing concerns over Ghana's low academic accomplishment. To identify the causes of poor academic achievement, the research uses a secondary data analysis approach, consulting academic records, educational policy documents, and relevant literature. The results draw attention to important problems such as low socioeconomic status, a lack of educational resources, and the vital role of good teachers. The study also assesses how foreign aid has affected education, showing how it has been crucial in supporting efforts for school meals, teacher training, and infrastructure development that have been proved to raise student achievement. Recommendations for comprehensive aid interventions tailored to the specific needs of Ghanaian students are proposed, emphasizing sustainable solutions that address both access and quality in education.

This study adds to the continuing discussion about educational reforms in Ghana by providing information that could help with resource allocation and policy changes meant to improve the country's educational system.

Keywords: Academic Performances, Aid Intervention, Ghana, Educational Reforms, Student Outcome

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1. Introduction

The foundation of any society's development is education, and a country's educational condition is largely determined by the academic achievement of its students. In recent years, concerns have been raised regarding the low academic performance of Ghanaian students, prompting a need for a comprehensive examination of the contributing factors and potential aid interventions (Ghanney & Aniagyei, 2014). This capstone project aims to delve into the multifaceted elements that influence the academic performance of students in Ghana and to identify aid interventions that can lead to substantial improvements. The central question guiding this investigation is: *What kinds of aid interventions are most successful at producing improved student outcomes in the Ghanaian education system and why?* This research question encapsulates the core objective of understanding the specific aid interventions that can effectively address the challenges faced by Ghanaian students, ultimately fostering enhanced academic performance.

The Ghanaian education system grapples with multifaceted challenges that hinder its effectiveness and inclusivity. Insufficient infrastructure and limited access to resources, especially in rural areas, impede the quality of learning environments. Shortages of qualified teachers, particularly in remote regions, contribute to uneven educational opportunities. Outdated curriculum and pedagogical approaches, wrong policy implementation and inadequate aid or funds. My research will focus on educational policies and reforms, the types of aid received, and the kinds of aid intervention that will be or are more successful in improving student outcomes.

The Ghanaian education system has been the recipient of various aid interventions and educational policies aimed at enhancing academic outcomes for students. Despite these efforts, certain challenges persist. Infrastructure development initiatives, designed to improve learning environments, face hurdles in ensuring equitable distribution and overcoming persistent issues in remote areas. Teacher training programs, though implemented, have not fully resolved shortages of qualified educators, impacting the overall quality of teaching. The integration of technology into schools, supported by aid, encounters difficulties in aligning with the curriculum and addressing the digital divide. Additionally, interventions aimed at fostering inclusive education for kids with impairments also confront continuous obstacles because of societal perceptions and the distribution of resources. Despite aid programs, the complexity of socioeconomic issues affecting pupils still prevents broad advancements. These enduring difficulties demonstrate the necessity of a sophisticated and flexible strategy to support interventions to successfully handle the variety of problems the Ghanaian education system is confronted with.

Furthermore, developing countries, including Ghana encounter other significant obstacles. These include, among other things, severe financial limitations in situations where there are sizable populations of the underserved or unserved; inadequate bureaucratic ability to administer policies and programs; restricted ability to deliver high-quality services; conflicting needs and interests in pursuing education policy in comparison to other policy priorities; and social norms and financial incentives that hinder the full use of education services (Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). In Ghana, enrollment has increased over the years because of some educational policies such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), which was successfully implemented in 2006, and the free Senior High School policy, which was also implemented in 2017. However, quality has been extremely poor, and little research has been done to find out the cause.

The primary actors in a nation's education systems are bureaucrats and political bodies, voters (parents and others), government officials (Minister of Education and other ministry officials), local government officials (local authority), school officials (headteacher, governing body, and teachers), teacher unions, school governors, and civil society; all these bodies have the power to impact students' results, especially because of their possible impact on accountability (Kingdon et al., 2014). However, these bodies, especially the bureaucrats, do not use funds received for their intended purposes. According to the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), 300% of Ghana's foreign aid was made up of funds lost due to corruption. High levels of corruption in dealing with Ghanaian government entities were also noted by the US Department of State. This study will thereby also investigate the role of the government in managing and sustaining aid, the implementation of policies and why most policies have not solved the problem of poor student outcomes.

The Free Senior High School (SHS) policy in Ghana, while aiming to broaden access to education, has encountered challenges that have negatively impacted the country's education system. The rapid increase in student enrollment has strained existing infrastructure and resources, resulting in overcrowded classrooms and inadequate facilities. This surge in demand for education has led to shortages of qualified teachers, compromising the student-teacher ratio and overall instructional quality. Critics argue that the emphasis on quantity over quality has raised concerns about the long-term financial sustainability of the policy and its potential impact on maintaining educational standards. The strain on resources and infrastructure, coupled with potential compromises in the quality of education, underscores the need for a comprehensive and sustainable approach to ensure that the Free SHS policy effectively meets its goals without compromising educational excellence (Duah et al., 2023).

This study is significant because it has the potential to influence Ghanaian educational policy and practices. The study intends to add important insights to the ongoing discourse on educational reforms and policies by identifying and comprehending the elements causing poor academic performance as well as determining the aid interventions that prove most effective. The findings could pave the way for targeted interventions, resource allocation, and policy adjustments to uplift the educational landscape in Ghana. This study employs a secondary data analysis approach to investigate the factors influencing academic performance among Ghanaian students and to identify the most effective aid interventions in improving academic outcomes. Secondary data refers to pre-existing data collected by other researchers or organizations for purposes other than the present study (Hair Jr et al., 2019).

The following secondary sources will provide the data for this study: Academic Records: Information about academic performance will be gathered from Ghanaian educational establishments, such as colleges, universities, and schools. These documents will offer insightful information about the attendance, grades, and other pertinent academic metrics of the pupils. Documents pertaining to educational policies will be used to examine official policy documents released by the Ghanaian government and educational authorities to comprehend the current frameworks, tactics, and interventions meant to enhance students' academic performance. Research Studies and Reports will also be used to pinpoint important conclusions, patterns, and best practices concerning aid interventions and academic achievement in Ghana, a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed research papers, reports, and studies carried out by academics and organizations working in the field of education will be done.

Press releases, news articles, and media reports from reliable sources will all be examined to document public opinions, discussions, and discourse on educational problems and assistance initiatives in Ghana. Government Statistics: Over time, trends in academic performance, educational outcomes, and aid allocation will be evaluated using statistical data from government agencies, including the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques will be used in the analysis of the gathered data. To find reoccurring themes, patterns, and insights from policy documents, research studies, news items, and media reports, qualitative content analysis will be used. Based on academic records and official government statistics, quantitative methods like statistical analysis and data visualization will be used to investigate the connections between aid initiatives and academic performance markers. Using secondary data provides a solid and thorough method to look into the research topic and accomplish the goals of this study. Through the

examination of a wide range of sources, this study seeks to provide insightful analysis and suggestions for creating efficient aid interventions that can improve Ghanaian students' academic performance.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the major factors contributing to the poor academic performance of students in Ghana.
- To determine the most successful aid interventions for enhancing students' outcomes in the Ghanaian education system
- To develop recommendations for comprehensive aid interventions tailored to the specific needs of Ghanaian students, considering cultural, economic, and educational dynamics.

3. Theoretical Review

3.1 Resource Dependency Theory

Resource Dependency Theory (RDT) was developed by organizational scholars Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) to understand how external resources impact organizational behavior and outcomes. A core tenet of RDT is that organizations depend on resources from their environment and that control over vital resources equates to organizational power and influence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Access to critical resources is key for organizational effectiveness and survival. According to RDT, organizations strive to establish resource dependencies that minimize uncertainty and ensure their survival. This theory is relevant to the study in the case of Ghanaian education, the theory aligns with the study to examine how educational institutions depend on external sources, such as government funding, foreign aid, and international organizations, to acquire essential resources. RDT suggests the Ghanaian education system depends heavily on external resources like government funding, foreign aid, infrastructure, instructional materials, and trained teachers. However, only 4.6% of public education spending goes to learning materials (World Bank, 2019) and schools face shortages in infrastructure, supplies, and qualified teachers. Applying an RDT perspective, these resource deficiencies negatively impact schools' capabilities to deliver quality instruction and learning. RDT specifies that as the availability of essential resources decreases, organizational performance and sustainability suffer (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Specifically, RDT predicts the scarcity of learning resources, materials, infrastructure, and trained teachers undermines Ghanaian students' academic performance by constraining teaching effectiveness.

Evaluating the relationship between resource constraints in Ghanaian schools and student achievement metrics through an RDT lens will inform targeted interventions. Despite the relevance of the theory in the study, there are however critics including its deterministic view of organizations as passive entities driven solely by resource dependencies by overlooking the agency and strategic behavior of organizational actors. Critics argue that RDT fails to adequately account for factors such as organizational culture, leadership, and internal dynamics that shape resource acquisition and utilization. Additionally, RDT has been criticized for its limited consideration of non-material resources, such as knowledge, skills, and relationships, which are increasingly recognized as important for organizational success. RDT explains how reliance on limited external resources creates dependency, strain, and performance issues for public service organizations like schools. Enhancing access to instructional, informational, financial, and infrastructure resources could strengthen academic capabilities and learning outcomes in Ghana. RDT provides a useful framework for diagnosing and addressing resource deficiencies hampering educational effectiveness.

3.2 Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory was developed by Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura. He proposed this valuable framework for understanding involved relationships among individual, social, and environmental factors that influence academic performance (Bandura, 1986). Bandura's theory posits that individuals learn not only through direct experiences but also through observing others and the consequences of their actions. A core component is observational learning, where people acquire knowledge, rules, skills, strategies, and beliefs by observing others. Self-efficacy, an individual's belief in their abilities, also strongly shapes motivation and persistence. Despite the relevance of the theory, it has been subjected to several criticisms and limitations. One critique is that the theory may oversimplify the complexities of human behavior by focusing primarily on cognitive processes and individual agency while neglecting broader structural and systemic factors. Additionally, some critics argue that social cognitive theory places too much emphasis on internal determinants of behavior, overlooking the role of external influences and environmental factors. The theory has also been critiqued for not sufficiently addressing emotions and moods as influences. Finally, the concept of reciprocal determinism is debated, with some scholars arguing environmental factors play a stronger role in driving human behaviors. Despite these critiques, social cognitive theory remains a valuable framework for examining the interaction between individuals, social contexts, and academic performance.

In the context of the study on the low academic performance of Ghanaian students, social cognitive theory offers valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of educational outcomes. Ghanaian students' academic performance is influenced not only by individual factors such as intelligence and motivation but also by socio-cultural factors such as family support, peer influence, and societal expectations. Poverty, gender inequality, and cultural norms in Ghana can significantly impact students' access to resources, opportunities for learning, and support systems, thereby influencing their academic success (Takyi et al., 2019). Furthermore, social cognitive theory underlines the relevance of observational learning, arguing that children may copy the behavior and attitudes of their classmates, instructors, and role models. In the Ghanaian context, this underlines the value of strong peer connections, effective teaching approaches, and supportive learning settings in developing academic accomplishment. Educational interventions aiming at boosting students' self-efficacy, developing good social relationships, and addressing socio-cultural obstacles might lead to better academic achievements among Ghanaian students.

4. Empirical Review

4.1 Major Factors Contributing to Poor Academic Performance Among Students in Ghana

A number of studies have been conducted to explore the various factors that contribute to poor academic performance among students. According to a study conducted by Saviour et al. (2022) conducted a study on the causes of poor academic achievement in public basic schools in the Sagnarigu Municipality in Northern Region, Ghana, with a focus on the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The study adopted a qualitative case study approach, using interviews and historical records as data sources. It was discovered that some factors contribute to the low academic performance of students. Some of these factors include lateness and absenteeism, inadequate structural and material resources, pupils' attitudes towards learning, indiscipline among pupils, poor parental control, teachers' motivation, and ineffective supervision of schools (Saviour et al., 2022). They suggested a few policy interventions and mitigation strategies to address the problem. Some of these interventions include school counselling, parental control, logistical support, and effective supervision by the parents and teachers.

Another study conducted by Agbofa (2023) assessed the impact of reading difficulties on the academic performance of high school students using a quantitative survey of 260 students and 24 teachers. The study identified that poor performance of students is caused by their difficulties in reading in all subjects. Also, word mispronunciation, word omission, word substitution, and word addition are the most common reading errors among students. He concluded that the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service should prioritize and develop strategies to improve reading abilities, such as providing adequate reading materials, conducting library lessons, and offering in-service training for teachers.

Moreover, Adzaku et al. (2022) used a descriptive survey design to investigate the perceived impact of COVID-19 on the academic performance of students in Colleges of Education in Ghana. The study used a sample of 346 convenience samples across three colleges and gathered data via questionnaires. The study found that students had difficulty focusing during online lessons, resulting in worsened academic performance due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, students encountered challenges including poor internet connectivity, lack of resources like laptops, and unconducive home learning environments. Given these detrimental impacts on student performance, the study concluded that the shift to online learning necessitated by COVID-19 had negatively impacted Colleges of Education students in Ghana. Adzaku et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of online learning platforms and accessibility for students for remote education to be successful. Recommendations for the study included the integration of online components into education systems at all levels, alongside support from policymakers, to enable continued academic achievement for students in times of crisis requiring educational institutions to temporarily move instruction entirely online.

4.2 Tailoring Comprehensive Aid Interventions to Support Students in Ghana: Accounting for Cultural, Economic, and Educational Dynamics

A qualitative case study explored by Okine (2022) on stakeholders' perceptions of the influence of NGOs/NPOs on Ghana's educational system, particularly in rural communities, using the Advocate Coalition Framework and advocacy coalition theory to assess their dynamic power and authority relative to the Ministry of Education (MoE). The findings from the study suggested that NGOs/NPOs have emerged as a complementary governing body to the MoE and other education leaders, capable of supporting the achievement of universal primary education by providing resources and improving teaching/learning quality in schools. Specifically, by forming intentional coalitions focused on defining clear program/project roles and functions, NGOs/NPOs can partner with the MoE for effective, regulated interventions. Thus, the study recommended the MoE's decision-making bodies account for this influential NGO/NPO role in policymaking moving forward, particularly around program supervision, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Ahinful and Tauringana (2018) studied the determinants of academic performance for students generally and accounting students specifically, including attitudinal variables, effort, class participation, and subject interest. This study analyzed how the influence of motivational factors differs by education level in a Ghanaian context. Findings from the study showed attitudinal variables positively impact performance, with student effort significantly relating to academic achievement. The analysis indicated academic interest and learning attitude have a significant positive relationship with performance for both secondary and tertiary students. Meanwhile, volition was only salient at the tertiary level, and expectation only at the secondary level. By delineating motivational determinants by education level, the differential impacts of factors like effort, interest, and attitudes are clarified for Ghanaian students. Targeting interventions boosting engagement indicators significant at each phase could effectively bolster achievement (Ahinful & Tauringana, 2018).

4.3 Foreign Aid Received in the Education Sector and Some Educational Reforms Over Time

Even with increased government funding for education, a large amount of the funding goes on wages and administration, creating a financial vacuum that forces reliance on outside assistance. Education funding is further complicated by the government's inability to collect enough income as a result of variables like macroeconomic instability, poor tax administration, and an enormous informal sector. Ghana has become more and more dependent on outside help to close the financial gaps in the education system, with bilateral and international donors contributing significantly to the sector's finances (Nyarkoh & Intsiful, 2018). Ghana's education system has undergone a radical transformation thanks to foreign help, which has made it possible to build new schools and renovate older elementary and postsecondary facilities. Over the past 20 years, Ghana has received varying responses from bilateral and multinational donors in response to its request for assistance. For example, in the last 19 years, the World Bank has funded the building of over 8,000 classroom blocks and acquired over 35 million textbooks for Ghana's basic schools.

The Ghana School Feeding Program was also funded by other donors, including the Netherlands and World Food Programs. Its goal was to lower child hunger and malnutrition to increase educational access and quality in Ghana. Also, the Department for International Development gave the government budgetary help so that it could boost education sector funding to 10% of government expenditures in Ghana (Nyarkoh & Intsiful, 2018). The growth of the educational system and the lessening of the differences in educational development between urban and rural areas are both results of this support. Ghana has addressed inequality and raised literacy rates by directing help toward underprivileged areas. Furthermore, foreign aid has been crucial in helping Ghana develop a knowledge-based economy, realizing that education is a key component that drives economic competitiveness (Njoroge, 2020). While student learning achievements are an important measure of the quality of education, Chapman and Quijada (2009) pointed out that few reviews were able to draw reliable conclusions about how aid initiatives affected learning outcomes. There were notable learning increases in certain interventions, although the outcomes varied depending on the assessment. The findings of a study conducted in 25 developing countries by the Education Policy and Data Center (2008) indicate that there may not always be a direct correlation between improved learning outcomes and aid to education achievements, such as entry rate, attendance rate, and pupil-teacher ratio.

Aid has had a complex impact on Ghana's educational system, resulting in both beneficial and negative effects. Mama Bema Owusu's research indicates that aid has had a role in augmenting finances and providing educational opportunities. The Ghanaian education system has benefited from the addition of resources thanks to donor monies, with major contributions coming from organizations like the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Regular in-service training for teachers has been made easier by this assistance, which has improved student learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness. The assistant has also assisted in addressing issues including poor student learning outcomes and a shortage of teaching and learning resources. Aid has not, however, always had a favorable effect. Aid conditionality, funding of non-priority items, and difficulties assessing aid outcomes are among the negative effects noted in the research.

Concerns over the appropriateness of aid are particularly contentious, as beneficiaries do not always turn to aid when they need help. Additionally, the fact that recipients' voices are missing from donor assessments has been brought to attention, suggesting that recipients may not have had a say in how aid results are evaluated (Owusu, M. B. (2018)). While aid has improved the resources and support available to Ghana's educational system, it has also brought with it difficulties and complications that must be resolved in order to have a more significant and long-lasting effect. The education system and student performance in Ghana have declined as a result of the inconsistent implementation of educational reforms. The system is unstable and inconsistent as a result of the numerous modifications to laws and reforms that have interfered with the continuation of educational initiatives. This discrepancy has made it harder to execute long-term plans successfully, which has led to inefficient resource allocation and trouble enforcing policies. This has led to a deterioration in the quality of education that kids get, which has an impact on their performance and capacity for academic success. Students

have found it difficult to adjust to shifting curriculum content and assessment techniques due to the erratic nature of reforms, which has ultimately hampered their success and achievement in the classroom as a whole (Adu-Gyamfi et al, 2016).

With the effective implementation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 2006, whose goal was to guarantee that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to high-quality basic education, and the free Senior High School policy in 2017, among other educational programs, has expanded enrollment over time. However, the extent to which increased access and retention translates into improved learning outcomes is debated. Research by Christina et al. (2017) covering 15 developing countries determined that foreign aid was not associated with significant improvements in learning outcomes. Factors driving this lack of return on investment include the diversion of funds towards non-educational spending as well as inadequate preparation to maintain quality with increased student enrollment. Thus, while aid has succeeded in driving quantitative gains, systems have often struggled to sustain learning quality. Ultimately, for aid to substantially improve education, interventions must take a comprehensive approach spanning beyond just access and resources towards holistic systems strengthening in curriculum, teacher training and management (Rose et al., 2017). It also requires sustained, long-term prioritization from donors rather than volatile year-by-year financing.

Educational quality, access, attainment and equality tend to lag substantially behind in the Global South compared to developed Northern countries due to a multifaceted set of historical burdens, inadequate policies, funding gaps and sociocultural barriers that intersect to limit advancement. Legacy issues stemming from colonialism and neocolonialism have created foundational challenges that current systems still grapple with. Restrictive education policies under imperial British rule catered resources towards selected urban elites while neglecting the rural majority's needs, laying the roots of inequality still visible today (Sifuna, 2010). Post-independence leaders in African countries then prioritized personal gains and consolidation of control rather than developing national education systems, often prodded by continued Northern influence safeguarding exploitative interests (Carnoy, 1974). Crippling debt crises and detrimental IMF loan conditions requiring cuts in social spending further starved education budgets of desperately needed investment through the 1980s/90s (Brock-Utne, 2000). These historical burdens make equitable progress difficult.

Beyond colonial imprints, present-day education planning failures lead resources to flow disproportionately to already advantaged populations, widening disparity. Analysis of public expenditure across multiple African countries confirms that higher income groups secure more public spending than poorer counterparts in both absolute and relative terms (Castro-Leal et al., 1999). The imbalance stems from insufficient budgetary allocations compounded by priority given to tertiary over basic education, and urban over rural areas, leaving lower income and rural students lacking basic facilities and teachers (Lewin & Sabates, 2012). The drive to achieve visible quantity gains also jeopardizes underlying quality, evident in high teacher absenteeism and lack of professional support structures (Bold et al., 2017). Recognition of these gaps in serving marginalized groups is indispensable. Entrenched sociocultural barriers also disproportionately disadvantage girls, rural students and lower castes. Practices like child marriage and policies restricting adolescent mothers' return to schooling erode girls' education opportunities, reflected in wide gender literacy divides (Soler-Hampejsek et al., 2018).

While foreign aid aims to advance educational quality and access, political realities in recipient countries significantly mediate resultant outcomes. Analysis by Heyneman (2003) determined that in corrupt settings, education aid rarely reaches classrooms to improve learning. However, multilateral aid is less vulnerable to misuse than bilateral funds. Similarly, a study of USAID programs in El Salvador showed only 20% efficiency in allocation towards academic expenditures despite substantial investments (Winters, 2010). Capture by local elites is a perpetual challenge requiring structural oversight mechanisms. Politically motivated aid conditionality also backfires by limiting policy space for developing contexts to direct funds based on needs. Research on aid effectiveness for primary education in 70 low and middle-income countries found imposition of decentralization and privatization reforms actively reduced enrollment rates despite the stated aims of increasing access, illustrating the detrimental impacts of coerced conditions (Shivalingaiah, 2016). Rather investments should empower local actors to develop homegrown, context-relevant solutions.

Ghana's landmark free Senior High School (SHS) program launched in 2017 aimed to boost secondary enrollment and retention by removing tuition barriers that excluded poorer families. However, rapid nationwide implementation without adequate preparation has hindered academic outcomes and system quality, attributable significantly to political motivations overriding strategic considerations. Analysis shows that the sudden six-fold increase in SHS admissions stress-tested infrastructure capacity and teacher workloads without corresponding investments to boost supply, leading to shortages, overcrowding and reliance on unqualified contract teachers (Rolleston et al., 2021). Studies estimate over 90% of students now attend oversubscribed schools and 1 in 4 teachers are untrained (Akyeampong et al., 2018). The quality impacts visible in highly reported bullying and failures in national exams indicate the policy prioritized political wins through visibility and access gains over

slower, systemic upgrades for absorbing expanded demand critical for ensuring learning. Experts further critique the lack of multi-stakeholder consultation in policy development as largely a unilateral top-down political directive from the incumbent regime to secure an advantage after election promises without incorporating educator and community considerations for smooth adoption (Atta et al., 2021). Implementation responsibility was shifted wholly onto overburdened regional administrations without matching resources or organizational change support. The absence of needs-based budgeting coordinated planning and decentralized decision autonomy reflects a politically driven centralized process failing to deliver intended equity benefits. While free access represents a landmark achievement, genuinely upgrading academic outcomes requires tackling political disincentives that privilege ribbon-cutting wins over investing in systemic strength and local empowerment. Sustainable progress necessitates collaborative policymaking and capacity building for quality, not just access alone.

5. Results and Analysis

The section summarizes the important conclusions generated from the detailed analysis undertaken for this research. By evaluating a broad variety of sources including academic records, policy papers, research studies, media stories, and government data, this analysis gives significant insights into the variables impacting the academic performance of students in Ghana. The research sheds light on the unique issues and impediments that lead to low educational results, as well as examines the efficacy of different humanitarian programs and educational policies adopted so far. Through thorough analysis, this section tries to reveal the links between socioeconomic determinants, resource availability, policy execution, and student accomplishment in the Ghanaian context.

Figure 1



5.1 Factors leading to poor academic performance.

Ghana's education system has made considerable achievements in recent years, with expanded access to education and higher enrollment rates. However, despite these achievements, the nation continues to confront obstacles in guaranteeing excellent education and optimum academic performance for all pupils. A study by Chowa et al. (2013) indicated that kids from low-income homes were more likely to encounter educational disadvantages and do badly in school compared to their classmates from higher-income backgrounds. The Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) 7 revealed that the poverty rate in Ghana was at 23.4% in 2017 (Ghana

Statistical Service, 2018), showing that a considerable section of the population experiences financial limitations that might impair educational achievement.

Moreover, parental education levels have been connected to student achievement. Research by Ansong et al. (2018) indicated that adolescents whose parents had greater levels of education were more likely to attain better academic performance. The GLSS 7 data indicated that only 17.2% of household heads in Ghana had finished secondary school or above (Ghana Statistical Service, 2018), indicating that many pupils may lack the required parental support and educational assistance at home. The availability and quality of school facilities and resources have a substantial influence on student learning results. A study by the World Bank (2019) emphasized that many schools in Ghana lack appropriate infrastructure, such as classrooms, furniture, and sanitary facilities. The survey observed that only 67% of primary schools and 40% of junior secondary schools had access to power, while 58% of primary schools and 48% of junior secondary schools had access to potable water. These infrastructural limitations might produce an inconducive learning environment and significantly affect student performance.

The paucity of textbooks and learning materials provides a hurdle to effective teaching and learning. The World Bank (2019) research revealed that the pupil-to-textbook ratio in Ghana was 1.5 for primary schools and 1.7 for junior secondary schools, meaning that not all pupils had access to the essential learning tools. This lack of suitable instructional resources limit students' ability to interact successfully with the subject and influence their academic achievement. A study by Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2020) indicated that teacher absenteeism, lack of subject-matter expertise, and weak pedagogical abilities were among the key factors leading to low student performance in Ghana. The research noted that many instructors in Ghana, especially in rural regions, lacked the requisite skills and training to offer excellent education.

Moreover, teacher motivation and work satisfaction have been connected to student accomplishment. Research by Abudu and Gbadamosi (2014) indicated that variables such as low salary, poor working conditions, and restricted professional development opportunities significantly influenced teacher motivation in Ghana. The World Bank (2019) research revealed that the average monthly income for primary school teachers in Ghana was GHS 978 (about USD 170), which is deemed low compared to other professions. This poor pay may lead to teacher demotivation and high turnover rates, eventually harming the quality of instruction offered.

Ghana's education system follows a bilingual approach, where English is the principal medium of teaching, but Ghanaian languages are employed as support in the early stages. However, research by Owu-Ewie and Eshun (2018) indicated that many pupils struggled with the transfer from Ghanaian languages to English as the main medium of teaching in higher grades. The research revealed that students' insufficient ability in English hindered their understanding and engagement with the program, resulting in poor academic achievement. The National Education Assessment (NEA) performed in 2016 found that only 37.6% of primary grade 4 pupils obtained competence in English, while 22.1% gained proficiency in Ghanaian languages (Ministry of Education, 2016). These poor competence levels show the need for a more effective language strategy and support systems to guarantee that children can successfully study and communicate in both English and Ghanaian languages.

A study by Chowa et al. (2013) indicated that parental participation in their children's education, such as supervising homework, attending school meetings, and giving educational materials, had a beneficial influence on student achievement in Ghana. However, the research also found that many parents, especially those from low-income families, had obstacles in actively participating in their children's education owing to reasons such as time limits, insufficient education, and financial issues. The Ghana Education Service (2018) stated that just 54% of parents consistently attended school meetings and activities, suggesting a need for more parental participation and assistance. Strengthening the collaboration between schools and parents and offering tailored interventions to enhance parental participation, particularly in disadvantaged areas, may contribute to better student results.

The reasons leading to low academic performance in Ghana are numerous and linked, spanning socioeconomic circumstances, school infrastructure and resources, teacher quality and motivation, language of teaching, and parental engagement. Addressing these difficulties demands a comprehensive and collaborative strategy that incorporates politicians, educators, parents, and communities. Investing in school infrastructure, assuring the availability of learning resources, boosting teacher training and support, establishing effective language policies, and fostering parental participation are critical methods to increase student performance. Moreover, targeted interventions to assist poor students and communities, such as scholarships, school nutrition programs, and community-based projects, may help minimize the effect of socioeconomic obstacles on educational achievement.

5.2 Evaluation of Successful Aid Interventions in Ghana

Ghana has been the beneficiary of several assistance measures targeted at strengthening its education system and raising student performance. While some initiatives have met problems, others have shown effectiveness in reaching their aims. The World Bank has been a prominent contributor in subsidizing the construction and restoration of school buildings around the nation. Between 2004 and 2013, the World Bank sponsored the building of over 8,000 classroom blocks and the distribution of more than 35 million textbooks for basic schools in Ghana (World Bank, 2014). These investments have considerably enhanced access to education, especially in disadvantaged regions, by providing acceptable learning settings and important instructional resources.

Donor organizations, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department for International Development (DFID), have undertaken initiatives to promote teacher quality and effectiveness. For example, the USAID-funded Ghana Partnership for Education: Learning Activity has educated over 20,000 primary school teachers in evidence-based reading teaching approaches (USAID, 2020). These projects have helped to enhance teaching methods and student learning results in literacy and numeracy.

School feeding programs have been an effective assistance intervention in Ghana, addressing the problem of hunger and malnutrition among pupils. The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP), backed by donors such as the Netherlands and the World Food Programme, has delivered daily meals to millions of primary school kids throughout the nation. A study by Abotsi (2013) indicated that the GSFP had a favorable influence on school enrollment, attendance, and retention rates, especially for females and children from impoverished homes. By reducing hunger and motivating school attendance, school feeding programs have led to increased educational access and results.

The DFID (Department for International Development) funded Complementary Basic Education (CBE) initiative which targeted out-of-school children, especially those from underprivileged areas, and offered them accelerated learning opportunities to catch up with their classmates and transfer into the formal education system. Between 2012 and 2018, the CBE program enrolled approximately 240,000 out-of-school children, with a completion rate of 90% (DFID, 2018). These programs have helped to eliminate educational inequities and guarantee that no kid is left behind.

Donor funding for Ghana's education sector budget has been crucial in helping the government to execute key reforms and policies. The DFID, for instance, offered fiscal assistance to the Ghanaian government, enabling increased education sector financing to exceed 10% of government expenditure (DFID, 2018). This financial assistance has helped the implementation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and the free Senior High School (SHS) policies, which have greatly improved access to education at the basic and secondary levels.

5.3 Evaluation of Unsuccessful Aid Interventions in Ghana

Several specialized assistance projects in Ghana's education sector have met problems and have been less effective in attaining their desired effects. The Education Quality for All (EQUAL) project was a five-year (2005-2010) USAID-funded effort aiming at enhancing the quality of basic education in Ghana. The initiative focuses on boosting teacher training, providing instructional resources, and strengthening school administration and oversight. However, the EQUAL initiative experienced various problems that restricted its influence. One of the key concerns was the lack of congruence with the current teacher training system in Ghana. The initiative brought novel training methodologies and resources that were not completely incorporated into the national teacher education framework, resulting in inconsistencies and low adoption by teachers (Asare & Essuman, 2014). Additionally, the project's concentration on generating new teaching materials did not fully evaluate the durability and scalability of these resources beyond the project time.

The Textbooks and Learning Materials Programme (TLMP) was a World Bank-supported effort operated between 2001 and 2006, intended to enhance the availability and quality of textbooks and learning materials in Ghanaian primary schools. The initiative involves the buying and distribution of millions of textbooks and instructors' guides throughout the nation. However, the TLMP experienced severe obstacles in its execution. A study by Opoku-Amankwa (2010) concluded that the program suffered from weak planning and coordination, resulting in delays in the acquisition and delivery of resources. Many schools got textbooks that were not aligned with the curriculum or were in inadequate quantity. Moreover, the initiative did not offer appropriate training to instructors on how to successfully employ the new resources, limiting their influence on classroom teaching and student learning results.

The Ghana Education Decentralization Project (GEDP) was a World Bank-funded initiative undertaken between 2004 and 2010, intending to facilitate the decentralization of education administration and enhance education quality at the local level. The initiative aims to increase the ability of district education offices and school management committees to plan, supervise, and monitor education delivery. However, the GEDP met various hurdles that impeded its success. A World Bank assessment (2011) stated that the initiative met pushback from several stakeholders who were unwilling to surrender power and authority to local levels. There were also issues in creating the requisite capability at the district and school levels to properly fulfil their new tasks and responsibilities. Furthermore, the project's monitoring and evaluation system was poor, making it impossible to evaluate progress and make informed choices for improvement.

These unsuccessful aid interventions in Ghana's education sector, such as the EQUAL project, TLMP, and GEDP, have faced challenges due to factors such as lack of alignment with existing systems, inadequate planning and coordination, limited sustainability and scalability, resistance to change, weak capacity building, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation. These experiences underline the necessity of creating assistance initiatives that are context-sensitive, fit with national frameworks, promote sustainability, involve stakeholders, create local capacity, and have rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures.

5.4 Funding Allocated to the Education Sector.

According to the 2019 Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Project report, between 2011 and 2015, public education spending accounted for 6–8% of Ghana's GDP and 21–28% of the government's expenditures annually. This figure exceeded the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) recommended benchmarks of 6 percent of GDP and 20 percent of government spending, as well as higher than that of any of the other 13 ECOWAS member states. Public education spending as a proportion of GDP fell to 5.4 percent in 2016 and 5.2 percent in 2017, as a result of the overall government's expenditure falling from 27–30 percent of GDP between 2011 and 2015 to 18 percent in 2017. However, since education is a priority to the Government, the Government of Ghana (GoG) made up the largest source of contribution to total education expenditures in 2017 with 74 percent (World Bank, 2019). However, 95.4 percent of these funds were used for wages and salaries, leaving only 4.6 percent for non-salary expenses like teaching and learning materials (TLMs); thus, a reflection of one of the biggest obstacles to Ghana's education Quality; inadequate teaching and learning materials, and infrastructure (Boakye-Amponsah et al, 2015, p.1). Wages and salaries accounted for 72% of total education spending after other funding sources are deducted, followed by goods and services at 23% and capital expenditures at 5% of total spending. This suggests that nearly all non-salary expenses come from sources (such as USAID and the world bank) other than government funding for education. All pre-tertiary education levels had an increase in spending between 2015 and 2017, according to the allocation by subsector. In 2017, the Senior High School (SHS) subsector received the biggest share of education spending because of the introduction of the free Senior High School program (World Bank, 2019). The implementation of the free senior high school policy came along with its own challenges, such as overcrowding, even though the government had good intention of improving quality of education with this policy.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education (2019) provided a detailed breakdown of the education sector's total discretionary resource envelope from various sources for the years 2018 to 2021. The sources of education resource allocation included government allocation, internally generated funds (IGF), donors, funds earmarked for Free Senior High School, the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund), the Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA), allocations from other government departments, and funds raised from external sources and loans.

Government allocation represents the funds allocated by the government specifically for education, covering budgetary allocations for different educational programs and initiatives. Internally Generated Funds (IGF) are funds generated within the education sector itself, primarily through fees, levies, and other income-generating activities within educational institutions. Donors contribute external funding to support educational initiatives in Ghana, providing additional resources to the education sector. Donors include countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, or international organizations like the World Bank or the United Nations providing financial support for education projects in Ghana without expecting repayment. The allocation for Free Senior High School is dedicated funding for the Free SHS program, which aims to provide free secondary education to students in Ghana. The Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) is a special fund established by the government to support educational development through funding for infrastructure, scholarships, and other projects. The Annual Budget Funding Amount (ABFA) represents funds allocated from oil revenue for specific purposes, including education projects.

Additionally, funds from other government departments are allocated to education, such as those from the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection for school feeding programs and the District Common Fund. External

sources and loans contribute to the education resource envelope, including funds obtained from international organizations, financial institutions, or other countries to support educational initiatives in Ghana. It encompasses a broader category of funding that includes both donor contributions and other forms of financial support from external entities, including loans and investments, example, loans from world bank, and aid from non-governmental organizations. This comprehensive breakdown of funding sources highlights the diverse financial support that sustains and enhances the education sector in Ghana (Ministry of Education, 2019).

In 2018, total resources amounted to 12.295 billion GHC, with significant contributions from government allocations (7.306 billion), internally generated funds (1.638 billion), donors (0.326 billion), Free Senior High School (1.138 billion), GETFund (0.925 billion), ABFA (0.01 billion), other government departments (0.591 billion), and external sources & loans (0.372 billion). In 2019, total resources increased to 13.935 billion GHC, with continued support from government allocations (8.125 billion), internally generated funds (1.508 billion), donors (0.292 billion), Free Senior High School (1.771 billion), GETFund (1.239 billion), ABFA (0.01 billion), other government departments (0.618 billion), and external sources & loans (0.372 billion). 2020's total resources rose to 16.234 billion GHC, with notable allocations from government funds (9.223 billion), internally generated funds (1.396 billion), donors (0.248 billion), Free Senior High School (1.860 billion), GETFund (1.921 billion), ABFA (0.564 billion), other government departments (0.651 billion), and external sources & loans (0.372 billion).

Lastly, in 2021, total resources reached 17.723 billion GHC, with substantial contributions from government allocations (9.500 billion), internally generated funds (2.460 billion), donors (0.144 billion), Free Senior High School (1.953 billion), GETFund (2.253 billion), ABFA (0.620 billion), other government departments (0.631 billion), and external sources & loans (0.162 billion).

This comprehensive summary provides a detailed breakdown of the education sector's total discretionary resource envelope from all sources for the years 2018 to 2021 (Ministry of Education, 2019).

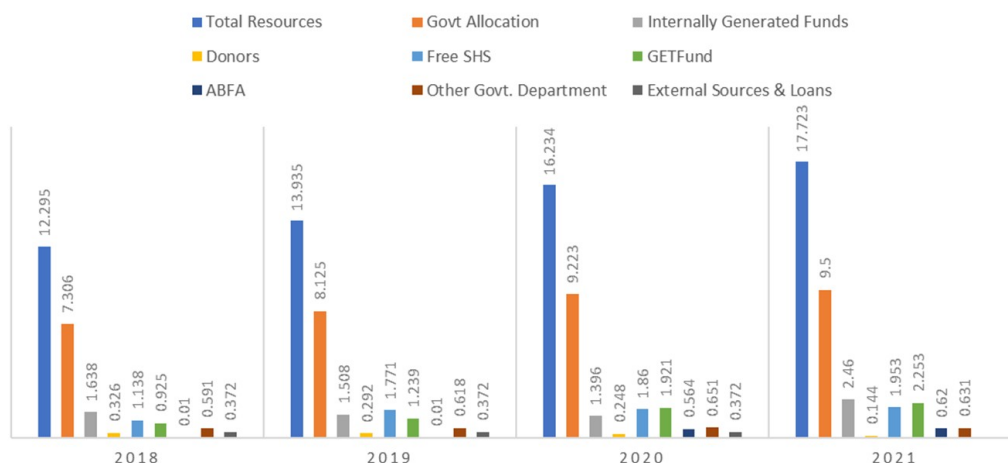
Total discretionary resource envelope from all sources for the education sector, 2018–2021 (GHC billion, nominal)

Table 1

Year	Total Resources (GHC billions)	Government Allocation	Internally Generated Funds	Donors	Free Senior High School	GETFUND	ABFA	Other Govt. Department	External Sources and Loans
2018	12.295	7.306	1.638	0.326	1.138	0.925	0.01	0.591	0.372
2019	13.935	8.125	1.508	0.292	1.771	1.239	0.01	0.618	0.372
2020	16.234	9.223	1.396	0.248	1.860	1.921	0.564	0.651	0.372
2021	17.723	9.500	2.460	0.144	1.953	2.253	0.620	0.631	0.162

Figure 2

EDUCATION SECTOR TOTAL DISCRETIONARY RESOURCE ENVELOPE FROM ALL SOURCES 2018-2021 CHART



Also, according to the 2021 mid- year fiscal review of the budget statement and economic policy, the Ghanaian government prioritized the Road Sector Development, focusing on routine maintenance and specific projects like the Tema Motorway roundabout and the Obetsebi Lamptey Circle Interchange. Additionally, the Agriculture Sector received attention with investments aimed at improving production and productivity in sub-sectors such as rice, poultry, soybean, and tomato. The Tourism Sector saw support for modernization and development of tourist sites, skills upgrading, cost reduction, and transformation of targeted beaches. Lastly, the Housing Sector received funds for the National Homeownership Fund to promote affordable housing with low mortgage interest rates. These sectors were key areas of focus for driving economic growth and transformation in Ghana in 2021.

Nonetheless, according to the 2022 mid-year review, The Government has made significant investments in key sectors to address crucial issues and promote development in Ghana, including a GH¢5.3 billion investment in the Free SHS Program enabling 1,261,495 children to access secondary education, the Ghana School Feeding Program providing daily meals to 3,620,468 pupils and creating jobs for 32,496 caterers, and progress on 87 out of 111 sites for the Agenda 111 project aimed at strengthening the national health system and reducing health inequality. These sectors have been prioritized by the Government, receiving significant investments and attention to drive development and address critical challenges in the country, followed by the national security, food security, power sector agreement negotiations, road sector programs, railways infrastructure, and the national identification programs, as of 2022 (Ministry of Finance, 2022). The 2023 mid-year fiscal policy review also confirms the Government prioritizing education, followed by health, before the other sectors.

5.5 Impact of Educational Policies and Innovations on Student Outcomes

Educational policies and changes have a substantial influence on student performance in Ghana. Over the years, the government has launched several measures aiming at enhancing access, quality, and fairness in education. However, the efficacy of these policies and changes in boosting student performance has been a matter of controversy and investigation. One of the biggest educational changes in Ghana was the implementation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 2006. The purpose of this program was to guarantee that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, had access to excellent basic education. Along with other educational programs like the free Senior High School policy established in 2017, these efforts have grown enrollment over time. However, questions have been expressed concerning the quality of education and the amount to which increasing access and retention translates into better learning results.

Research done by Christina et al. (2017), including 15 poor nations, revealed that foreign assistance was not connected with substantial gains in learning outcomes. The research ascribed this lack of return on investment to issues such as the diversion of cash towards non-educational expenditures and poor planning to

sustain quality with growing student enrollment. The quick adoption of the Free Senior High School (SHS) program in Ghana has also had a detrimental influence on student results. According to research by Rolleston et al. (2021), the sudden six-fold increase in SHS admissions "stress-tested infrastructure capacity and teacher workloads without corresponding investments to boost supply, leading to shortages, overcrowding and reliance on unqualified contract teachers." Estimates suggest that "over 90% of students now attend oversubscribed schools and 1 in 4 teachers are untrained" (Akyeampong et al., 2018). These quality implications, seen in highly reported bullying and failures in national examinations, demonstrate that the policy emphasized political advantages via visibility and access gains above delayed, systemic changes essential for assuring learning.

Furthermore, the uneven implementation of educational reforms has led to a decrease in the education system and student performance in Ghana. Adu-Gyamfi et al. (2016) suggests that repeated changes in policies and reforms have damaged the continuity of educational endeavors, resulting in an unstable and inconsistent system. This mismatch has made it more complicated to execute long-term goals efficiently, leading to wasteful resource allocation and difficulty in enforcing rules. As a consequence, the quality of education that pupils get has decreased, hurting their performance and capacity to achieve academically.

Historical constraints and weak policies have also hindered educational growth in the Global South compared to rich Northern nations. Legacy difficulties resulting from colonialism and neocolonialism have generated basic obstacles that modern institutions continually contend with. Sifuna (2010) highlights that limited education practices under imperial British authority channeled resources towards chosen urban elites while disregarding rural majority needs, creating the seeds of inequity still present today. Post-independence leaders in African nations therefore focused on personal advantages and consolidation of authority rather than creating national education systems, frequently encouraged by persistent Northern influence preserving exploitative interests (Carnoy, 1974). Moreover, present-day education planning failures allow resources to flow disproportionately to already advantaged communities, exacerbating inequity. Castro-Leal et al. (1999) indicate that higher-income groups get greater public expenditure than poorer peers in both absolute and relative terms across several African nations. This mismatch originates from limited financial allocations reinforced by the priority given to tertiary over basic education, and urban over rural regions, leaving lower-income and rural students missing basic facilities and instructors (Lewin & Sabates, 2012).

Educational policies and innovations in Ghana have had both beneficial and bad consequences on student results. While efforts like the FCUBE and free SHS have extended access to school, concerns regarding the quality of education continue. Inconsistent implementation of reforms, historical burdens, and insufficient policies have also contributed to the issues faced by the Ghanaian education system. To boost student performance, it is necessary to address these concerns via comprehensive, well-planned, and sufficiently resourced interventions that emphasize both access and quality. By learning from previous experiences and involving all stakeholders in the education system, Ghana can establish and execute successful policies and reforms that promote fair and high-quality education for all pupils.

5.6 Enrollment and Attendance

The introduction of the FCUBE in 2006 and the free SHS policy in 2017 have resulted in a huge rise in enrollment rates. According to the Ministry of Schools, the gross enrollment ratio for elementary schools climbed from 92.9% in 2006 to 105.3% in 2019 (Ministry of Education, 2020). Similarly, the gross enrollment percentage for secondary schools climbed from 48.4% in 2017 to 62.6% in 2019 (Ministry of School, 2020). These indicate the favorable effect of these policies on widening access to education. However, despite the rise in enrollment, student attendance rates have not demonstrated a proportional improvement. Research by Ansong et al. (2019) indicated that the average attendance rate in public primary schools was 78.4%, suggesting that a considerable majority of registered pupils do not routinely attend lessons. This tendency implies that although policies have succeeded in boosting access, they have not necessarily translated into constant student involvement.

5.7 Learning Outcomes

The influence of educational policies and changes on learning results in Ghana has been uneven. The 2013 and 2018 Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) findings indicated that just 2% of kids in primary grade 2 could read at grade level, with 50% unable to identify a single word (USAID, 2018). These results indicate the persisting obstacles in literacy acquisition despite the introduction of measures aimed at increasing

educational quality. Moreover, the National Education Assessment (NEA) performed in 2016 found that just 11% of primary grade 4 children obtained competence in mathematics, while 25% earned proficiency in English (Ministry of Education, 2016). These low proficiency rates show that the majority of pupils are not reaching the intended learning objectives, despite the increasing access to education.

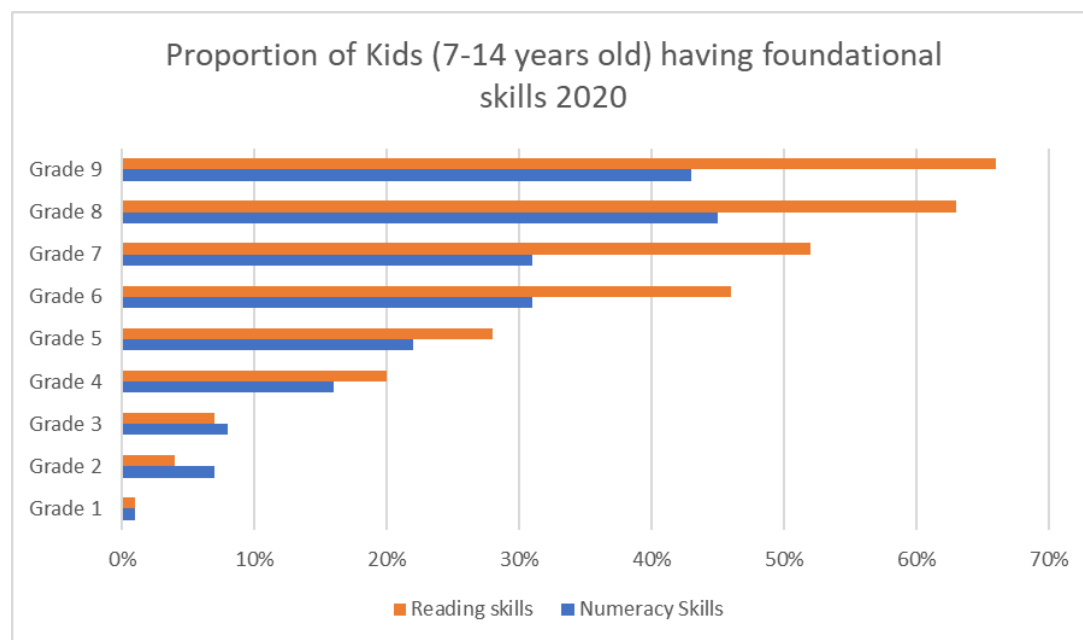
According to the Ghana Education Sector Report (2022), in 2020, the share of children with foundation skills (7-14 years) in Ghana varied across different categories. The report indicates that only 7% of Grade 3 students had the required reading skills, and just 8% had the necessary numeracy skills.

Below is a summary of the data in a chart and tabular form:

Table 2

Grade	Numeracy Skills	Reading Skills
Grade 1	1%	1%
Grade 2	7%	4%
Grade 3	8%	7%
Grade 4	16%	20%
Grade 5	22%	28%
Grade 6	31%	46%
Grade 7	31%	52%
Grade 8	45%	63%
Grade 9	43%	66%

Figure 3



Additionally, the out-of-school rates differed based on wealth quintiles, with children from the poorest wealth quintile experiencing higher out-of-school rates compared to other categories. An average of 7% of students were absent from primary school (Ghana Education Sector, 2022).

The educational inequality in Ghana, based on wealth quintiles, underscores a significant issue of disparity within the education system. According to the Ghana Education Sector report, 2022, children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds encounter obstacles in accessing education, leading to higher rates of being out of school. Financial constraints pose a major challenge, as families with limited financial resources struggle to cover basic educational expenses like school fees and uniforms, hindering children from regular school attendance. Furthermore, schools in economically disadvantaged areas often lack crucial resources such as qualified teachers and learning materials, resulting in lower-quality education and limited learning opportunities for students in these communities. Social barriers, including discrimination and lack of community support, also impede the educational progress of children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, affecting their academic performance and retention in school. Poverty-related issues like inadequate healthcare and nutrition further impact children's ability to learn and attend school regularly, contributing to higher rates of absenteeism and dropout among economically disadvantaged students. Also, the need for children from low-income families to work or contribute to household income leads to early school leaving, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and educational disadvantage (Ghana Education Sector, 2022).

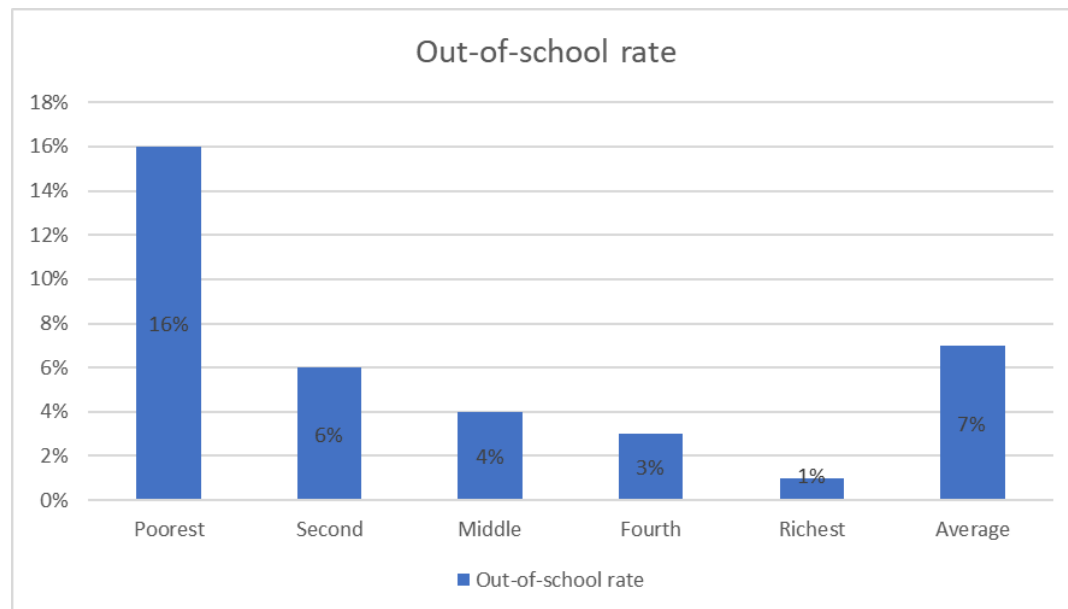
Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive efforts to reduce educational gaps, enhance access to quality education for all children, and establish support systems to ensure that economically disadvantaged students receive equal opportunities for learning and academic success.

Here is the summary in tabular form: **Wealth Quintile Out-of-School Rate**

Table 3

Wealth	Out-of-school rate
Poorest	16%
Second	6%
Middle	4%
Fourth	3%
Richest	1%
Average	7%

Figure 4



5.8 Infrastructure and Resources

The fast rise in enrollment owing to the free SHS policy has stretched the existing infrastructure and resources. A study by Akyeampong et al. (2018) indicated that over 90% of kids currently attend overcrowded schools, with 1 in 4 instructors being unqualified. This lack of suitable facilities and skilled instructors has significantly influenced the quality of education given. Furthermore, research by the World Bank (2019) noted that just 4.6% of public education funding in Ghana goes towards learning materials. This poor allocation of resources to critical instructional materials has further impacted the effective delivery of quality education and student success.

5.9 Regional Disparities

Educational policies and reforms have not sufficiently addressed the regional variations in student results. Research by Takyi et al. (2019) demonstrated substantial variations in academic performance between urban and rural pupils in Ghana. Students in urban regions typically outperformed their rural counterparts, with variables such as greater infrastructure, competent instructors, and access to resources contributing to this discrepancy. The Northern areas of Ghana, in particular, have historically trailed behind in educational attainment. The 2018 Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) indicated that the net attendance ratio for elementary schools in the Northern area was 69.4%, compared to 91.4% in the Greater Accra region (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). These geographical discrepancies underscore the need for targeted interventions and resource allocation to guarantee fair educational opportunities and results throughout the nation.

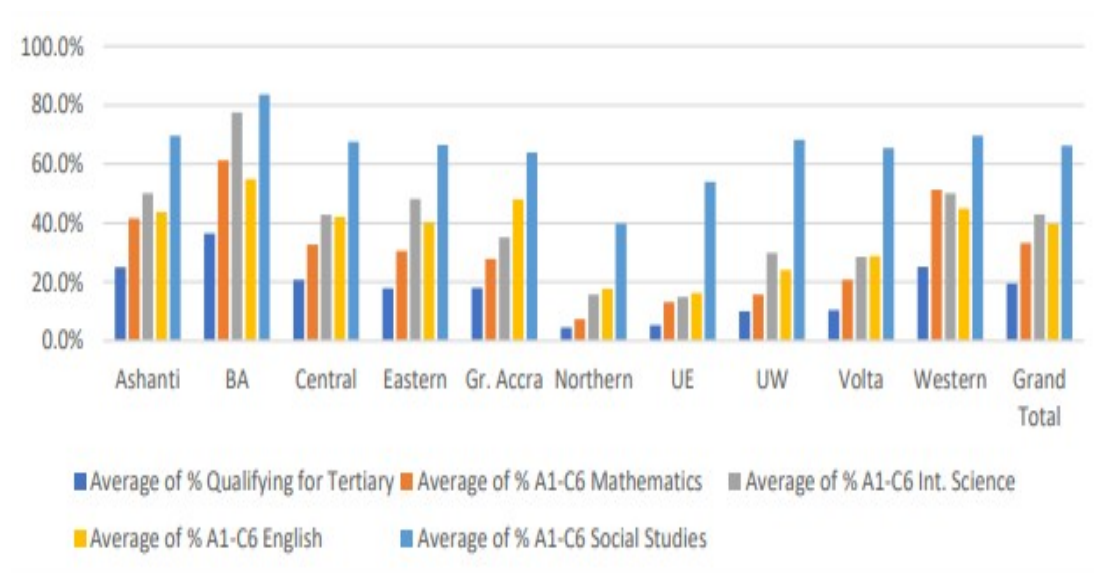
According to the Education Sector Performance Report (ESPR) 2019, funding to the education sector in Ghana is determined centrally, with the Ministry of Education playing a significant role in budget allocation and resource distribution. However, local governments and local property taxes also play a role in education funding, particularly through the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund). The GETFund is financed through a 2.5% tax on goods and services, and it is used to support educational infrastructure and facilities across the country. Regional disparities in students' performances are influenced by various factors, including funding allocation, teacher availability, and infrastructure development. Disparities in funding distribution leads to differences in resource availability among regions, affecting the quality of education provided. For example, regions with lower funding levels may struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers, leading to lower academic performance. According to the report, data on the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), pass rates across regions reveals notable disparities in performance. The Brong Ahafo Region

demonstrated a pass rate of 35%, indicating relatively strong performance, while the Northern Region exhibited a significantly lower pass rate of 4%. In comparison, the Western and Central Regions had pass rates of 23% and 23.5% respectively, falling between the higher and lower performing regions. The availability of trained teachers appears to play a role in these variations, as Brong Ahafo Region boasts a student-to-trained-teacher ratio of 19, whereas the Northern Region has a ratio of 26 (Ministry of Education, 2019).

Moreover, disparities in local property taxes and economic conditions also impact the resources available for education at the local level. Regions with higher property tax revenues have more resources to invest in education, leading to better facilities, teacher training, and student support services. On the other hand, regions with lower property tax revenues face challenges in providing quality education, which can contribute to disparities in student performance across regions (Ministry of Education, 2019). Therefore, while central funding plays a crucial role in education financing in Ghana, the involvement of local governments and the impact of local property taxes are important factors that can contribute to regional disparities in students' performances. Addressing these disparities requires a comprehensive approach that considers both central and local funding mechanisms to ensure equitable access to quality education for all students.

Below is a chart from the Education Sector Performance Report highlighting disparities in WASSCE (West African Senior School Certificate Examination) performance across various regions in Ghana in 2018. The data reveals that the Brong Ahafo Region demonstrates a relatively high WASSCE pass rate of 35%, indicating strong academic achievement in this area. In contrast, the Northern Region reports a significantly lower WASSCE pass rate of only 4%, reflecting challenges in academic performance. Additionally, the Greater Accra Region, Eastern Region, and Central Region show varying levels of WASSCE performance, while the Upper West Region and East Region face notable difficulties in achieving high pass rates. These disparities emphasize the importance of targeted interventions and support to address the varying levels of WASSCE performance across regions and ensure equitable access to quality education for all students in Ghana.

Figure 5: Proportion of Students Obtaining A1-C6 WASSCE core subjects by region in 2018



The investigation gives useful insights into the variables leading to low academic performance among students in Ghana. The assessment of successful and failed assistance programs underlines the need to match projects with local needs, guaranteeing sustainability and local ownership, strengthening cooperation among stakeholders, and promoting quality education and learning outcomes. The influence of educational policies and reforms on student outcomes underlines the necessity for comprehensive, well-planned, and sufficiently resourced initiatives that address both access and quality. Furthermore, the consideration of particular issues such as socioeconomic circumstances, school infrastructure, teacher quality, language of instruction, and parental participation underscores the complex character of the difficulties confronting Ghana's education system. By leveraging these evidence-based findings and adopting a holistic approach to education reform,

policymakers, educators, and development partners can work together to design and implement effective interventions that enhance student performance and promote equitable access to quality education for all Ghanaian students.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Factors Contributing to Poor Academic Performance

Poor academic performance among students in Ghana is driven by a complex interaction of circumstances, as shown by the analysis of several research and statistical data. Low socioeconomic status, including poverty and little parental education, leads to educational disadvantages for kids in low-income families. Insufficient school infrastructure, restricted learning resources and funds, and overcrowded classrooms impede effective teaching and learning. Teacher quality, motivation, language of teaching, and family participation are all essential factors that influence student results. To tackle these complex difficulties, a comprehensive strategy is needed that focuses on improving both access to and quality of education.

6.2 Effective Aid Interventions to Improve Student Performance

Assessing assistance programs in Ghana's education sector reveals several effective efforts that have enhanced student performance. Infrastructure development initiatives, such as constructing and renovating school facilities, have expanded educational opportunities, especially in places with limited access. Teacher training and support programs have raised the quality of education and encouraged the implementation of good pedagogical approaches. School feeding programs have tackled hunger and malnutrition problems, resulting in higher enrollment, attendance, and retention rates. Inclusive education projects have targeted underprivileged communities and given accelerated learning opportunities for out-of-school youngsters. These effective initiatives indicate the potential for targeted and well-designed assistance programs to boost student results in Ghana.

6.3 Comprehensive Aid Interventions

After analyzing the Ghanaian setting and evaluating effective assistance initiatives, suggestions may be made for complete aid programs designed to meet the unique requirements of Ghanaian students. First, assistance initiatives should focus on a comprehensive strategy that targets both access and quality in education, ensuring that greater enrollment is supported by improvements in learning outcomes. Second, interventions should be created in close consultation with local stakeholders, specifically the Ghana Education Service (GES) which is the central player in the education landscape, and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NaCCA), which formulate policies, allocate resources, and oversee the implementation of educational initiatives; to make initiatives that align with national education goals and respond to context-specific issues. Third, assistance programs should stress sustainability and local ownership; assistance programs should prioritize participatory approaches, capacity building, and institutional strengthening to engage local stakeholders in program design, implementation, and evaluation. By empowering communities, educators, and institutions to take ownership of initiatives, fostering alignment with national priorities, and mobilizing local resources, these programs can contribute to the long-term sustainability of education interventions. Emphasizing a long-term perspective, flexibility, and integration into existing frameworks ensures that initiatives are contextually relevant, responsive to local needs, and effectively embedded within the broader education system, ultimately leading to lasting improvements in educational quality and access. Fourth, interventions should emphasize the most disadvantaged and marginalized people, allocating resources such as learning materials/textbooks and assistance to schools and communities with the greatest needs. Finally, assistance activities should be backed with strong monitoring and evaluation systems to assess success, identify areas for improvement, and assure accountability.

6.4 Overall Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of aid interventions in Ghana's education sector, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

- To ensure that funds are effectively directed to the education sector in Ghana, it is crucial to align aid interventions with national priorities and strategies, as highlighted in Figure 2 and Table 1; International donors and development partners should coordinate their efforts with Ghana's educational goals, focusing on targeted interventions such as comprehensive teacher training programs, curriculum development aligned with global standards, investment in infrastructure and resources including ICT facilities, and student support services like counseling and remedial classes. Additionally, a portion of the funds should be allocated to robust monitoring and

evaluation systems to assess the impact of interventions, promote community engagement, and encourage research and innovation in education. By strategically allocating resources to these key areas and ensuring their effective utilization, Ghana can address the persistent challenges in academic performance despite increased investment in the education sector.

- As shown in Figure 3 and Table 2, comprehensive aid programs that address both access and quality in education are crucial to ensuring that Ghanaian children gain the skills they need and perform well academically. Programs for teacher training to improve the quality of education, school food programs to address issues of hunger and malnutrition that might impede learning, and infrastructure development to create surroundings that are conducive to learning should be the main emphasis of initiatives. More enrollment and retention rates can be achieved by offering out-of-school youth accelerated learning opportunities through inclusive education initiatives that target underserved populations. Ghana can enhance academic achievement and guarantee that all students have fair access to high-quality education by creating focused, comprehensive assistance programs that address their unique requirements.
- In light of the prioritization of roads, agriculture, and tourism over education in Ghana's 2021 mid-year fiscal review, it is imperative to underscore the pivotal role of education in fostering sustainable development and socio-economic progress. Education serves as the cornerstone for individual empowerment, national productivity, and innovation. Therefore, to address the existing imbalance and ensure long-term prosperity, it is recommended that Ghana's government reevaluates its budget allocations, placing a greater emphasis on education funding. This entails investing in infrastructure improvement, teacher training programs, curriculum development, and equitable access to quality education across all regions. By prioritizing education, Ghana can cultivate a skilled workforce, stimulate economic growth, and ultimately achieve holistic development that benefits all its citizens.
- A diversified approach is necessary to bridge the educational gap and provide equitable opportunity to all pupils, especially those from economically disadvantaged homes as represented in Table 3 and figure 4. Aid interventions should prioritize reaching the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as girls, children with disabilities, and students from low-income households. Targeted interventions, such as scholarships, school feeding programs, and inclusive education initiatives, can help address barriers to education access and retention.
- To prevent regional disparity in Ghana's education system, it is essential to prioritize targeted initiatives that address the specific needs of underserved regions. Aid programs should focus on equitable distribution of resources, infrastructure development, and teacher training in remote and marginalized areas to ensure all students have access to quality education regardless of their geographical location. By tailoring interventions to the unique challenges faced by different regions and promoting inclusive policies that bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, aid can play a crucial role in promoting educational equity and reducing disparities across regions in Ghana.
- **Prioritize Capacity Building and System Strengthening:** Aid interventions should focus on building the capacity of Ghana's education system, rather than creating parallel structures. This includes supporting teacher training, strengthening school management and accountability mechanisms, and investing in data collection and analysis systems to inform policy decisions.
- **Promote Evidence-Based Interventions:** Donors should prioritize aid interventions that are based on rigorous evidence and best practices. This involves conducting thorough needs assessments, piloting and evaluating interventions, and scaling up successful programs.
- **Encourage Long-Term and Predictable Funding:** Aid interventions should be supported by long-term, predictable funding commitments. This allows for better planning, reduces uncertainty, and enables the implementation of sustainable, large-scale programs. Multi-year funding arrangements and joint financing mechanisms can help ensure aid predictability and coordination.
- **Foster Sustainability and Exit Strategies:** Aid interventions should be designed with sustainability and exit strategies in mind from the outset. This involves building local capacity, promoting community involvement, and gradually transitioning ownership and responsibility to national actors.

7. Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the factors contributing to poor academic performance and the effectiveness of aid interventions in Ghana's education sector, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The study's scope is limited to the Ghanaian context, and the findings may not be generalizable to

other countries or education systems. Furthermore, the analysis is based on available data and studies, and there may be additional factors or interventions that were not captured in the reviewed literature.

8. Suggestions for Future Studies

Future studies could employ primary data collection methods, such as surveys, interviews, or focus group discussions, to gather more in-depth and context-specific information from students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Second, comparative studies could be conducted to examine the effectiveness of different aid interventions across various regions or countries, identifying best practices and lessons learned. Finally, studies could investigate the potential of public-private partnerships and community-based interventions in supporting education development efforts in Ghana.

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